

Mid-May-December 2000: Almihdhar and Alhazmi Receive Late Night Visits at FBI Informer's House

While living with FBI informer Abdussatar Shaikh (see [May 10-Mid-December 2000](#)), hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi receive strange late night visits, as they did in their previous apartment in San Diego. ([Fox 9/16/2001](#)) The visits are seen by their neighbors. For instance, one neighbor says, "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." ([Cloud 10/1/2001](#)) The two hijackers are also reportedly visited by Mohamed Atta and Hani Hanjour at this time (see [Mid-May-December 2000](#)).

Mid-May-December 2000: Atta and Hanjour Reportedly Visit Fellow Hijackers at FBI Informer's House



Abdussatar Shaikh's house in Lemon Grove, California. [Source: *Newsweek*] While Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi are living with FBI informer Abdussatar Shaikh in San Diego (see [May 10-Mid-December 2000](#)), they are apparently visited frequently by Mohamed Atta, as well as Hani Hanjour, according to neighbors interviewed after 9/11. ([KGTV 10 \(San Diego\) 9/27/2001](#); [Hettena 9/29/2001](#); [Brandon 9/30/2001](#); [KGTV 10 \(San Diego\) 10/11/2001](#); [Puit and Kalil 10/26/2001](#)) However, Shaikh will deny Atta's visits and the FBI will not mention them. ([Hettena 9/29/2001](#)) Shaikh will also deny having met Hanjour, but the 9/11 Commission will say that it has "little doubt" Shaikh met Hanjour at least once. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 518](#)) The two San Diego-based hijackers also receive a series of mysterious late night visits at this time (see [Mid-May-December 2000](#)).

May 17, 2000: Bush Allegedly Says He Will Take Saddam Hussein Out



Osama Siblani. *[Source: Publicity photo]* Presidential candidate George W. Bush allegedly tells Osama Siblani, publisher of an Arab American newspaper, that if he becomes president he will remove Saddam Hussein from power. “He told me that he was going to take him out,” Siblani says in a radio interview on Democracy Now! almost five years later. Siblani will also recall that Bush “wanted to go to Iraq to search for weapons of mass destruction, and he considered the regime an imminent and gathering threat against the United States.” As Siblani will later note, as a presidential candidate Bush has no access to classified intelligence on Iraqi weapons programs. ([Democracy Now! 3/11/2005](#))

May 17, 2000-May 2001: Bin Al-Shibh US Visas Rejected, Possibly Because of Ties to USS *Cole* Bombing



Ramzi bin al-Shibh. *[Source: FBI]* During these months, Hamburg al-Qaeda cell member Ramzi bin al-Shibh tries several times to get a US visa, but all his attempts fail, some possibly due to a link to the USS *Cole* bombing. In 2000, he tries to get a visa three times from Germany, and once from Yemen, but all these attempts fail. He may also make a fifth attempt in May 2001, although the 9/11 Commission will not include that in their final report. One of the applications says he will be visiting Agus Budiman, a Hamburg associate, in Washington (see [October-November 2000](#)). ([Lichtblau and Williams 10/24/2001](#); [Abuza 12/24/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 11-15](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 209](#)) Most accounts claim that bin al-Shibh is refused a visa on economic grounds based on fears that he will overstay his visa and work in the US. One official later suggests it was “only by luck” that he was turned

down. ([CBS News 6/6/2002](#); [Finn 7/14/2002](#)) However, Bin al-Shibh is in Yemen during the two months before the bombing of the *Cole* in that country, and investigators later conclude that he may have been involved in that attack (see [Around September 15-16 and October 10-21, 2000](#) and [October 12, 2000](#)). Possibly for this reason other accounts note that, as the London Times will put it, he was “turned down on security grounds.” ([Kennedy 9/9/2002](#)) Newsweek will later report, “One senior law-enforcement official told Newsweek that bin al-Shibh’s efforts to obtain a US visa were rebuffed because of suspicions that he was tied to the bombing of the USS *Cole*.” ([Lichtblau and Williams 10/21/2001](#); [Thomas 11/26/2001](#); [BBC 9/14/2002](#)) In addition, Al Jazeera journalist Yosri Fouda will say that according to his US intelligence sources, bin al-Shibh’s visas were “turned down because he was implicated in the USS *Cole* attack.” ([TBS Journal 10/2002](#)) But no journalist will ever question why this information didn’t lead to the unraveling of the 9/11 plot. Not only is there the obvious visa connection to Ziad Jarrah while he is training at a US flight school, but also during this same time period bin al-Shibh wires money to Marwan Alshehhi, Zacarias Moussaoui, and others, sometimes using his own name. ([CBS News 6/6/2002](#)) It is unclear how the US would know about his ties to the bombing at this time, though it’s possible that the consular official who reviews his fourth attempt in Berlin in October/November 2000 sees that al-Shibh entered Yemen one day before the attack and leaves shortly after it (see [Around September 15-16 and October 10-21, 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 15](#))

May 22, 2000: German Intelligence Notices Hijackers’ Associate Traveling Monitored Route

Hamburg cell member Mounir El Motassadeq leaves Germany for Afghanistan and his travel is immediately reported to the German authorities because he is on a watch list (see [March 2000](#)). Motassadeq, an associate of Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, and Ziad Jarrah, flies from Hamburg to Karachi, Pakistan, via Istanbul. At least two of the hijackers had previously traveled this route to Afghanistan (see [Late November-Early December 1999](#)). Although Turkish intelligence is aware that radicals from Germany travel to Afghanistan via Turkey, it is not clear whether they pick up the travel by Motassadeq (see [1996](#)). There are two versions of German intelligence’s reaction to this trip. An early 2003 article in Der Spiegel will say that the intelligence report only gives Motassadeq’s destination as Istanbul, so there are no consequences for him. However, a later article in Stern magazine will say, “Naturally, the officials know that Istanbul is not his real destination but only the usual stopover on his way to Afghanistan, to the camps of Osama bin Laden.” ([Cziesche, Mascolo, and Stark 2/3/2003](#); [Laabs 8/13/2003](#))

May 30, 2000: US Military Blueprint Calls for ‘Full-Spectrum Dominance’ of Entire World



A Joint Vision graphic.

[Source: US Defense Department] (click image to enlarge) The US Defense Department publishes its new long-term blueprint for the future, entitled “Joint Vision 2020.” As a Defense Department press release points out, “‘Full-spectrum dominance’ is the key term” in the plan. “Full-spectrum dominance means the ability of US forces, operating alone or with allies, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the range of military operations.” ([Garamone 6/2/2000](#)) The term comes from US Space Command’s “Vision for 2020” in 1998, which spoke of “dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect US interests and investment.” Author Peter Dale Scott will later note this represents an important shift from a policy of containing or rolling back the Soviet Union to “full-spectrum dominance of the globe” in order to achieve “global economic integration on American terms, [including] the opening of foreign markets to US investment.” ([Scott 2007, pp. 19-20](#)) Scott will also note that the similarity between this blueprint and a report published by the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) think tank several months later “was not coincidental,” since it was built on a 1992 draft report written by some of the same people involved in the PNAC report, such as Paul Wolfowitz and I. Lewis Libby. The PNAC report calls itself a “blueprint” for the “creation of a ‘global Pax Americana’” (see [September 2000](#)). ([Scott 2007, pp. 24](#))

[May 30, 2000-March 2001: Al-Marabh Convicted of Stabbing Roommate But Skips Probation and Evades Arrest](#)

Nabil al-Marabh stabs his Boston roommate in the knee during an argument on May 30, 2000. He pleads guilty in December 2000 to assault and battery with a dangerous weapon. ([Farmer 9/20/2001](#)) He is given a six-month suspended sentence, but fails to report to his probation officer. An arrest warrant is issued for him in March 2001. ([Getter, Mehren, and Slater 9/21/2001](#); [Dimmock and Sands 10/29/2001](#)) In July, just after he has been released on bail in Canada, the Boston police go to al-Marabh’s former Boston address with the arrest warrant. His landlord tells them al-Marabh is gone and has not left a forwarding address. ([Risen and Engelberg 10/14/2001](#))

May 2000-Late September 2000: Defense Agency Analyst Assembles Unheeded Attack Warning; Able Danger Information May Be One Source

Kie Fallis, a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) terrorism intelligence analyst, has been gathering evidence of an upcoming al-Qaeda attack or attacks. In 2002, he will describe to the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry a research process similar to what Able Danger is using at the same time: “I began to notice there was a voluminous amount of information, as others have testified, regarding al-Qaeda. Most of it appeared to be unrelated to other pieces of information. It appeared to be almost chat. By using a piece of [commercial software called ‘Analyst’s Notebook’] I was able to put these small snippets of information into, and graphically represent them as well, I was able to, over a course of many months, to determine certain linkages between these items—linkages that would never be apparent without the use of this tool. It would be lost in the weeds. And there were a lot of weeds to look through.” ([Gertz 8/26/2002](#); [US Congress 10/8/2002](#)) In his research, he claims to find links between al-Qaeda and Iranian intelligence. By May 2000, he writes a classified report on his conclusion that “terrorists were planning two or three major attacks against the United States. The only gaps were where and when.” Apparently, he envisions at least one of these attacks will use a small boat to blow up a US warship. However, the DIA has already issued a report concluding that such a method of attack would be impossible to carry out successfully, and the agency sticks by this assessment. A video message put out by bin Laden in mid-September convinces Fallis that an al-Qaeda attack will happen in the next month or two.(see [Mid-September 2000](#)). Shortly after learning about this message, Fallis reaches “the ‘eureka point’... in determining an impending terrorist attack.” This comes “from a still-classified intelligence report in September 2000, which he will not discuss.” ([Gertz 8/26/2002](#)) This may be a reference to a lead by the Able Danger team on increased al-Qaeda activity in Yemen at this time (see [Late September 2000](#)), and/or it may refer to other intelligence leads. Fallis goes to his supervisor and asks that at least a general warning of an attack in the Middle East be issued. He hopes such a warning will at least put US military forces in the region on a higher alert. His superior turns him down, and other superiors fail to even learn of his suggested warning. The USS *Cole* will be successfully attacked in the port of Aden, Yemen, by a small boat of terrorists on October 12, 2000 (see [October 12, 2000](#)) . ([Gertz 8/26/2002](#)) One day after the *Cole* attack, Fallis will resign in protest. According to Sen. John Warner (R), “What [Fallis] felt is that his assessment was not given that proper level of consideration by his superiors and, as such, was not incorporated in the final intelligence reports provided to military commanders in the [Middle East region].” ([CNN 10/25/2000](#))

May 31, 2000: Atta Namesake Arrives in Prague, Is Deported

A Pakistani businessman called Mohammed Atta (spelt with three ‘m’s) arrives in Prague aboard a Lufthansa flight from Saudi Arabia via Frankfurt. As he does not have a Czech

visa, he is sent back, although he remains in the transit area at Prague Ruzyně airport for six hours. Unfortunately, he spends most of his time at the airport out of range of the security cameras. In the confusion immediately after 9/11, Czech counterintelligence will believe he may be the real lead hijacker Mohamed Atta (spelled with two 'm's)—he paid cash for his ticket and names are often spelled wrong—and that he had a meeting that could not wait, although this theory is eventually discounted. The real Mohamed Atta has a Czech visa, but it will not come into effect until the next day. Atta arrives in Prague on June 2 (see [June 2, 2000](#)). ([Epstein 11/19/2003](#); [Crewdson 8/29/2004](#); [Kenety 9/3/2004](#))

Summer 2000: San Diego Hijackers Meet Atta and Al-Bayoumi

Anonymous government sources later claim that Mohamed Atta visits fellow hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi, Khalid Almihdhar, and Omar al-Bayoumi. These same sources claim al-Bayoumi is identified after September 11 as an “advance man” for al-Qaeda. ([Seper 11/26/2002](#)) Other reports have suggested Atta visited Alhazmi and Almihdhar in San Diego, but the FBI has not confirmed this. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#).)

Summer 2000: Saeed Sheikh Frequently Calls ISI Director



Lieutenant General Mahmood Ahmed in 2000. [*Source: Reuters*] In 2002, French author Bernard-Henri Levy is presented evidence by government officials in New Delhi, India, that Saeed Sheikh makes repeated calls to ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed during the summer of 2000. Later, Levy gets unofficial confirmation from sources in Washington regarding these calls that the information he was given in India is correct. He notes that someone in the United Arab Emirates using a variety of aliases sends Mohamed Atta slightly over \$100,000 between June and September of this year (see [June 29, 2000-September 18, 2000](#) and [July-August 2000](#)), and the timing of these phone calls and the money transfers may have been the source of news reports that Mahmood Ahmed ordered Saeed Sheikh to send \$100,000 to Mohamed Atta (see [October 7, 2001](#)). However, he also notes that there is

evidence of Sheikh sending Atta \$100,000 in August 2001 (see [Early August 2001](#)), so the reports could refer to that, or both \$100,000 transfers could involve Mahmood Ahmed, Saeed Sheikh, and Mohamed Atta. ([Levy 2003, pp. 320-324](#))

Summer 2000: FBI Extracts Confession from Embassy Bombing Cell Member without Torture

The FBI extracts a full confession from L'Houssaine Kherchtou, a member of the cell that bombed the US embassy in Nairobi, Kenya (see [Late 1993-Late 1994](#) and [August 7, 1998](#)). However, in contrast with methods used on al-Qaeda operatives after 9/11, he is not tortured and the FBI is at pains to treat him well. FBI agent Jack Cloonan will later say of the initial interrogation, which took place in Morocco, "The setting was beautiful, it was this grand house with stables out back, gazelles bouncing in the background, palm trees, three-course meals." Kherchtou had a relationship with the British intelligence service MI6 (see [Mid-Summer 1998](#) and [Shortly After August 7, 1998](#)), but had broken off contact with it and has to be lured to Morocco, where his debriefing is headed by Patrick Fitzgerald. Cloonan will later describe the questioning: "We advised [Kherchtou] of his rights. We told him he could have a lawyer anytime, and that he could pray at any time he wanted. We were letting the Moroccans sit in on this, and they were dumbfounded." Kherchtou is also denied a plea bargaining agreement, and told he must plead guilty to conspiracy to murder, for which he may receive a life sentence. However, it is indicated that the US will do something for his wife and children and he knows the US will not torture him, so he accepts, providing the FBI with details of the plot and becoming a star witness at the trial (see [September 2000](#)). After the trial, he enters the witness protection program in the US. FBI officials will later compare this outcome favorably to procedures used by other US agencies after 9/11. For example, following the detainee abuse scandals after 9/11, FBI manager Tom Harrington will write that the FBI has "been successful for many years obtaining confessions via non-confrontational interviewing techniques." Cloonan will later contrast Kherchtou's treatment with that of al-Qaeda training manager Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi in December 2001, when the US sent al-Libi to Egypt to be tortured and interrogated, but some of the information he provided there turned out to be false (see [December 19, 2001](#) and [January 2002 and after](#)). ([Vest 6/19/2005](#))

June 2000: Multiple Web Domains Related to 2001 and/or WTC Attack Are Registered

Around this time, a number of very suspicious web domains are registered, including the following: attackamerica.com, attackonamerica.com, attackontwintowers.com, august11horror.com, august11terror.com, horrorinamerica.com, horrorinnewyork.com, nycterroriststrike.com, pearlharborinmanhattan.com, terrorattack2001.com, towerofhorror.com, tradetowerstrike.com, worldtradecenter929.com, worldtrade-centerbombs.com, worldtradetowerattack.com, worldtradetowerstrike.com, and wterroristattack2001.com. A counterterrorism expert says, "It's unbelievable that [the

registration company] would register these domain names” and “if they did make a comment to the FBI, it’s unbelievable that the FBI didn’t react to it.” Several of the names mention 2001 and, apparently, there were no other websites mentioning other years. Registering a site requires a credit card, so presumably, this story could provide leads, but it is unclear what leads the FBI gets from this, if any. No sites will be active on 9/11. ([Johnson 9/19/2001](#)) All of the domain name registrations will expire around June 2001. ([Johnson 9/20/2001](#)) This story will later be incorrectly called an “urban legend,” ([Berlau 3/11/2002](#))

June 2000: Tenet Visits Pakistan, Complains about Islamic Charities’ Ties to Bin Laden

CIA Director George Tenet makes a secret trip to Pakistan to complain about funds being moved through Islamic charities to al-Qaeda. This is part of an effort coordinated by the National Security Council to cut off the vast sums of money that intelligence officials believe flow to bin Laden’s al-Qaeda terrorist network through Islamic charities and wealthy donors from across the Middle East. The US campaign prompts the Pakistani government in early 2001 to make some efforts to ban raising funds explicitly designated for holy war. Former US officials will later claim the trip is part of a larger effort to disrupt bin Laden’s financial network following the 1998 US embassy bombings. ([Trofimov et al. 10/1/2001](#))

June 2000: GAO Warns of ‘Large-Scale Incidents Designed for Maximum Destruction’

The General Accounting Office (GAO) issues a report examining problems affecting the performance of security screening staff at US airports. It warns: “The threat of attacks on aircraft by terrorists or others remains a persistent and growing concern for the United States. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the trend in terrorism against US targets is toward large-scale incidents designed for maximum destruction, terror, and media impact.” Though the GAO describes the performance of screeners in detecting dangerous objects like handguns as “unsatisfactory,” it makes no recommendations to revise current screening practices. ([General Accounting Office 6/2000, pp. 6-8, 20](#); [Robinson, and Johnson 9/20/2001](#))

June 2000: Al-Qaeda Leaders Visit Indonesia, Hosted by Saudi Charity



Video footage of al alleged al-Qaeda training camp in Sulawesi, Indonesia. [Source: CNN] Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's second in command, and Mohammed Atef, al-Qaeda's military chief, visit Indonesia to examine expanding al-Qaeda operations there. They are guided by al-Qaeda operatives Agus Dwikarna and Omar al-Faruq. Dwikarna is working as a regional head of the Indonesia branch of the Al Haramain Foundation, a charity directly tied to the Saudi government. US officials already strongly suspected Al Haramain helped fund the 1998 African embassy bombings (see [Summer-Autumn 1997](#)), though none of their offices were shut down. Dwikarna uses Al Haramain to funnel al-Qaeda money into Southeast Asia and give al-Qaeda operatives cover as charity workers; he also runs an al-Qaeda training camp on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. Dwikarna will be arrested in 2001 and al-Faruq in 2002. Both will confess to using Al Haramain to fund al-Qaeda operations. Despite this, Al Haramain's Indonesia's office not only stays open, but in 2002 it signs an agreement with the Indonesian government to expand operations while it continues to divert charity money to militant operations. The United Nations will finally blacklist Al Haramain offices worldwide in 2004. ([Ressa 8/30/2002](#); [Ressa 2003, pp. 95-96](#); [Burr and Collins 2006, pp. 41, 202](#))

Summer-October 2000: Al-Qaeda Counterterrorism Squad Found to be Illegally Sharing Information with Prosecutors

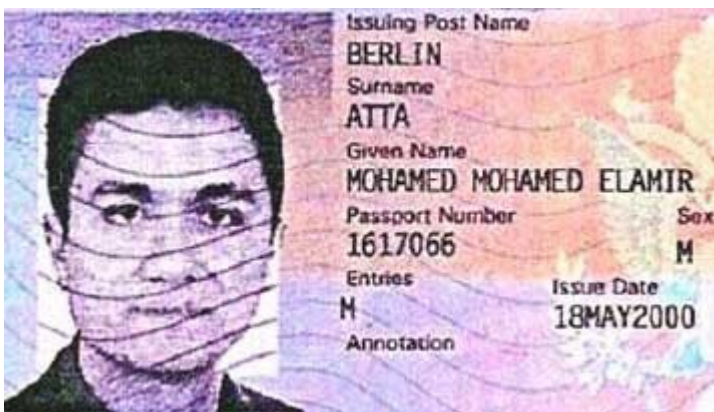
The Justice Department's Office of Intelligence Policy and Review (OIPR), which helps obtain warrants under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), discovers errors in several al-Qaeda related FISA applications under a counterterrorist program called "Catcher's Mitt." The OIPR verbally notifies the FISA Court of the errors, which are mostly in affidavits submitted by supervisory special agents at field offices. Then, in September and October 2000, the OIPR submits two pleadings to the court regarding approximately 75-100 applications with errors starting in July 1997. Many of the errors concern misleading statements about the nature of collaboration between criminal and intelligence agents. Most of these applications stated that the FBI New York field office, where the I-49 squad focusing on al-Qaeda was based (see [January 1996](#) and [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)), had separate teams of agents handling criminal and intelligence investigations. But in actual fact the I-49 agents intermingled with criminal agents working on intelligence cases and intelligence agents working on criminal cases.

Therefore, contrary to what the FISA Court has been told, agents working on a criminal investigation have had unrestricted access to information from a parallel intelligence investigation—a violation of the so-called “wall,” the set of bureaucratic procedures designed to separate criminal and intelligence investigations (see [July 19, 1995](#)). ([Hirsh and Isikoff 5/27/2002](#); [Isikoff and Thomas 3/29/2004](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 36-37](#).) The information about al-Qaeda in these cases is also shared with assistant US attorneys without FISA permission being sought or granted first. Other errors include the FBI director wrongly asserting that the target of a FISA application was not under criminal investigation, omissions of material facts about a prior relationship between the FBI and a target, and an interview of a target by an assistant US attorney. ([Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court 5/17/2002](#)) This leads the FISA Court to impose new requirements regarding the “wall” (see [October 2000](#)). Similar problems will be found in FISA applications for surveillance of Hamas operatives (see [March 2001](#)).

June 2, 2000: Atta Arrives in Prague on Way to New York

Lead hijacker Mohamed Atta arrives in the early morning in Prague, Czech Republic, by bus from Cologne, Germany. He plays on slot machines at the Happy Day Casino, then disappears. It will never be discovered where he sleeps in Prague. He takes the midday flight to New York the next day (see [June 3, 2000](#)). ([Kenety 9/3/2004](#)) After 9/11, this trip will fuel the controversy over whether Atta meets an Iraqi agent in Prague in 2001 (see [April 8, 2001](#) and [September 18, 2001-April 2007](#)). It is not entirely clear why Atta chooses to fly to the US from the Czech Republic, although 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed will be reported to have lived in Prague in the late 1990s (see [Mid-1996-September 11, 2001](#)).

June 3, 2000: Atta Supposedly Arrives in US for First Time, Despite Evidence of Prior Entries



A portion of Mohamed Atta's US visa obtained in May 2000. [Source: 9/11 Commission] Mohamed Atta supposedly arrives in the US for the first time, flying from Prague to Newark on a tourist visa issued May 18

in Berlin. ([Morgan, Kidwell, and Corral 9/22/2001](#); [Australian Broadcasting Corporation 11/12/2001](#))

June 2000: Atta and Alshehhi Stay in New York Area, but Some Accounts Suggest Elsewhere

After arriving in the US on May 29 and June 3, 2000, alleged hijackers Marwan Alshehhi and Mohamed Atta meet up and reportedly spend all of June in the New York area. The 9/11 Commission reports them spending the month staying in a series of short-term rentals in New York City while searching for a flight school to attend, e-mailing a New Hampshire school on June 5 and inquiring with a New Jersey school on June 22. A day after arriving in the US, Atta receives a mobile phone he bought listing his address as an Oklahoma flight school he subsequently visits (see [July 2-3, 2000](#)). According to the FBI, Alshehhi enrolls at an English language school, and the pair remains in the area until July 2. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 519](#)) However, some accounts suggest they leave before this. According to the owner of the Venice, Florida flight school subsequently attended by Atta and Alshehhi, the pair first visits his school on July 1. ([US Congress 3/19/2002](#)) And according to the later statement of a local sheriff, some of the hijackers, including Atta, may live and take flight training in Punta Gorda, Florida, prior to moving to Venice (see [Before July 2000](#)). After 9/11, a federal investigator will reveal that Atta and Alshehhi rented rooms in the Bronx and Brooklyn in spring 2000. Whether this included the period prior to when Atta officially first entered the US, in June, is unstated (see [Spring 2000](#)). ([Milton 12/8/2001](#))

June 9, 2000: On Trip to Los Angeles, Alhazmi and Almihdhar Seem to Know Local Muslims Well, Meet Mysterious Associate

Hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi travel to Los Angeles with an associate, Mohdar Abdullah, before Almihdhar leaves the US the next day (see [June 10, 2000](#)). When they visit the King Fahd Mosque in Culver City, Abdullah is surprised that Alhazmi and Almihdhar already know several people at the mosque. Abdullah will later say, "I was surprised that anybody at the mosque knew them, because as far as I knew Alhazmi and Almihdhar hadn't visited Los Angeles since they arrived in the US." They meet one of the hijackers' Los Angeles acquaintances, known as Khallam, again later that night at their motel. According to the 9/11 Commission, Khallam asks Abdullah to leave the motel room, so he can talk to Alhazmi and Almihdhar in private. However, Abdullah will later dispute this, saying he is not asked leave the room, but that Alhazmi leaves to make an international phone call from a pay phone. The identity of the person he calls is unknown, but it is possible that he talks to Ahmed al-Hada, an al-Qaeda operative whose safe house is monitored by the US and who Alhazmi sometimes calls from the US (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). Khallam will apparently never be found after 9/11. The FBI will consider the possibility that he is Khallad bin Attash, as there are some reports that bin Attash is in the US at this time and met the mosque's imam, Fahad al Thumairy.

However, this theory will never be confirmed. ([Krikorian and Reza 7/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 216, 514](#)) The next day, Alhazmi, Abdullah and an unknown man make a casing video at Los Angeles Airport (see [June 10, 2000](#)). It is possible that the third man is Khallam.

June 10, 2000: Almihdhar Flies from San Diego to Germany; Return Date Unclear



Khalid Almihdhar. [*Source: FBI*]/Hijacker Khalid Almihdhar flies from San Diego to Frankfurt, Germany. ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#)) He is accompanied to the airport by another hijacker, Nawaf Alhazmi, and an associate (see [June 10, 2000](#)). Authorities later believe that Almihdhar visits his cousin-in-law Ramzi Bin al-Shibh and other al-Qaeda members in bin al-Shibh's cell. Since the CIA fails to notify Germany about its suspicions of Almihdhar and bin al-Shibh, both of whom were seen attending the al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia in January, German police fail to monitor them and another chance to uncover the 9/11 plot is missed. ([Schrom 10/1/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#)) FBI Director Mueller and the congressional inquiry into 9/11 will claim that Almihdhar does not return to the US for over a year ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#)), although it is possible that Almihdhar does return before then. For instance, there are indications Almihdhar attends a flight school in Arizona in early 2001. ([Wagner and Zoellner 9/28/2001](#))

June 10, 2000: 9/11 Hijacker and Associates Case Los Angeles Airport

Hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi and one of his associates, Mohdar Abdullah, go to Los Angeles airport with hijacker Khalid Almihdhar, who is returning to the Middle East via Germany (see [June 10, 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 222](#)) Together with a third man, Alhazmi and Abdullah shoot videocamera footage there. They appear to be scouting out the airport and record secretly near the security area. The identity of the third man is not known, but he may be Khallam, an associate of Alhazmi and Almihdhar's who they met the day before (see [June 9, 2000](#)). Al-Qaeda had plotted to bomb Los Angeles Airport not long before (see [December 14, 1999](#)). The tapes, which are not found until Abdullah is

deported, will cause the FBI to re-start their investigation of him in 2006. ([Myers 9/8/2004](#); [US District Court, Southern District of California 10/29/2004](#).)

Summer 2000-September 11, 2001: Illegal FBI Activity Leads to Suspension of Surveillance of Al-Qaeda Suspects in US



FISA court judge Royce Lamberth was angry with the FBI over misleading statements made in FISA wiretap applications. [Source: Public domain] While monitoring foreign terrorists in the US, the FBI listens to calls made by suspects as a part of an operation called Catcher's Mitt, which is curtailed at this time due to misleading statements by FBI agents. It is never revealed who the targets of the FBI's surveillance are under this operation, but below are some of the terrorism suspects under investigation in the US at the time:

- Imran Mandhai, Shuyeb Mossa Jokhan and Adnan El Shukrijumah in Florida. They are plotting a series of attacks there, but Mandhai and Jokhan are brought in for questioning by the FBI and surveillance of them stops in late spring (see [November 2000-Spring 2002](#) and [May 2, 2001](#));
- Another Florida cell connected to Blind Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. The FBI has been investigating it since 1993 (see [October 1993-November 2001](#));
- Al-Qaeda operatives in Denver (see [March 2000](#));
- A Boston-based al-Qaeda cell involving Nabil al-Marabh and Raed Hijazi. Cell members provide funding to terrorists, fight abroad, and are involved in document forging (see [January 2001](#), [Spring 2001](#), and [Early September 2001](#));
- Fourteen of the hijackers' associates the FBI investigates before 9/11. The FBI is still investigating four of these people while the hijackers associate with them; ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 169](#).)
- Hamas operatives such as Mohammed Salah in Chicago. Salah invests money in the US and sends it to the occupied territories to fund attacks (see [June 9, 1998](#)).

When problems are found with the applications for the wiretap warrants, an investigation is launched (see [Summer-October 2000](#)), and new requirements for warrant applications are put in place (see [October 2000](#)). From this time well into 2001, the FBI is forced to shut down wiretaps of al-Qaeda-related suspects connected to the 1998 US embassy bombings and Hamas (see [March 2001](#) and [April 2001](#)). One source familiar with the case says that about 10 to 20 al-Qaeda related wiretaps have to be shut down and it

becomes more difficult to get permission for new FISA wiretaps. Newsweek notes, “The effect [is] to stymie terror surveillance at exactly the moment it was needed most: requests from both Phoenix [with the Ken Williams memo (see [July 10, 2001](#))] and Minneapolis [with Zacarias Moussaoui’s arrest] for wiretaps [will be] turned down [by FBI superiors],” (see [August 21, 2001](#) and [August 28, 2001](#)). ([Hirsh and Isikoff 5/27/2002](#)) Robert Wright is an FBI agent who led the Vulgar Betrayal investigation looking into allegations that Saudi businessman Yassin al-Qadi helped finance the embassy bombings, and other matters. In late 2002, he will claim to discover evidence that some of the FBI intelligence agents who stalled and obstructed his investigation were the same FBI agents who misrepresented the FISA petitions. ([Judicial Watch 9/11/2002](#))

(Mid-June-Mid-July 2000): Almihdhar Stays in Yemen House Monitored by US Intelligence

When hijacker Khalid Almihdhar leaves the US in June (see [June 10, 2000](#)), he flies to Frankfurt, Germany, and then to Oman in the Middle East. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#).) From there he returns to his family’s home in Sana’a, Yemen. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 237](#)) His wife and children live at an al-Qaeda communications hub that is run by his father in law, Ahmed al-Hada. The hub is being monitored by the NSA and CIA. Phone calls to and from the hub, including ones made by Almihdhar and other hijackers, are intercepted, rooms in the building are bugged, and spy satellites record visitors (see [Late August 1998](#), [Late 1998-Early 2002](#), and [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). Based on information gained from monitoring this house, the CIA and local intelligence services mounted a major operation against Almihdhar, other hijackers, and several more al-Qaeda operatives in December 1999 and January 2000, when they were followed around the Middle East and South Asia and monitored during an al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see [December 29, 1999](#), [January 2-5, 2000](#), and January 5-8, 2000). So presumably US intelligence should have been aware of this visit to the hub and who Almihdhar was, but what exactly was known and who may have known it has not been made public.

June 13-September 25, 2000: Hijackers Receive Money from Germany

PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS A COMPLETER EN CARACTÈRES D'IMPRIMERIE BITTE IN DRUCKBUCHSTABEN AUSFÜLLEN		
Destination: Country Bestimmungsort: Land	USA	City Ort
Sender's name Name des Absenders		NEW YORK
RAMZI MOHAMMED BINALSHIBH		
Address: Address / Adresse		EMIL-ANDERSEN-STR. 5, HAMBURG
Post Code / Code postal / PLZ		22073 21. 322
Telephone number / Numéro de téléphone / Telephonnummer		
(Home) (domicile) / (Privat)	(Work) (bureau) / (Büro)	
Receiver's Name Nom et nom de famille / Name des Empfängers		
MARWAN AL SHEHHI LEKRAB		
Amount to be sent / Montant à envoyer / Zu überweisender Betrag		3.862,78
(In words and figures) / (En chiffres et en toutes lettres) / (In Worten und Ziffern)		

Document for wire transfer on June

21, 2000 [Source: *US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division*] Plot facilitator Ramzi bin al-Shibh wires over \$10,000 from Germany to hijacker pilot Marwan Alshehhi in the US. The money is apparently withdrawn from Alshehhi's Dresdner bank account, to which bin al-Shibh has access.

- On June 13, he wires \$2,708.33 to Alshehhi in New York;
- On June 21, he wires \$1,803.19 to Alshehhi in New York;
- On July 25, he wires \$1,760.15 to Alshehhi in Florida;
- On September 25, he wires \$4,118.14 to Alshehhi in Florida; ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 134-5](#)); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/3/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/3/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/3/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/3/2006](#)) Bin al-Shibh also sends money to Zacarias Moussaoui in the US (see [July 29, 2001-August 3, 2001](#)). The hijackers also receive various other transfers (see [June 2000-August 2001](#)).

June 2000-August 2001: Hijackers Receive Money from Abroad

The 9/11 hijackers living in Florida receive money from abroad via wire and bank transfers. After 9/11 the FBI and the 9/11 Commission will focus on just two sets of wire transfers, one totaling approximately \$10,000 from hijacker associate Ramzi bin al-Shibh (see [June 13-September 25, 2000](#)) and another totaling about \$110,000 from a plot facilitator later identified as Ali Abdul Aziz Ali (see [June 29, 2000-September 18, 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 134-5](#)) Some reports indicate that these are not the only wire transfers and that the hijackers receive extra money that is not subsequently mentioned by the 9/11 Commission (see [July-August 2000](#), [May 2001](#), [Early August-August 22, 2001](#), [Summer 2001 and before](#), and [Late August-Early September 2001](#)). The hijackers also receive money by other means (see [January 15, 2000-August 2001](#)).

Summer 2000: NSA Continues to Intercept Calls between Hijackers and Yemen Communications Hub

After hijacker Khaled Almihdhar returns to the Middle East (see [June 10, 2000](#) and [\(Mid-June-Mid-July 2000\)](#)), the NSA continues to intercept his telephone calls to and from an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana'a, Yemen, where his wife and children live. US intelligence understands that this is one of the most important al-Qaeda hot spots, and has been closely monitoring it since at least late 1998 (see [August 5-25, 1998](#) and [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). It also intercepts calls between hijacker Salem Alhazmi and the hub, as well as conversations between his brother, hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi, in the US and the hub (see [Mid-October 2000-Summer 2001](#)). (US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 157^٥; 9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 222; Wright 2006, pp. 343) The NSA had previously intercepted calls made by the hijackers to and from the communications hub, both when they were in the US and outside it (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)).

June 27-28, 2000: Ziad Jarrah Enters the US; Begins Flight Training in Violation of Immigration Status



Florida Flight Training Center. [Source: *FBI*] Ziad Jarrah, the alleged pilot of Flight 93, arrives in the US, flying from Munich to Atlanta, Georgia (or Newark, according to the 9/11 Commission). He enters on a tourist visa, issued in Berlin on May 25, 2000. He then flies to Venice, Florida, where he has already arranged to take full-time lessons at the Florida Flight Training Center (FFTC). However, he never files an application to change his status from tourist to student. According to the 9/11 Commission, “This failure to maintain a legal immigration status provided a solid legal basis to deny him entry on each of the six subsequent occasions in which he reentered the United States. But because there was no student tracking system in place and because neither Jarrah nor the school complied with the law’s notification requirements, immigration inspectors could not know he was out of status.” Jarrah begins the private pilot program at FFTC on June 28, aiming to get a multi-engine license. His training will cost \$16,000, which his parents wire to him. ([Longman 2002, pp. 90-91](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 224](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 11-12](#)^٥) FFTC is just down the road from Huffman Aviation, a flight school where Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi soon begin training. ([Corte 9/9/2002](#))

June 28-July 7, 2000: Hijackers Open Florida Bank Accounts

The hijackers open bank accounts in Florida around the time they start flight training there (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)). Ziad Jarrah opens an account at the First Florida National Bank with a \$2,000 deposit and, nine days later, hijacker pilots Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi open a joint account at SunTrust Bank in Venice, Florida. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 139](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) It is unclear whether more accounts are opened at this time, although the New York Times will also say that an account is opened with the Century Bank and that money is paid into this account from abroad (see [July-August 2000](#)). ([van Natta, and Zernike 11/4/2001](#)) It will initially be claimed that the hijackers provide fake and randomly made up social security numbers. ([Risen 7/10/2002](#)) However, the 9/11 Commission will say that they did not present or give false numbers, but that in some cases bank employees completed the social security number field with a hijacker's date of birth or visa control number. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 140](#)) Reports of the number of accounts the hijackers open in the US vary over time (see [Late-September 2001-August 2004](#)), although the hijackers are known to have had several other bank accounts (see [February 4, 2000](#), [Early September 2000](#), [May 1-July 18, 2001](#) and [June 27-August 23, 2001](#)).

(June 28-December 2000): Ziad Jarrah Trains at Venice, Florida Flight School



Ziad Jarrah, with dark blue shirt and sunglasses, leaning against an airplane. He is surrounded by his fellow flight school students. [*Source: History Channel*] Ziad Jarrah attends the Florida Flight Training Center (FFTC) in Venice, where he takes lessons in a Cessna 152. According to the FBI, he finishes his training there in December 2000. ([Der Spiegel 2002, pp. 12](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) The school's owner, Arne Kruithof, says Jarrah is enrolled there until January 15, 2001. ([Longman 2002, pp. 91](#)) The 9/11 Commission says he studies there until January 31, 2001. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 12](#)) However, these latter two accounts conflict with other reports, according to which Jarrah is elsewhere at the same time (see [Late November 2000-January 30, 2001](#)). According to the 9/11 Commission, in early August, just weeks after commencing training, Jarrah gains a single-engine private pilot certificate. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 224](#)) However, Arne Kruithof says that

although Jarrah eventually receives his private pilot license and instrument rating, he does not do so while at FFTC. Kruithof later claims that Jarrah becomes an “average” pilot, saying, “We had to do more to get him ready than others. His flight skills seemed to be a little bit out there.” ([Longman 2002, pp. 91](#)) At the same time as Jarrah is in Venice, Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi attend Huffman Aviation, which is just up the road from FFTC. ([Corte 9/9/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 224](#)) Yet no reports describe him ever meeting them while they are so near to each other. Ramzi bin al-Shibh, who shared an apartment in Hamburg with Mohamed Atta (see [November 1, 1998-February 2001](#)), is supposed to join Jarrah at FFTC, wiring the school a \$2,200 deposit in August 2000, but is repeatedly unable to obtain the necessary US visa (see [May 17, 2000-May 2001](#)). ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 225](#))

(June 28-December 2000): Ziad Jarrah Lives in Venice, Florida



Ziad Jarrah flying in Florida in 2000.

[Source: *Der Spiegel*] After entering the United States (see [June 27-28, 2000](#)), Ziad Jarrah lives in Venice, Florida, while taking flying lessons (see [June 28-December 2000](#)). According to the 9/11 Commission, he stays with some of his flight school’s instructors. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 224](#)) Other accounts describe him “spending most of the time sleeping on a sofa in the apartment the other students shared,” or simply as rooming “with three others.” ([Longman 2002, pp. 91](#); [Corbin 2003, pp. 155](#)) For six weeks, Thorsten Biermann, a 23-year-old fellow flight student from Germany, rooms with Jarrah. According to Biermann, Jarrah keeps another apartment in Venice, but does not sleep in it. ([Williams 10/23/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 91-92](#)) As well as paying for his flying lessons, Jarrah’s family in the Lebanon regularly wires him generous pocket money. He buys himself a car, which he lets other flight students borrow, and often cooks for his flatmates. During his time in the US, Jarrah maintains close contact with his girlfriend Aysel Senguen who is in Germany, phoning her hundreds of times and frequently e-mailing her. ([Corbin 2003, pp. 155](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 224-225](#))

June 29, 2000-September 18, 2000: Hijackers Receive \$100,000 in Funding from United Arab Emirates Location



Ali Abdul Aziz Ali. [Source: FBI] Hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi receive a series of five money transfers from the United Arab Emirates:

- On June 29, \$5,000 is wired by a person using the alias “Isam Mansur” to a Western Union facility in New York, where Alshehhi picks it up;
- On July 18, \$10,000 is wired to Atta and Alshehhi’s joint account at SunTrust from the UAE Exchange Centre in Bur Dubai by a person using the alias “Isam Mansur”;
- On August 5, \$9,500 is wired to the joint account from the UAE Exchange Centre by a person using the alias “Isam Mansour”;
- On August 29, \$20,000 is wired to the joint account from the UAE Exchange Centre by a person using the alias “Mr. Ali”;
- On September 17 \$70,000 is wired to the joint account from the UAE Exchange Centre by a person using the alias “Hani (Fawar Trading).” Some sources suggest a suspicious activity report was generated about this transaction (see [\(Late September 2000\)](#)). ([Willman 11/29/2001](#); [Beith 12/2/2001](#); [Eichenwald 12/10/2001](#); [MSNBC 12/11/2001](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 134-5](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) Hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar previously received a transfer from the United Arab Emirates from a “Mr. Ali” (see [April 16-18, 2000](#)). The 9/11 Commission say this money was sent by Ali Abdul Aziz Ali (a.k.a. Ammar al-Baluchi), a nephew of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 133-5](#)) Although he denies making the \$5,000 transfer to Nawaf Alhazmi, Ali will admit sending Alshehhi these amounts and say that the money was Alshehhi’s (see [March 30, 2007](#)). He also admits receiving 16 phone calls from Alshehhi around this time. ([US Department of Defense 4/12/2007](#)) The hijackers may also receive another \$100,000 around this time (see [\(July-August 2000\)](#)). It is suggested that Saeed Sheikh, who wires the hijackers money in the summer of 2001 (see [Early August 2001](#)), may be involved in one or both of these transfers. For example, French author Bernard-Henri Levy later claims to have evidence from sources inside both Indian and US governments of phone calls between Sheikh and Mahmood Ahmed, head of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence agency, during this same time period, and he sees a connection between the timing of the calls

and the money transfers (see [Summer 2000](#)). ([Swami 10/13/2001](#); [Kak 10/18/2001](#); [Levy 2003, pp. 320-324](#))

Mid 2000: Jemaah Islamiyah Passes Casing Video to Al-Qaeda Leadership to Get Approval for Attack

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) prepares to attack US military personnel in Singapore, but consults al-Qaeda's top leaders and passes them a casing video before it begins carrying out the plot. The initial plan is to attack a bus that transports US military personnel from a metro station in Singapore and is devised by a JI operative called Faiz abu Baker Bafana. However, when the proposal is shown to JI leader Hambali, Bafana is told that he needs the approval of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) for the operation and that he has to travel to Afghanistan to get it. Bafana cannot find KSM, so he talks to Mohammed Atef, who promises to provide funding and suicide bombers, as long as JI contributes explosives and transport. KSM subsequently sends Bafana money for the operation. 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar apparently visits Malaysia twice to move the plot forward (see [October 2000](#) and [June 2001](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#)) JI sends Atef a casing video, which will be found after the US invasion of Afghanistan. Even though the US sits on the video for a month, Singapore is able to roll the plot up based on information it obtains on its own (see [November 15-Late December 2001](#)).

Mid-2000-December 9, 2000: British Intelligence Monitors Moussaoui; Records Him Talking to Future Shoe Bomber Richard Reid



Richard Reid. [Source: *Plymouth County*

Jail]/MI5, Britain's domestic intelligence agency, has Zacarias Moussaoui under surveillance. The French government had asked MI5 to monitor him in 1999 (see [1999](#)), but it has not been confirmed if this is in response to that request. It is not clear when the surveillance begins, but the Observer reports that it lasts for "months" and ends when Moussaoui leaves Britain on December 9, 2000, to attend an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan. The extent of Moussaoui's surveillance is not publicly known; the only reported detail is that some phone calls between Moussaoui and Richard Reid are intercepted. Reid will later be convicted for attempting to blow up a passenger airliner with a bomb in his shoe (see [December 22, 2001](#)). MI5 records the conversations between them made inside Britain. Opposition politicians in Britain will later criticize MI5 for not realizing Reid's al-Qaeda ties between 9/11 and Reid's shoe bomb plot over two months later. ([Walsh, Ahmed, and Harris 12/30/2001](#); [Champion and Tomsho 12/31/2001](#)) Moussaoui appears to be in contact with other al-Qaeda figures during this time. For instance, he travels to Yazid Sufaat's house in Malaysia in September 2000 and again in October 2000 (see [September-October 2000](#)), and Ramzi bin al-Shibh stays in London for a week in early December 2000 and meets with Moussaoui (see [October 2000-February 2001](#)). ([Burrell, Gumbel, and Sengupta 12/11/2001](#)) However, it is not known if such contacts are monitored as well.

Before July 2000: Hijackers Reportedly Living and Attending Flight School in Punta Gorda, Contradicting Official Account



Sheriff William E. Clement [*Source: Charlotte County Sheriff's Office*] In the weeks after 9/11, Sheriff William E. Clement will say he believes some of the 9/11 hijackers, including Mohamed Atta, resided in the area of Punta Gorda, Florida, and attended a flight school at Charlotte County Airport. Clement will say that some local businesses recognize Atta from pictures shown after 9/11, and say he may have used an alias. According to Clement, "It looks like some of these terrorists were here and then went to Venice." ([Arnold 9/21/2001](#)) Along with Marwan Alshehhi, Atta moves to Venice, about 30 miles north of Punta Gorda, at the beginning of July (see [July 1-3, 2000](#)). Yet, according to official accounts, Atta first enters the US on June 3, 2000, and, along with Alshehhi, remains in the New York area until the start of July (see [June 2000](#)).

July 2000: Potential Informant Ignored by Australian and US Authorities



Jack Roche. [*Source: Agence France-Presse/ Getty Images*] Jack Roche, an Australian Caucasian Muslim, tries to inform on al-Qaeda for Australia or the US, but is ignored. In April, Roche returned from a trip to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Malaysia, where he took an explosives training course and met with bin Laden, Mohammed Atef, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, and other top al-Qaeda leaders. In Pakistan, Mohammed discussed attacking US jets in Australia and gave Roche money to start an al-Qaeda cell in Australia. Roche also met Hambali in Malaysia and was given more money there. Early this month, he tries to call the US embassy in Australia, but they ignore him. He then tries to contact The Australian intelligence agency several times, but they too ignore him. In September 2000, his housemate also tries to contact Australian intelligence about what he has learned from Roche but his call is ignored as well.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard later acknowledges that authorities made a “very serious mistake” in ignoring Roche, though he also downplays the importance of Roche’s information. Roche is later sentenced to nine years in prison for conspiring with al-Qaeda to blow up an Israeli embassy. ([McGeown 6/1/2004](#); [Paddock 6/7/2004](#))

July 2000: Taliban Bans Poppy Growing, but Benefits from Resulting Price Rise



A sign put up by the Taliban reads: “The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan not only engenders illegal things forbidden but launches effective struggles against illicit drugs as these drugs are a great threat to personality, wisdom, life, health, economy, and morality.” [Source: *BBC*] The Taliban bans poppy growing in Afghanistan. As a result, the opium yield drops dramatically in 2001, from 3,656 tons to 185 tons. Of that, 83 percent is from Northern Alliance-controlled lands. This is supposedly done in response to Western pressure. ([Harris 11/25/2001](#); [Hopkins and Taylor 2/21/2002](#); [Reuters 3/3/2002](#)) However, United Nations officials later suggest that the ban was actually used by the Taliban to drive up their drug profits. According to these officials, for several years, the Taliban had stockpiled over half of their annual opium harvest in a series of warehouses around the country. When the ban begins, a kilogram of opium sells for around \$44 wholesale, but one year later the price rises to \$400. ([Leinwand, Locy, and Walt 10/16/2001](#)) Time magazine will later suggest that the ban was the idea of al-Qaeda’s financial experts working with Haji Juma Khan (see [December 2001 and After](#)) and other alleged top Afghan drug traffickers. The ban “meant huge profits for the Taliban and their trafficker friends who were sitting on large stockpiles when prices soared.” ([McGirk 8/2/2004](#))

July 2000: Candidate Bush Meets with Suspected Terrorism Supporters



Bush, center, and some of the Muslim activists meeting with him in Austin, Texas. Alamoudi is standing over his left shoulder. *[Source: CAIR]*/Presidential candidate George W. Bush meets with Abdurahman Alamoudi and other suspected Islamic militant sympathizers. US intelligence has suspected Alamoudi of ties to bin Laden and other militant figures since 1994 (see [Shortly After March 1994](#)), but he has nonetheless grown in importance as a Muslim political activist. It will later be reported that Alamoudi “sought to secure the support first of the Clinton administration in seeking to repeal certain antiterrorist laws, but when Bill Clinton failed to deliver, Alamoudi defected to Bush, then governor of Texas.” ([Waller 10/23/2003](#)) Alamoudi and other Muslim leaders meet with Bush in Austin, Texas, in July 2000, just one month before the Republican presidential convention. They offer their support to his presidential campaign in exchange for his commitment to repeal certain antiterrorist laws. A photo of the meeting shows Bush with Alamoudi, several open supporters of the Hamas and Hezbollah terrorist groups, the former head of the Pakistani Communist Party, and other unknown individuals. One photo likely taken at this meeting shows Bush’s political adviser Karl Rove there as well (see [June 22, 2001](#)). Bush and Rove also met with Alamoudi in 1999 (see [1999](#)). ([Waller 10/23/2003](#)) Some of Alamoudi’s radical connections are publicly known at the time, and in October 2000 the Bush campaign will return a \$1,000 contribution from Alamoudi shortly after Hillary Clinton returned an Alamoudi contribution to her senate race. ([Hickey 10/29/2001](#)) Muslim activists like Alamoudi are hinging their political support on the repeal of the use of secret evidence in terrorism cases. The Bush campaign had already been strongly pushing for support from Muslim American voters (see [1998-September 2001](#) and [March 12, 2000](#)) and such ties continue to grow. During the second presidential debate on October 11, 2000, Bush will come out strongly for repealing the use of secret evidence, saying, “Arab-Americans are racially profiled in what’s called secret evidence. People are stopped, and we got to do something about that.” ([Unger 3/15/2004](#)) Later in 2000, Alamoudi will meet with two suspected associates of the 9/11 hijackers (see [October-November 2000](#)), and in early 2001 he will attend a public conference attempting to unite militant groups, including al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad, to wage holy war against the US and Israel (see [Late January 2001](#)). Nonetheless, Bush will appear with Alamoudi several times even after 9/11 (see [September 14-26, 2001](#)). Alamoudi will be sentenced to a long prison term in 2004 (see [October 15, 2004](#)).

July 2000: CIA Learns Al-Qaeda Related Group Plans to Attack US Naval Ship

A CIA informant reveals that a militant group based in Sidon, Lebanon that is affiliated with bin Laden is planning to attack a US naval ship somewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean, probably off the coast of Lebanon. ([Miniter 2003, pp. 215](#)) This is a probable reference to Asbat al-Ansar, the only group that fits such a profile. ([US Department of State 5/21/2002](#)) The CIA and Defense Department discount the threat, pointing out the US is not deploying ships near Lebanon. However, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke will later say he was alarmed by the warning because it showed increased ambitions for al-Qaeda in going after hardened military targets. ([Miniter 2003, pp. 215](#)) Al-Qaeda will successfully bomb the USS *Cole* several months later in Yemen (see [October 12, 2000](#)).

July-December 2000: Some at Flight School Find Ziad Jarrah an Unlikely Terrorist, Though Accounts Conflict



Arne Kruithof. [*Source: History Channel*] According to some accounts, while he is taking lessons at Florida Flight Training Center (FFTC) in Venice, alleged hijacker Ziad Jarrah appears an unlikely terrorist. Arne Kruithof, the school’s owner, says he is “not just nice, but he had qualities you look for in a dear friend, someone you trust.” ([Longman 2002, pp. 92](#)) He says Jarrah “would even offer to put out the trash cans at night, which no one else did,” and later remembers him “bringing me a six-pack of beer at home when I hurt my knee one time and sitting for hours on my sofa chatting.” Unlike other Middle Eastern students, Jarrah never seems uncomfortable or disapproving of the school’s receptionists, who wear skimpy skirts and tiny t-shirts. ([Corbin 2003, pp. 155](#)) Furthermore, Jarrah drinks alcohol, having one or two beers, “but not three.” According to Kruithof, who later insists Jarrah’s demeanor was “not faked,” the school’s “entire staff does not believe that he had bad intentions,” and Jarrah “was a friend to all of us.” However, fellow flight student Thorsten Biermann, who rooms with Jarrah for six weeks, describes him as “introverted, a loner, he kept his distance.” Biermann will describe one occasion flying with Jarrah on a round-trip to Fort Lauderdale where, on the return, Jarrah insisted on both flying and manning the radio, and twice ignored Biermann’s pleas to refuel when the weather worsened. Biermann says, “I decided I did not want to fly with him anymore, and everyone I knew who flew with him felt the same way. It was as if he needed control.” Biermann also says Jarrah avoids pork and, contrary to what Arne Kruithof claims, does not drink alcohol, even when they

go to bars together. ([Golden, Mos, and Yardley 9/23/2001](#); [Williams 10/23/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 91-92](#))

(July-August 2000): Money Paid into Atta Account from Abroad?

According to some media reports, Mohamed Atta receives around \$100,000 in wire transfers from abroad around this time, as does Marwan Alshehhi. The New York Times will write: “The money for the operation began arriving... in the summer of 2000. Mr. Atta received slightly more than \$100,000, Mr. Shehhi just less than that amount.” ([van Natta, and Zernike 11/4/2001](#); [Eichenwald 12/10/2001](#)) The Financial Times will say Mohamed Atta “received \$109,440 in four wire transfers from the United Arab Emirates,” and Marwan Alshehhi “also received wire transfers totaling \$100,000 over several months.” ([Griffith, Spiegel, and Williamson 11/29/2001](#)) PBS comments: “The FBI now says Atta and Al-Shehhi were being fed streams of money from abroad, eventually more than \$100,000 each.” ([PBS 1/17/2002](#)) However, the 9/11 Commission will only mention an amount of approximately \$100,000 that is paid into a joint account of which Alshehhi is the main holder (see [June 29, 2000-September 18, 2000](#)). Some other transfers to the hijackers are also reported, but not confirmed on-the-record by US authorities (see [June 2000-August 2001](#)).

Mid-2000: DEA Arranges for Source Knowledgeable about Bin Laden to Meet FBI

The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) arranges for the FBI assistant legal attachÉ in Islamabad, Pakistan, to meet a source, later known in a New York Times article as “Omar,” that has substantial information on Osama bin Laden, his operatives and operations. Omar will go on to play a key role in the investigation of the USS *Cole* bombing, as he will identify Khallad bin Attash, one of the masterminds behind the attack (see [November 22-December 16, 2000](#) and [January 4, 2001](#)). However, because the assistant legal attachÉ cannot speak the source’s language and due to the value of the information Omar has, the CIA is asked to help and he is handled as a joint source. The CIA attempts to prevent the source from working on criminal investigations for the FBI, fearing he may be exposed in court, but these attempts are not successful. ([Johnston and Risen 4/11/2004](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 264-5](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#))

July 1-3, 2000: Atta and Alshehhi Move to Florida and Enroll in Pilot Classes



Rudi Dekkers. [Source: Peter Muhly / Agence France-Presse] Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi move to Venice, Florida. ([Chicago Sun-Times 9/16/2001](#)) They arrive at Huffman Aviation, a flying school at Venice Municipal Airport, on July 1, according to the school's owner Rudi Dekkers, inquiring about taking lessons there. They are reported to also check out a flight school in Oklahoma at the beginning of this month (see [July 2-3, 2000](#)). They then return to Huffman—on July 3 according the Dekkers—and begin flight instruction, subsequently enrolling in the school's Accelerated Pilot Program. When they register at the school, Atta and Alshehhi use their real names. Dekkers later states that they say they are unhappy with a flying school they attended up north, though he gives no details about the identity of this school. It will later be claimed that Atta and Alshehhi attended a flight school in Punta Gorda before moving to Venice (see [Before July 2000](#)). However, Punta Gorda is south, not north, of Venice. Paying by check, Atta will give \$18,703.50 in total for his lessons, while Alshehhi gives \$20,917.63. The money necessary to cover their training is sent to them in a series of transfers from Dubai (see [June 29, 2000-September 18, 2000](#)). ([Fainaru and Whoriskey 9/19/2001](#); [Goldstein 9/30/2001](#); [US Congress 3/19/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 224](#); [Martin 7/25/2004](#)) Huffman's owner Rudi Dekkers has what the St. Petersburg Times will describe as "a long history of troubled businesses, run-ins with the Federal Aviation Administration and numerous lawsuits." ([Martin 7/25/2004](#)) After 9/11 he will face even more lawsuits (see [August 23, 2001-April 2004](#)).

July 2-3, 2000: Atta and Alshehhi Visit Oklahoma Flight School Later Attended by Zacarias Moussaoui



Brenda Keene. [Source: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi, who are looking for a flight school to attend, visit the Airman Flight School in Norman, Oklahoma, to evaluate its training

program. Atta had e-mailed the school in April 2000, requesting information. On June 4, 2000, the day after he arrived in the US, he'd received a prepaid cellular telephone from Voicestream Wireless, which he'd purchased actually listing Airman Flight School as his address. The pair stay the night of July 2 at the school's dormitory in the nearby Sooner Inn, as is shown by documents, including the hotel's guest list. The next day they take a tour of the school, reportedly lasting "maybe an hour," before deciding not to attend. ([Cullen and Ranalli 9/18/2001](#); [Fainaru and Whoriskey 9/19/2001](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [McKenna 3/16/2004](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/7/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/7/2006](#)) Several months later, al-Qaeda conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui will attend Airman, and other Islamic extremists have previously attended the school (see [February 23-June 2001](#)). Shohaib Nazir Kassam, a student at the time of Atta and Alshehhi's visit, will recall bumping into them when they are being given their tour. Kassam subsequently becomes a flight instructor and is Zacarias Moussaoui's primary instructor at Airman. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/7/2006](#)) Brenda Keene, Airman's admissions director who gives Atta and Alshehhi their tour, says during the 2006 Moussaoui trial that she does not recall doing so. But, she adds, "After 9/11 and [Atta's] picture was everywhere, he's got a very distinctive face, and then I do remember seeing him at the school. I don't recall anything in specific about... the tour, but just remembered his face." ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#)) Atta and Alshehhi subsequently start lessons at Huffman Aviation in Venice, Florida (see [July 1-3, 2000](#)). In August 2001, they will allegedly be witnessed at an Oklahoma City hotel together with Zacarias Moussaoui (see [August 1, 2001](#)).

Early July 2000: Atta and Alshehhi Stay at Home of Flight School Bookkeeper, but Evicted after a Week



Charles Voss. [*Source: Sarasota Herald-Tribune*] Having arrived in Venice, Florida to take flying lessons, Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi rent a room in the south Venice home of Charles Voss, a bookkeeper at Huffman Aviation, and his wife Drucilla. They arrive in a rental car, but later in the week buy a red 1989 Pontiac, which they register to the Voss's address. They are found to be unpleasant and messy guests, and after a week are asked to leave. Drucilla Voss later says, "We never talked. They ate all their meals out and really spent all their time in their room." She describes them as "very sarcastic," and says, "They gave me the impression they didn't care much

for women.” ([Arnold 9/13/2001](#); [Arnold 9/13/2001](#); [Chicago Sun-Times 9/16/2001](#); [Freedberg 9/27/2001](#); [Wall Street Journal 10/16/2001](#))

July 6-December 19, 2000: Atta and Alshehhi Attend Huffman Aviation Flight School



Huffman Aviation logo. [Source: *Huffman Aviation*] Marwan Alshehhi and Mohamed Atta attend Huffman Aviation, a flight school in Venice, Florida and enroll in its Accelerated Pilot Program, aiming to get commercial pilot licenses. According to the school’s owner Rudi Dekkers, Atta already has a private pilot’s license—though where and how he gained this is unstated—and wants to obtain a commercial license. Alshehhi wants to obtain both licenses. They begin their training in a Cessna 172 with instructor Thierry Leklou. According to the 9/11 Commission, by the end of July both are already taking solo flights. However, in August Leklou complains to Chief Flight Instructor Daniel Pursell that the two are failing to follow instructions and have bad attitudes. Pursell considers expelling them, but, according to Dekkers, after a warning they improve their behavior and continue without further problems. ([US Congress 3/19/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 224, 227](#); [Martin 7/25/2004](#)) Yet Pursell later testifies that the school’s instructors breathed “a collective sigh of relief” when the two left Huffman. ([Associated Press 3/23/2006](#)) Furthermore, reportedly, “Atta and al-Shehhi would rent a plane from Huffman and be gone for days at a time, Pursell said. They could fly to 20 airports across the state and never be noticed.” ([Martin 7/25/2004](#)) Mark Mikarts, another of the school’s instructors, says Atta has “big problems with authority,” and doesn’t take instructions well. ([Mollenkamp et al. 9/17/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 17](#).) Susan Hall, Huffman’s office manager, refers to Atta as “the little terrorist” while he is at the school, because, she later says, “I just didn’t like the aura he gave off.” ([Reuters 3/22/2006](#)) In the middle of their training, in late September, Atta and Alshehhi enroll at another flight school, in nearby Sarasota. However, they are soon asked to leave it, and return to Huffman in October (see [Late September-Early October 2000](#)). While Atta and Alshehhi attend Huffman Aviation, another of the alleged hijackers, Ziad Jarrah, is taking lessons at a flight school just down the road from them (see [June 28-December 2000](#)). Yet no reports describe the three ever meeting up while they are all in Venice. According to official accounts, Atta and Alshehhi complete their schooling at Huffman on December 19, 2000, when they take their commercial pilot license tests. Rudi Dekkers says that after returning to the school to settle their bills, they leave and are never seen there again. ([US Congress 3/19/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 17](#).) Yet Daniel Pursell will later allege that early in 2001 the two are still connected with Huffman, being reported to the school for practicing nighttime landings in one of its planes at another Florida airport (see [Between January and February 2001](#)).

Mid-July 2000: Almihdhar Reports to KSM; Claims He and Alhazmi Were Followed to US

According to a post-9/11 confession obtained from 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM), al-Qaeda operative Khallad bin Attash persuades hijacker Khalid Almihdhar to return to Afghanistan to meet with KSM. At the meeting, Almihdhar complains about life in the US but says he is confident he will be able to obtain another visa, as he left the US before his first one expired. He also tells Mohammed about the problems he and Nawaf Alhazmi have had enrolling in language schools and says they believe they were monitored when they flew from Bangkok to the US in January 2000 (see [January 15, 2000](#)) (it is not clear who may have monitored them). Supposedly, KSM is angry that Almihdhar left the US without permission and wishes to exclude Almihdhar from the mission, but bin Laden himself intervenes and keeps Almihdhar involved. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 237, 269](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia 7/31/2006, pp. 20-21](#).) Doubts have been raised about the reliability of KSM's confession, as it was obtained using torture (see [June 16, 2004](#)). According to author Ron Suskind, at one point interrogators even threaten to hurt KSM's children, a seven-year-old boy and a nine-year-old girl, unless he provides more information. ([Suskind 2006, pp. 230](#))

(Mid-July 2000 - Early January 2001): Atta and Alshehhi Live at Sandpiper Apartments, Venice



The Sandpiper Apartments.

[Source: Patrick Durand / Corbis] (click image to enlarge) While attending Huffman Aviation flight school in Venice, Florida, Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi share a two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment with four other Middle Eastern flight school students in unit 26 of the Sandpiper Apartments, near the Venice airport. The apartment they are in is rented by the flight school, and then sublet to its students at a profit. After 9/11, Paula Grapentine, who along with her husband manages the apartments, will remember Atta being her former next-door neighbor. She recalls him being "very unfriendly," and that he "treated women like they were under him." She also recalls "a lot of visitors" at the apartment. As a consequence of the students' unruly behavior, the Grapentines will subsequently stop renting to Huffman Aviation. Vicky Kyser, who owns the apartment complex, says the students smoke a strange tobacco, which smells like

marijuana. Postal carrier Neil Patton also later recalls Atta and Alshehhi living in the apartment, and says Atta may have gone by the name Youseff. Patton stops delivering mail to them at the apartment on January 18, 2001, which he says suggests they moved out seven to ten days earlier. After 9/11, the Charlotte Sun will obtain a written list of names of individuals the FBI is pursuing: Gamil, Rami, Mukadam, Ibrahim and Mogadem. Patton confirms all these having been used by the students at the apartment. ([Arnold 9/14/2001](#); [Arnold and Overbey 9/14/2001](#)) No mention is made of this residence in official accounts, such as the 9/11 Commission Report. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 224-227](#)) Over about the same period as they reportedly live in the Sandpiper Apartments, Atta and Alshehhi rent a house in nearby Nokomis, although their next-door neighbor there never sees them at the house (see [\(Mid-July - December 2000\)](#)).

(Mid-July - December 2000): Atta and Alshehhi Rent House But Are Seldom Seen There



Steve Kona. [*Source: Sarasota Herald Tribune*] While attending Huffman Aviation flight school in Venice, Florida, alleged 9/11 hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi move into a small, furnished two-bedroom house in Nokomis, about ten miles north of Venice, which they rent for \$550 per month. Noting that Atta and Alshehhi also drive a ten-year-old car, Steve Kona, who owns the house, later says, “This house is nothing extravagant at all... It’s not like they were living in a \$3,000-a-month rental home and driving a Mercedes.” ([Markon et al. 9/20/2001](#); [Freedberg 9/27/2001](#)) Kona says, “Atta I never met.” But he talks to Alshehhi “two or three times because I’d go to mow the grass. He was very friendly.” The pair refuses Kona’s offer of free cable TV, don’t use the house’s air conditioning, even in the middle of summer, and leave the place in spotless condition. Although they rent the house for as long as six months, Jeff Duignan, who lives next door, later says, “I never saw them, and when you don’t see them you don’t worry about them.” ([Wexler et al. 9/14/2001](#); [Morgan and Brinkley-Rogers 9/15/2001](#); [Davis 9/16/2001](#); [Whittle 9/10/2006](#)) This apparent absence could be explained by the fact that, according to several witnesses, over about this same duration they live in an apartment in Venice (see [\(Mid-July 2000 - Early January 2001\)](#)). Atta and Alshehhi were evicted from their previous address, in Venice (see [Early July 2000](#)). When Rudi Dekkers, the owner of Huffman Aviation, testifies before Congress in 2002, he will claim, “After their eviction there was no mention of where they were staying.” ([US Congress 3/19/2002](#)) No explanation is ever given as to why they have two separate

residences at the same time. However, a private consumer database will later reveal that Atta had 12 addresses, including two places where he lived and ten safe houses, so the Nokomis address could possibly be one of these safe houses (see [Mid-September 2001](#)). Interestingly, another of the alleged hijackers, Ziad Jarrah, also has a second residence he never stays at while he attends flight school in Venice (see [June 28-December 2000](#)).

(Mid-July - December 2000): Atta and Alshehhi Frequent Venice Bars and Drink Alcohol



Lizsa Lehman [*Source: Sarasota Herald-Tribune*] While attending flight school in Venice, Florida (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)), Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi regularly visit a couple of local bars. Most nights, after flying classes, they drink beer at the Outlook. They are observed there as being well dressed and well spoken. Atta comes across as cold and unfriendly, and is disapproving of the presence of women servers behind the bar. Bartender Lizsa Lehman will later say that, after the 9/11 attacks, “I remember thinking that [Atta] was capable of everything they had said was done.” In contrast, Alshehhi is “friendly and jovial and... always eager to interact with bartenders and patrons.” Lehman later says, “I, to this day, have trouble seeing [Alshehhi] doing it [i.e., participating in 9/11].” ([Whittle, Laroe, and Allen 9/10/2006](#); [Allen 9/10/2006](#)) Atta and several friends are also regulars at the 44th Aero Squadron bar. The group drinks Bud Light, talks quietly, and stays sober. The bar’s owner, Ken Schortzmann, says Atta has “a fanny pack with a big roll of cash in it,” and comments, “I never had any problems with them.... They... didn’t drink heavily or flirt with the waitresses, like some of the other flight students.” While he regularly goes to these bars during this period, Atta never visits any of the three mosques in Southwest Florida, and avoids contact with local Muslims. ([Thomas and Hosenball 9/24/2001](#); [Davis 9/28/2001](#)) Interestingly, other witnesses later describe Atta as possibly doing drugs as well. The owner of a unit of apartments where Atta reportedly lived with some other Middle Eastern men in late 2000 (see [Mid-July 2000 - Early January 2001](#)) says these men smoked a strange tobacco, which smelled like marijuana. ([Arnold and Overbey 9/14/2001](#)) Atta may also be a heavy smoker, as he is reported to spend his time “chain smoking,” when later living in Coral Springs. ([Sunday Times \(London\) 2/3/2002](#))

July 24, 2000: French Detail Bin Laden Network, Including His Ties to Bin Laden Family and Saudi Government Charity

The French intelligence agency, the DGSE, publishes a 13-page classified report entitled “The Networks of Osama bin Laden.” According to a 2007 article, the report describes the “context, the anecdotal details, and all the strategic aspects relative to al-Qaeda” in “black and white” terms. It mentions a payment of \$4.5 million from the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) to bin Laden. The US will not go after the IIRO even years after 9/11 because of the organization’s close ties to the Saudi government (see [October 12, 2001](#) and [August 3, 2006](#)). The report also doubts Osama bin Laden’s purported estrangement from the bin Laden family: “It seems more and more likely that bin Laden has maintained contacts with certain members of his family, although the family, which directs one of the largest groups of public works in the world, has officially renounced him. One of his brothers apparently plays a role as intermediary in its professional contacts or the monitoring of its business.” French officials will later claim they regularly passed on their intelligence on al-Qaeda to the CIA. ([DasquiÈ 4/15/2007](#))

July 26, 2000: FBI Official Tells Congress the Threat of Terrorism in the US Is Low



Terry Turchie. [*Source: FBI*]Freeh’s FBI Deputy Assistant Director for Counterterrorism Terry Turchie, testifying before a classified meeting of a House of Representatives committee, says, “FBI investigation and analysis indicates that the threat of terrorism in the United States is low.” Summarizing the terrorist threat, he fails to mention al-Qaeda or Islamic militants of any kind, and instead considers the “serious terrorist threat” to be coming from “animal-rights and environmental extremists” and “right-wing groups.” In December 2000, the FBI will tell Congress that the threat of terrorists targeting US aviation is low (see [December 2000](#)). In contradiction to this, Louis Freeh, FBI Director from 1993 to early 2001, will testify after 9/11 that “Before the end of 1999, the FBI and the intelligence community clearly understood the foreign-based al-Qaeda threat regarding targets within the United States. Congress and the Executive were fully briefed as to this threat analysis...” ([US Congress 7/26/2000](#); [US Congress 10/8/2002](#))

July 31, 2000: Politician Accuses Philippine Government and CIA of Manipulating Muslim Militant Group



Aquilino Pimentel. *[Source: Publicity photo from Aquilino Pimentel website.]* Senator Aquilino Pimentel, president of the Philippines Senate, accuses the Philippine government of collusion with the Muslim militant group Abu Sayyaf. He cites research that names two high police officers, Leandro Mendoza and Rodolfo Mendoza, as handlers for Abu Sayyaf informants. He also names Brig. Gen. Guillermo Ruiz, commanding general of the Filipino Marines in the early 1990s, as someone who colluded with the group, even splitting profits from illegal logging with them. Pimentel says, “My information is that the Abu Sayyaf partisans were given military intelligence services IDs, safe-houses, safe-conduct passes, firearms, cell phones and various sorts of financial support.” He accuses officials of manipulating the Abu Sayyaf “in the game of divide and rule as far as the Muslim insurgency is concerned.” He also accuses the CIA of helping to create the Abu Sayyaf, saying, “For what the Abu Sayyaf has become, the CIA must merit our people’s condemnation. The CIA has sired a monster that has caused a lot problems for the country...” He says Abu Sayyaf’s handlers “passed on military equipment and funds from the CIA and its support network...” He claims witnesses have come to him with evidence but are afraid of speaking out publicly. He concludes that “any Filipino who had a hand in the creation, training and equipping of the Abu Sayyaf should be held to account for high treason and other crimes.” ([Pimentel 7/31/2000](#))

August 2000: Vulgar Betrayal Investigation Shut Down



Frances Fragos Townsend. [Source: White House]Vulgar Betrayal, the most significant US government investigation into terrorist financing before 9/11, shuts down. FBI agent Robert Wright launched the investigation in 1996 (see [1996](#)) and was removed from the investigation in late 1999 (see [August 3, 1999](#)). Apparently the investigation accomplished little after Wright's departure. ([Crogan 8/25/2004](#); [Judicial Watch 12/15/2004](#); [Robert G. Wright, Jr., v. Federal Bureau of Investigation 5/16/2005](#)) A March 2000 affidavit named Yassin al-Qadi as a source of terrorist funds in Chicago, but no charges are brought against him. ([Ross and Walker 12/19/2002](#)) Mark Flessner, an assistant US attorney assigned to Vulgar Betrayal in 1996, later will recall, "Vulgar Betrayal was a case where the FBI's intelligence agents would not cooperate with the criminal agents trying to put these guys in jail. They refused to let us arrest them. They only wanted to watch them conduct their business." He will also claim that Frances Fragos Townsend, a Justice Department official working a variety of posts, helps close down the investigation. He will say Townsend did not share information but "deliberately obstructed it. And I found that very disconcerting." He will claim that she completely supports FBI intelligence agents and refuses to share their information with the Vulgar Betrayal investigation. A federal grand jury was impaneled in 1996 to support Vulgar Betrayal, but without the information from FBI intelligence, Flessner did not have enough evidence to return indictments. "I couldn't even get permission to do the basic things you do, such as collecting phone numbers from their targets' incoming and outgoing calls, and addresses from their mail." With the shut down of the investigation in 2000, Flessner will resign from the Justice Department in frustration. After 9/11, Townsend will be appointed President Bush's Homeland Security Adviser and counterterrorism director for the National Security Council. ([Crogan 8/25/2004](#))

(August 2000): Wiretap Reveals Al-Qaeda is Planning 'Hiroshima-type Event' Against US

The US intelligence community has been monitoring al-Qaeda telephone communications to and from a communications hub in Yemen since the late 1990s (see [Late August 1998](#)). The CIA intercepts an al-Qaeda operative say in a monitored phone call that bin Laden is planning a "Hiroshima-type event" against the US. Failed millennium bomber Ahmed Ressam, who is arrested in late 1999 (see [December 14, 1999](#)), confirms at the time that al-Qaeda is preparing such an attack. ([Risen and Engelberg 10/14/2001](#); [PBS 10/3/2002](#)) This sets off an immediate but unsuccessful search for further evidence. Shortly after 9/11, the New York Times will report that "intelligence officials now acknowledge that they never imagined that Mr. bin Laden's

organization had the ability to kill thousands of people in coordinated attacks on the American homeland. Looking back through the prism of Sept. 11, officials now say that the intercepted message was a telling sign of a drastic shift in the ambitions and global reach of al-Qaeda during the last three years.” ([Risen and Engelberg 10/14/2001](#)) There apparently is another intercepted message talking about a “Hiroshima” event in the summer of 2001 (see [Summer 2001](#)).

August 2000-January 2001: Al-Marabh Gets Michigan Licenses for Murky Hazardous Materials Truck Plot

In August 2000, Nabil al-Marabh moves to Detroit, Michigan, to enroll in a truck driving course in nearby Dearborn. ([Ashenfelter 5/23/2003](#)) According to an informant who will claim that al-Marabh confided to him in 2002, al-Marabh is taking instructions from a mystery figure in Chicago known only as “al Mosul”, which means “boss” or “person in charge” in Arabic. Al Mosul asks al-Marabh to attend the driving school to get a commercial truck driver’s license. Also according to this informant, al-Marabh and Raed Hijazi have plans to steal a fuel truck from a rest stop in New York or New Jersey and detonate it in the heavily traveled Lincoln or Holland tunnels leading into New York City, but the plan is foiled when Hijazi is arrested in October 2000 (see [October 2000](#)) for an attempted bombing in Jordan (see [November 30, 1999](#)). ([Ashenfelter 5/23/2003](#)) Al-Marabh may have moved to Detroit to avoid government scrutiny in Boston after stabbing a roommate in May 2000 (see [May 30, 2000-March 2001](#)). His wife and son apparently continue to live at his long-time Boston address until September 2000 and then move to elsewhere in the city without leaving a forwarding address. ([Golden and Miller 9/18/2001](#); [Farmer 9/19/2001](#); [Wilgoren and Miller 9/21/2001](#)) Al-Marabh continues to live in Detroit until January 2001. The Washington Post will note that al-Marabh “appears to [move] every few months or continually [change] his residence on official documents ♦ at one point listing an address in Dearborn, Michigan, that is a truck stop.” ([Mintz and Lengel 9/21/2001](#); [Ashenfelter 5/23/2003](#)) He repeatedly claims to Michigan state officials that he lost his license, and secures temporary driver’s licenses without photographs. ([Mintz and Lengel 9/21/2001](#)) He receives five driver’s licenses in Michigan over a period of 13 months in addition to carrying driver’s licenses from Massachusetts, Illinois, Florida, and Ontario, Canada. ([Schiller 10/26/2001](#)) He moves to Toronto, Canada in January 2001 (see [January 2001-Summer 2001](#)), but will return to Detroit in August 2001 and will still be getting duplicate Michigan licenses and looking for a tractor-trailer driving job in the week after 9/11. ([Getter, Mehren, and Slater 9/21/2001](#); [ABC News 1/31/2002](#))

August 9, 2000: Saudi Charity Tied to Bin Laden’s Brother-in-Law Accused of Still Funding Philippine Militants

A former member of the militant group Abu Sayyaf claims that the group is still being funded by a Saudi charity tied to bin Laden’s brother-in-law Mohammed Jamal Khalifa.

The Philippine branch of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) was founded in 1991 by Khalifa. This former member, who uses the alias “Abu Anzar,” says the IIRO continues to fund the Abu Sayyaf after Khalifa’s arrest in the US in late 1994 (see [December 16, 1994-May 1995](#)). Anzar says, “Only 10 to 30 percent of the foreign funding goes to the legitimate relief and livelihood projects and the rest go to terrorist operations.” Anzar is said to be recruited by Edwin Angeles and his right hand man; since Angeles has been revealed as a deep undercover operative (see [1991-Early February 1995](#)), it is speculated Anzar may have been working undercover too. ([Herrera 8/9/2000](#)) A 1994 Philippine intelligence report listed a Gemma Cruz as the treasurer and board member of the IIRO. In 1998, Gemma Cruz-Araneta became the tourism secretary in the cabinet of new president Joseph Estrada. Anzar claims that in 1993 and 1994 he toured IIRO projects with Khalifa and Cruz-Araneta and identifies her as the same person who is now tourism secretary. Cruz-Araneta denies all the charges as a case of mistaken identity and retains her position in the cabinet. ([Herrera 8/11/2000](#); [Herrera 8/12/2000](#)) In 2006, the US government will officially list the Philippine IIRO branch as a terrorism financier and state that it is still being run by one of Khalifa’s associates (see [August 3, 2006](#)).

August 12, 2000: Italian Intelligence Wiretap of Al-Qaeda Cell Reveals Massive Aircraft-based Strike

Italian intelligence successfully wiretap the al-Qaeda cell in Milan, Italy from late 1999 until the summer of 2001. ([Sennott 8/4/2002](#)) In a wiretapped conversation from this day, suspected Yemeni Abdulsalam Ali Abdulrahman tells wanted Egyptian Mahmoud Es Sayed about a massive strike against the enemies of Islam involving aircraft and the sky, a blow that “will be written about in all the newspapers of the world. This will be one of those strikes that will never be forgotten.... This is a terrifying thing. This is a thing that will spread from south to north, from east to west: The person who came up with this program is a madman from a madhouse, a madman but a genius.” In another conversation, Abdulrahman tells Es Sayed: “I’m studying airplanes. I hope, God willing, that I can bring you a window or a piece of an airplane the next time we see each other.” The comment is followed by laughter. Beginning in October 2000, FBI experts will help Italian police analyze the intercepts and warnings. Neither Italy nor the FBI will understand their meaning until after 9/11, but apparently, the Italians will understand enough to give the US an attack warning in March 2001 (see [March 2001](#)). ([Rotella and Meyer 5/29/2002](#); [Carroll 5/30/2002](#); [Delaney 5/31/2002](#)) The Milan cell “is believed to have created a cottage industry in supplying false passports and other bogus documents.” ([Sennott 8/4/2002](#))

August 14-December 19, 2000: Atta and Alshehhi Pass Flight Tests at Huffman Aviation

At Huffman Aviation flying school, alleged hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi pass various pilots’ tests. On August 14, according to the 9/11 Commission, they pass their private pilot airplane tests, with Atta scoring 97 out of 100 and Alshehhi

scoring 83. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 12](#).) However, Huffman's owner Rudi Dekkers will later testify before Congress that Atta already had a private pilot's license when he first arrived at the school, six weeks previously (see [July 1-3, 2000](#)). ([US Congress 3/19/2002](#)) Despite having failed their Stage I exam for instruments rating at nearby Jones Aviation a month earlier (see [Late September-Early October 2000](#)), on November 6 Atta and Alshehhi pass their instrument rating airplane tests at Huffman, scoring 90 and 75 respectively. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 15](#).) On December 19 they pass their commercial pilot license tests, thus completing their training, with Atta scoring 93 and Alshehhi scoring 73. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 17](#).) (According to a 2005 Federal Aviation Administration factsheet, the passing score for all the pilot tests Atta and Alshehhi take is 70. Presumably this is also the case in 2000. ([Administration 3/2005](#).)) Yet one fellow student who witnesses the pair at Huffman on an almost daily basis later states that, while he always accompanied Atta during his flying lessons, she never saw Alshehhi at the controls of the training aircraft. ([Australian Broadcasting Corporation 10/18/2001](#)) Rudi Dekkers will state, "I have heard from the instructors that they were average students, the examiner told me the same." ([Australian Broadcasting Corporation 10/21/2001](#)) The local FAA designated examiner Dave Whitman is responsible for testing Atta and Alshehhi. He issues them temporary 120-day licenses allowing them to fly small, twin-engine planes. He will later say he assumes the FAA made their licenses permanent, as he was not notified otherwise. He says, "I don't even remember them, specifically. They were foreign students, and foreign students often tend to keep to themselves." ([USA Today 9/13/2001](#); [Chicago Sun-Times 9/16/2001](#); [US Congress 3/19/2002](#))

August-Early October 2000: FBI Notices Increased Al-Qaeda Telephone Activity in Yemen before *Cole* Attack

The FBI and other US intelligence agencies have been monitoring an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana'a, Yemen, since the attacks on US embassies in East Africa, and have used it to map al-Qaeda's global network (see [Late August 1998](#) and [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). In the run-up to the bombing of the USS *Cole* in Aden, Yemen, the FBI notices that there is increased telephone activity to and from the Sana'a hub. One of the messages says that bin Laden is planning a "Hiroshima-type event" (see [August 2000](#)). ([PBS 10/3/2002](#))

Late Summer 2000: Informant Says Al-Qaeda to Attack US Warship

According to PBS, an Egyptian informant warns US intelligence that al-Qaeda will attack an American warship. ([PBS 10/3/2002](#)) The FBI also notices increased telephone activity by al-Qaeda in Yemen around the same time (see [August-Early October 2000](#)). The USS *Cole* is attacked in the autumn of this year (see [October 12, 2000](#)).

August 22, 2000: Memo Claims FBI Lacks Strategy to Prevent Terrorist Attacks

An internal FBI memo warns that the agency lacks a coherent strategy to prevent terrorist attacks. The memo is sent from Dale Watson, head of the FBI's counterterrorism program, to interim FBI Director Tom Pickard. The memo reads, "While the FBI has traditionally relied on an approach that focused generally on the identification, penetration and neutralization of terrorist organizations, the [FBI] has not developed a 'grand strategy' in which resources and programs are systematically directed toward progressively reducing and neutralizing and ultimately eliminating the terrorist threat to US interests." After 9/11, a former top FBI official will claim, "The counterterrorism guys never arrested anyone, never stopped anything." Senior FBI officials will later acknowledge "that [the FBI's] counterterrorism program was deeply troubled and largely ineffective." The New York Times will also later claim that the FBI's "internal affairs unit, the Office of Professional Responsibility, became a much-feared inquisitor, sometimes damaging careers over minor offenses like using a bureau car for personal matters." ([Bumiller 6/2/2002](#))

August 28, 2000: Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda's Chief Bomb Maker Recognized in Aerial Photo



Midhat Mursi. [*Source: Washington Post*] Agents of the DGSE, the French intelligence agency, examine an aerial photo and spot al-Qaeda leader Midhat Mursi (a.k.a. Abu Khabab al-Masri) standing close to bin Laden. Mursi is considered al-Qaeda's chief bomb maker and chemical weapons expert (he will apparently be killed in 2006 (see [January 13, 2006](#)). French intelligence reports from before 9/11 show that Mursi is being closely watched by intelligence agencies, with the French exchanging information about him with the Mossad, CIA, and Egyptian intelligence. ([DasquiÈ 4/15/2007](#)) The quality of the aerial photo must have been extremely high in order for Mursi and bin Laden to be recognized, but it has not been explained how such a photo was obtained or what other photos of bin Laden or other al-Qaeda leaders may have been taken before 9/11. Less than two weeks later, the US begins flying Predator drones over Afghanistan to track bin Laden (see [September 7-October 2000](#)).

(August 29-September 15, 2000): Atta and Alshehhi Apply for Student Visas; Questions Over When This Occurs

In order to enter a professional flight training program, hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi are required to apply for student visas. They are currently in the US on tourist visas, attending Huffman Aviation flight school in Venice, Florida (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)). On August 29, 2000, according to the school's owner Rudi Dekkers, Huffman's student coordinator Nicole Antini sends I-20M forms demonstrating Atta and Alshehhi's enrollment at the school to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. She also sends copies of their passports. Their forms state, "The student is expected to report to the school not later than Sept. 1, 2000, and complete studies not later than Sept. 1, 2001." ([McIntyre 3/13/2002](#); [US Congress 3/19/2002](#)) However, the 9/11 Commission claims that the forms are filled out later, on September 15. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 224](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 13](#).) Interestingly, considering these contradictory dates, Antini later tells the FBI that on "one occasion, Atta was very upset with the date of his visa and wanted it changed," though he did not say what upset him about the date or why he wanted it changed. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 38](#).) Huffman only receives notification that the INS has approved the visa applications 18 months later, well after 9/11 (see [March 11, 2002](#)). Atta and Alshehhi will be cleared to stay in the US until October 1, 2001. ([McIntyre 3/13/2002](#))

Late August 2000: Al-Marabh Allegedly Considers Becoming an FBI Informant

The Boston Globe will later report that in late August 2000, Nabl al-Marabh moves from Boston to Detroit, leaving his estranged wife behind. "Before he left, however, he told cabdriver friends that the FBI had approached him and was asking him questions about bin Laden's operation, and that he was considering cooperating. The friends said that al-Marabh did not say why the FBI had approached him about bin Laden but that it may have been prompted by the Customs Service investigation that found that he had wired money to [al-Qaeda operative Raed] Hijazi. By this time, Hijazi was in jail in Jordan." ([Kurkjian and Murphy 10/15/2001](#)) In a 2003 interview, al-Marabh will claim that in the early 1990s, while working as a taxi driver in Boston, he had a run-in with a fellow taxi driver "who he thinks falsely accused him of planning to bomb a car. He said he spoke freely with the FBI agents, who concluded that the allegations were false. From then on, he said, the FBI tried to recruit him to become an informant, and he refused." He will also claim that in the early 1990s he had a roommate who both worked for the FBI and fought in Afghanistan (see [1989-1994](#)). ([Ashenfelter 5/23/2003](#)) But it is possible that al-Marabh accepts the FBI offer, because while in a Canadian prison in July 2001, he will boast to fellow prisoners that he remains in contact with the FBI (see [June 27, 2001-July 11, 2001](#)). Around this time, September 2000, it appears that the Jordanian government tells the US that Hijazi, al-Marabh, and 9/11 hijacker Hamza Alghamdi are connected through telephone numbers (see [September 2000](#)). Hijazi had already worked as an FBI informant

while he was roommates with al-Marabh in Boston (see [Early 1997-Late 1998](#)). In the spring of 2001, al-Marabh will be investigated for links to three 9/11 hijackers (see [Spring 2001](#)), but he will nonetheless go on to have an important role in the 9/11 plot.

(Before September 2000): Army Intelligence Unit Said to Discover Hijackers Renting Rooms at New Jersey Motels

According to an anonymous Able Danger official speaking to the Bergen Record, a US Army intelligence unit tasked with assembling information about al-Qaeda networks worldwide discovers that several of the 9/11 hijackers are taking rooms at motels in New Jersey and meeting together there. The intelligence unit, called Able Danger, which uses high-speed computers to analyze vast amounts of data, notices that Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi take a room at the Wayne Inn (see [\(Before September 2000-12 Months Later\)](#)). After the existence of the Able Danger unit comes to light in 2005, Bergen Record columnist and reporter Mike Kelly says, “The connect-the-dots tracking by the team was so good that it even knew Atta conducted meetings with the three future hijackers. One of those meetings took place at the Wayne Inn. That’s how close all this was—to us and to being solved, if only the information had been passed up the line to FBI agents or even to local cops. This new piece of 9/11 history, revealed only last week by a Pennsylvania congressman and confirmed by two former members of the intelligence team, could turn out to be one of the most explosive revelations since the publication last summer of the 9/11 commission report.” ([Kelly 8/14/2005](#)) The other two hijackers said to be present at the meetings, Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar, periodically live in the town of Paterson, only one mile away from Wayne (see [March 2001-September 1, 2001](#)). However, contradicting this account, a lawyer representing members of Able Danger later testifies, “At no time did Able Danger identify Mohamed Atta as being physically present in the United States.” ([CNN 9/21/2005](#); [US Congress 9/21/2005](#)) Some media accounts have stated that the Able Danger program determined Atta was in the US before 9/11. For instance, Fox News reported in August 2005, “[Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer] is standing by his claim that he told them that the lead hijacker in the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks had been identified in the summer of 2000 as an al-Qaeda operative living in the United States.” ([Fox News 8/17/2005](#))

(Before September 2000-12 Months Later): Mohamed Atta Has Long Term Stay in Wayne, New Jersey; Other Hijackers Seen There

In 2003, New Jersey state police officials say Mohamed Atta lived in the Wayne Inn, in Wayne, New Jersey, for an unspecified 12-month period prior to 9/11. He lives with one other hijacker who is presumably his usual partner Marwan Alshehhi (Alshehhi is seen eating in nearby restaurants with Atta). ([Diamond 6/20/2003](#)) In 2004, an unnamed whistleblower involved in the Able Danger program will claim that prior to 9/11, Able

Danger discovered that Atta and Alshehhi were renting a room at the Wayne Inn, and occasionally meeting with Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar at the inn or near it (see [\(Before September 2000\)](#)). From March 2001 onwards, other hijackers, including Alhazmi and Almihdhar, live in Paterson, New Jersey, only one mile away from Wayne (see [March 2001-September 1, 2001](#)). Nawaf Alhazmi and Salem Alhazmi rent mailboxes in Wayne at some unknown point before 9/11. Nawaf Alhazmi and Hani Hanjour rent cars from a Wayne car dealership between June and August 2001. There is also evidence Nawaf Alhazmi and Marwan Alshehhi shop in Wayne. ([Feyerick and Hirschhorn 9/26/2001](#); [Weiner and Weiser 9/27/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission does not mention any hijacker connection to Wayne. This long-term stay in Wayne is surprising because Atta and Alshehhi have generally been placed in Florida most of the time from July 2000 until shortly before 9/11. However, this discrepancy may be explained by one account which states Atta had “two places he lived and 10 safe houses” in the US (see [Mid-September 2001](#)).

Autumn 2000: Hijackers Live and Work in San Diego; Connected with Other Potential Al-Qaeda Operatives



Sam's Star Mart gas station. [Source: *Daniel Hopsicker*] Hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi works at a gas station while living in San Diego. This is the only apparent instance of any of the hijackers having a job while in the US. He and hijacker Khalid Almihdhar also frequently socialize at the gas station and Alhazmi works there on and off for about a month at some point after Almihdhar has gone overseas. ([Goldstein and Booth 12/29/2001](#); [McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. xii, 11-12, 143-146, 155-157](#).) The Texaco gas station, Sam's Star Mart, is owned by Osama "Sam" Mustafa. ([Thornton 7/25/2003](#)) Mustafa was first investigated by the FBI in 1991 after he tells a police officer that the US needs another Pan Am 103 attack and that he could be the one to carry out the attack. He also says all Americans should be killed because of the 1991 Iraq War. In 1994, he was investigated for being a member of the Palestinian organizations PFLP and PLO and for threatening to kill an Israeli intelligence officer living in San Diego. The investigation was closed, but reopened again in 1997 when he was tied to a possible plot in North Carolina. Apparently, it is closed again before 9/11. He also associates with Osama Basnan and others who have contacts with the hijackers. Witnesses later claim he cheers when first told of the 9/11 attacks. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. xii, 11-12, 143-146, 155-157](#).) The gas station is managed by Ed Salamah. ([Goldstein and Booth 12/29/2001](#); [Thornton 7/25/2003](#)) In January 2000, the brother of a known al-Qaeda operative is under surveillance and is seen chatting with Salamah. The Los Angeles FBI office is

investigating this operative, and it calls Salamah about it. Salamah refuses to come to Los Angeles for an interview, and refuses to give his home address to be interviewed there. Faced with a reluctant witness, the FBI drops the matter. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. xii, 11-12, 143-146, 155-157](#); [Isikoff and Klaidman 7/28/2003](#)) The hijackers are living with an FBI asset who is aware of their contact with at least Mustafa, and that asset has given reports about Mustafa to the FBI in the past. However, the asset fails to tell the FBI about their contacts with him. The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry strongly implies that Salamah and Mustafa assisted the hijackers with the 9/11 plot, but the FBI appears uninterested in them and maintains that the hijackers received no assistance from anyone. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. xii, 11-12, 143-146, 155-157](#))

Autumn 2000: CIA Front Company Leads to Suspicions CIA Is Attempting to Infiltrate Florida Cell

Writing in 2004, veteran UK intelligence officer Colonel John Hughes-Wilson will note that, at the same time as hijacker pilots Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi are learning to fly at Huffman Aviation in Venice, Florida (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)), “A CIA front company called Air Caribe was also operating out of the very same hangar at Venice airport.” He will go on to comment that “this highly curious coincidence must inevitably raise some suspicions of just how much the CIA really did know before 9/11. Was the CIA trying to infiltrate and ‘double’ the US-based al-Qaeda cell, in the hope of using it against Osama bin Laden’s organization in the future?” ([Hughes-Wilson 2004, pp. 391](#)) The Air Caribe story is originally broken by investigative reporter Daniel Hopsicker, who will publish a book about Atta’s time in Florida in 2004 (see [March 2004](#)).

September 2000: Al-Qaeda Defector Tells US about Pilot Training



Courtroom drawing of L'Houssaine Kherchtou. [*Source: C. Cornell/ CNN*] Al-Qaeda defector L'Houssaine Kherchtou (see [Summer 2000](#)) tells the FBI that between 1992 and 1995 he trained in Nairobi, Kenya, to be a pilot for al-Qaeda. His training ended when he began to drift away from al-Qaeda in 1995. Kherchtou, who began working with MI6 before the African embassy bombings (see [Mid-Summer 1998](#)), is a key prosecution witness at the bombing trial in early 2001, where he repeats the

information in public. He will later go into the witness protection program. ([Aita 2/22/2001](#); [Vest 6/19/2005](#))

September 2000: Candidate George W. Bush Promises Emphasis on Countering Terrorism in US

George W. Bush, campaigning for president, writes in an article, “There is more to be done preparing here at home. I will put a high priority on detecting and responding to terrorism on our soil.” ([Bush 9/2000](#)) This repeats verbatim comments made in a speech a year before at the start of the presidential campaign ([Bush 9/23/1999](#)), and in both cases the context is about weapons of mass destruction. However, after 9/11, now President Bush will say of bin Laden: “I knew he was a menace and I knew he was a problem. I was prepared to look at a plan that would be a thoughtful plan that would bring him to justice, and would have given the order to do that. I have no hesitancy about going after him. But I didn’t feel that sense of urgency.” ([Gellman 5/17/2002](#))

September 2000: Jordan Tells US of Connection Between Al-Marabh, Hijazi, and 9/11 Hijacker

Raed Hijazi, Nabil al-Marabh’s former Boston roommate, is tried and convicted in Jordan for his role in planned millennium bombings in that country. (Hijazi is tried in absentia since he has yet to be arrested, but will later be retried in person and reconvicted.) In the wake of the trial, Jordanian officials send information to US investigators that shows Nabil al-Marabh and future 9/11 hijacker Hamza Alghamdi are associates of Hijazi. The Washington Post will report, “An FBI document circulated among law enforcement agencies [just after 9/11] noted that Hijazi, who is in a Jordanian jail, had shared a telephone number with [9/11] hijacker, Hamza Alghamdi.” Apparently this document is created when Jordan sends the US this information in late 2000. ([Mintz and Lengel 9/21/2001](#)) The Boston Globe will later report that an FBI investigation found that “al-Marabh had, in the report’s language, a ‘telephone connection’ with one of the suspected hijackers, according to a federal source involved in the investigation. However, the source was uncertain whether the connection involved telephone conversations between al-Marabh and the unidentified suspect, or whether it involved their sharing a telephone number.” This is a probable reference to the same FBI report mentioning the Alghamdi-Hijazi phone link, especially since the same Globe article mentions that around the this time al-Marabh tells his coworkers that the FBI has been asking him about his links to bin Laden (see [Late August 2000](#)). ([Kurkjian and Murphy 10/15/2001](#)) It appears that Alghamdi is not put on any kind of watch list and will not be stopped when he will arrive in the US by January 2001 (see [January or July 28, 2001](#)) nor again on May 23, 2001 (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission Final Report will fail to mention any investigation into Alghamdi and will give no hint that his name was known to US authorities before 9/11.

September 2000: Neoconservative Think Tank Writes 'Blueprint' for 'Global Pax Americana'



People involved in the 2000 PNAC report (from top left): Vice President Cheney, Florida Governor Jeb Bush, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Cheney Chief of Staff I. Lewis Libby, Undersecretary of State John Bolton, Undersecretary of Defense Dov Zakheim, and author Eliot Cohen. [Source: Public domain] The neoconservative think tank Project for the New American Century writes a “blueprint” for the “creation of a ‘global Pax Americana’” (see [June 3, 1997](#)). The document, titled *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New Century*, was written for the George W. Bush team even before the 2000 presidential election. It was written for future Vice President Cheney, future Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, future Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Florida Governor and Bush's brother Jeb Bush, and Cheney's future chief of staff Lewis Libby. ([Project for the New American Century 9/2000, pp. iv and 51](#))

Plans to Overthrow Iraqi Government - The report calls itself a “blueprint for maintaining global US preeminence, precluding the rise of a great power rival, and shaping the international security order in line with American principles and interests.” The plan shows that the Bush team intends to take military control of Persian Gulf oil whether or not Saddam Hussein was in power and should retain control of the region even if there is no threat. It says: “The United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.” The report calls for the control of space through a new “US Space Forces,” the political control of the internet, the subversion of any growth in political power of even close allies, and advocates “regime change” in China, North Korea, Libya, Syria, Iran and other countries. It also mentions that “advanced forms of biological warfare that can ‘target’ specific genotypes may transform biological warfare from the realm of terror to a politically useful tool” (see February 7, 2003). ([Project for the New American Century 9/2000](#); [Mackay 9/7/2002](#))

Greater Need for US Role in Persian Gulf - PNAC states further: “The United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of

Saddam Hussein.”

'US Space Forces,' Control of Internet, Subversion of Allies - PNAC calls for the control of space through a new “US Space Forces,” the political control of the Internet, and the subversion of any growth in political power of even close allies, and advocates “regime change” in China, North Korea, Libya, Syria, Iran, and other countries.

Bioweapons Targeting Specific Genotypes 'Useful' - It also mentions that “advanced forms of biological warfare that can ‘target’ specific genotypes may transform biological warfare from the realm of terror to a politically useful tool.”

'A New Pearl Harbor' - However, PNAC complains that these changes are likely to take a long time, “absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor.”

([Johnson 1/12/2003](#))

Bush Will Claim a 'Humble' Foreign Policy Stance - One month later during a presidential debate with Al Gore, Bush will assert that he wants a “humble” foreign policy in the Middle East and says he is against toppling Saddam Hussein in Iraq because it smacks of “nation building” (see [October 11, 2000](#)). Around the same time, Cheney will similarly defend Bush’s position of maintaining President Clinton’s policy not to attack Iraq, asserting that the US should not act as though “we were an imperialist power, willy-nilly moving into capitals in that part of the world, taking down governments.”

([Masters 1/12/2002](#)) Author Craig Unger will later comment, “Only a few people who had read the papers put forth by the Project for a New American Century might have guessed a far more radical policy had been developed.” ([Unger 3/15/2004](#)) A British member of Parliament will later say of the PNAC report, “This is a blueprint for US world domination—a new world order of their making. These are the thought processes of fantasist Americans who want to control the world.” ([Mackay 9/7/2002](#)) Both PNAC and its strategy plan for Bush are almost virtually ignored by the media until a few weeks before the start of the Iraq war (see [February-March 20, 2003](#)).

September 2000: General Tommy Franks Tours Central Asia to Build Military Aid Relationships



General Tommy Franks. [*Source: US Army*] US General Tommy Franks tours Central Asia in an attempt to build military aid relationships with nations there, but finds no takers. Russia’s power in the region appears to be on the

upswing instead. Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev writes, “The actions of Islamic extremists in Central Asia give Russia the chance to strengthen its position in the region.” However, shortly after 9/11, Russia and China agree to allow the US to establish temporary US military bases in Central Asia to prosecute the Afghanistan war. The bases become permanent, and the Guardian will write in early 2002, “Both countries increasingly have good reasons to regret their accommodating stand. Having pushed, cajoled, and bribed its way into their Central Asian backyard, the US clearly has no intention of leaving any time soon.” ([Traynor 1/10/2002](#))

September 2000: Chart with Hijacker Atta’s Photo Presented by Able Danger at SOCOM Headquarters; Meetings with FBI Cancelled



Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Lambert. [*Source: Special Forces*

Command]/Members of a US Army intelligence unit tasked with assembling information about al-Qaeda have prepared a chart that includes the names and photographs of four future hijackers, who they have identified as members of an al-Qaeda cell based in Brooklyn, New York. The four hijackers in the cell are Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, Khalid Almihdhar, and Nawaf Alhazmi. The members of the intelligence unit, called Able Danger, present their chart at the headquarters of the US military’s Special Operations Command (SOCOM) in Tampa, Florida, with the recommendation that the FBI should be called in to take out the al-Qaeda cell. Lawyers working for SOCOM argue that anyone with a green card has to be granted the same legal protections as any US citizen, so the information about the al-Qaeda cell cannot be shared with the FBI. The legal team directs them to put yellow stickers over the photographs of Mohamed Atta and the other cell members, to symbolize that they are off limits. ([Phucas 6/19/2005](#); [Goodwin 8/2005](#); [Jehl 8/9/2005](#); [Garza 8/10/2005](#); [Shenon 8/17/2005](#); [Goodwin 9/2005](#)) Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer later says that an unnamed two-star general above him is “very adamant” about not looking further at Atta. “I was directed several times [to ignore Atta], to the point where he had to remind me he was a general and I was not... [and] I would essentially be fired.” ([Fox News 8/19/2005](#)) Military leaders at the meeting take the side of the lawyers and prohibit any sharing of information about the al-Qaeda cell. Shaffer believes that the decision to side with the lawyers is made by Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Lambert (who had previously expressed distress when Able Danger data was destroyed without his prior notification (see [May-June 2000](#))). He also believes that Gen. Peter Schoomaker, head of SOCOM, is not aware of the decision. ([Goodwin 9/2005](#))

September 2000: Military Lawyers Prevent Able Danger From Sharing Information about Atta and Others with FBI

On three occasions, military lawyers force members of Able Danger to cancel scheduled meetings with the FBI at the last minute. Able Danger officials want to share information about the Brooklyn al-Qaeda cell they believe they've discovered which includes Mohamed Atta and other hijackers (see [January-February 2000](#)). The exact timing of these meetings remains unclear, but they appear to happen around the time military lawyers tell Able Danger they are not allowed to pursue Mohamed Atta and other figures (see [September 2000](#)) . ([Goodwin 9/2005](#)) In 2005, it will be reported that Lt. Colonel Anthony Shaffer contacted FBI agent Xanthig Magnum in attempts to set up these meetings. Magnum is willing to testify about her communications with Shaffer, but apparently she has not yet been able to do so. ([Fox News 8/28/2005](#)) Shaffer will later elaborate that the meetings were set up around early summer. Col. Worthington, then head of Able Danger, is one of the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) officials scheduled to meet with FBI Counterterrorism agents. Shaffer later claims the meetings were cancelled because "SOCOM lawyers would not permit the sharing of the US person information regarding terrorists located domestically due to 'fear of potential blowback' should the FBI do something with the information and something should go wrong. The lawyers were worried about another 'Waco' situation. The critical counterterrorism information is never passed from SOCOM to the FBI before 9-11; this information did include the original data regarding Atta and the terrorist cells in New York and the DC area." ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#)) Rep. Curt Weldon (R), who in 2005 helps bring to light the existence of the program, says, "Obviously, if we had taken out that cell, 9/11 would not have occurred and, certainly, taking out those three principal players in that cell would have severely crippled, if not totally stopped, the operation that killed 3,000 people in America." ([Goodwin 8/2005](#))

Between September 2000 and August 2001: French Repeatedly Learn of Al-Qaeda Plots Against the US

The French intelligence agency, DGSE, publishes nine intelligence reports between these dates on the subject of al-Qaeda threats against the US. Over three hundred pages of classified DGSE reports on al-Qaeda from July 2000 to October 2001 will be leaked to a French reporter in 2007. One of the nine reports on attacks against the US, dated January 5, 2001, will be detailed in a 2007 French newspaper article (see [January 5, 2001](#)), but the contents of the other eight remain unknown. DGSE officials will later claim that such reports would have certainly been passed on to the CIA. None of the contents of any of these French reports will be mentioned in the 2004 9/11 Commission report. ([DasquiÈ 4/15/2007](#))

(September 2000): Informer Tells FBI Al-Qaeda Is Interested in Air Traffic Control Procedures

At the trial of al-Qaeda operatives accused of participating in the 1998 US African embassy bombings, it is disclosed that an unnamed al-Qaeda operative had requested information about air traffic control procedures. This information is provided to the FBI by a co-operating witness, L'Houssaine Kherchtou (see [Summer 2000](#)), and is mentioned by prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald, who says that Kherchtou "observed an Egyptian person who was not a pilot debriefing a friend of his, Ihab Ali [Nawawi], about how air traffic control works and what people say over the air traffic control system, and it was his belief that there might have been a plan to send a pilot to Saudi Arabia or someone familiar with that to monitor the air traffic communications so they could possibly attack an airplane." Nawawi is a Florida-based al-Qaeda operative and pilot who is arrested in 1999 (see [May 18, 1999](#)). The identity of the Egyptian is not disclosed, although both Kherchtou and Nawawi are associates of former Egyptian army officer Ali Mohamed, who used Kherchtou's apartment to plot the Nairobi embassy bombing (see [Late 1993-Late 1994](#) and [January 1998](#)). ([Day 8. United States of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al. 2/21/2001](#)) Mohamed also conducted surveillance of airports in the early 1980s with a view to hijacking an airliner, and subsequently worked as a security adviser to Egyptair, where he had access to the latest anti-hijacking measures. ([Lance 2006, pp. 11-12](#)) Jack Cloonan, one of the FBI agents who debriefed Kherchtou, will later receive the Phoenix Memo (see [July 27, 2001 or shortly after](#)), which states that an inordinate amount of bin Laden-related individuals are learning to fly in the US (see [July 10, 2001](#)). ([Vest 6/19/2005](#)) However, he will not apparently make the connection between the memo's premise and the information from Kherchtou.

September-October 2000: Moussaoui Visits Malaysia After CIA Stops Surveillance There



Yazid Sufaat (left), and his wife, Sejarahatul Dursina (right). [*Source: Associated Press*]/Zacarias Moussaoui visits Malaysia twice, and stays at the very same condominium where the January al-Qaeda summit (see January 5-8, 2000) was held. ([Fineman and Drogin 2/2/2002](#); [Chandrasekaran 2/3/2002](#); [Ressa 8/30/2002](#)) After that summit, Malaysian intelligence kept watch on the condominium at the request of the CIA. However, the CIA stopped the surveillance

before Moussaoui arrived, spoiling a chance to expose the 9/11 plot by monitoring Moussaoui's later travels. The Malaysians later say they were surprised by the CIA's lack of interest. "We couldn't fathom it, really," Rais Yatim, Malaysia's Legal Affairs minister, will tell Newsweek. "There was no show of concern." ([Isikoff and Klaidman 6/2/2002](#)) During his stay in Malaysia, Moussaoui tells Jemaah Islamiyah operative Faiz abu Baker Bafana, at whose apartment he stays for one night, that he had had a dream about flying an airplane into the White House, and that when he told bin Laden about this, bin Laden told him to go ahead. They also discuss purchasing ammonium nitrate, and Moussaoui says that Malaysia and Indonesia should be used as a base for financing jihad, but that attacks should be focused against the US. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#)) While Moussaoui is in Malaysia, Yazid Sufaat, the owner of the condominium, signs letters falsely identifying Moussaoui as a representative of his wife's company. ([Chandrasekaran 2/3/2002](#); [Zakaria 9/20/2002](#)) When Moussaoui is later arrested in the US about one month before the 9/11 attacks, this letter in his possession could have led investigators back to the condominium and the connections with the January 2000 meeting attended by two of the hijackers. ([Kelley 1/30/2002](#)) Moussaoui's belongings also contained phone numbers that could have linked him to Ramzi bin al-Shibh (and his roommate, Mohamed Atta), another participant in the Malaysian meeting (see August 16, 2001). ([Associated Press 12/12/2001](#))

(September 2000 and after): Secret Service Has Air Surveillance Capabilities

It is reported that the US Secret Service is using an "air surveillance system" called Tigerwall. This serves to "ensure enhanced physical security at a high-value asset location by providing early warning of airborne threats." Tigerwall "provides the Secret Service with a geographic display of aircraft activity and provides security personnel long-range camera systems to classify and identify aircraft. Sensor data from several sources are fused to provide a unified sensor display." ([US Department of Defense 2000](#); [US Department of the Navy 9/2000, pp. 28](#)) Among its responsibilities, the Secret Service protects America's highest elected officials, including the president and vice president, and also provides security for the White House complex. ([US Congress 5/1/2003](#)) Its largest field office with over 200 employees is in New York, in Building 7 of the World Trade Center. ([Tech TV 7/23/2002](#)) Whether the Secret Service, in New York or Washington, will make use of Tigerwall on 9/11 is unknown. Furthermore, in New York the Secret Service has a Stinger missile secretly stored in the WTC, to be used to protect the president if the city were attacked when he visited. Presumably it keeps this in Building 7, where its field office is. ([Weiss 2003, pp. 379](#)) As well as Tigerwall, the Secret Service appears to have other air surveillance capabilities. Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke will describe that on 9/11, the Secret Service had "a system that allowed them to see what FAA's radar was seeing." ([Clarke 2004, pp. 7](#)) Barbara Riggs, a future deputy director of the Secret Service who is in its Washington, DC headquarters on 9/11, will describe the Secret Service "monitoring radar" during the attacks. ([PCCW Newsletter 3/2006](#); [Wade 6/5/2006](#)) Furthermore, since 1974 the Secret Service

operations center has possessed a special communications line from the control tower of Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. This hotline allows air traffic controllers monitoring local radar to inform agents at the White House of any planes that are off course or appear to be on a “threatening vector.” ([Duffy 9/26/1994](#))

Early September 2000: Moussaoui Checks Out Malaysian Flight School

While in Malaysia (see [September-October 2000](#)), Zacarias Moussaoui visits the Royal Selangor Flying Club at a Malaysian Air Force base near Kuala Lumpur to inquire about learning to fly there, but decides not to pursue lessons after learning the cost. Moussaoui is driven to the club by Jemaah Islamiyah operative Faiz abu Baker Bafana, who had previously taken another al-Qaeda trainee pilot, Zaini Zakaria, to the same flying club (see [Spring 2000](#)). Moussaoui will eventually begin his training in the US (see [February 23-June 2001](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#))

Early September 2000: FBI Counterterrorism Informer Helps Hijacker Open Bank Account

Hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi is helped by his landlord, FBI counterterrorism informant Abdussattar Shaikh, with whom he has been living for some time (see [Mid-May-December 2000](#) and [May 10-Mid-December 2000](#)), to open an account with the Lemon Grove branch of the Bank of America. Alhazmi deposits \$3,000 to open the account. The origin of the \$3,000 is unclear, as the last known cash injection Alhazmi received was five months earlier and totalled only \$5,000 (see [April 16-18, 2000](#)). ([Crary 9/20/2001](#); [CBS News 9/27/2001](#)) Hijacker Khalid Almihdhar had previously opened and closed a bank account in San Diego (see [February 4, 2000](#))

September 5, 2000: Alhazmi Helps Housemate Cash Checks? FBI Later Flubs Investigation



Yazeed al-Salmi. [Source: Channel 10 News] A total of \$1,900 is deposited in Nawaf Alhazmi's Bank of America account from a set of traveler's checks worth \$4,000 that were issued in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on July 16, 2000 to a man named Yazeed al-Salmi. The same day, Alhazmi withdraws \$1,900. US investigators will therefore later hypothesise that Alhazmi is just helping al-Salmi cash the checks, since al-Salmi does not open a US bank account of his own until September 11, 2000. Al-Salmi arrived in San Diego on a student visa on August 7, 2000 and moved in with Alhazmi and FBI counterterrorism informant Abdussattar Shaikh three days later, staying for about one month (see [Mid-May-December 2000](#)). Hijacker associate Omar al-Bayoumi, who nominally reports to al-Salmi's uncle, Mohammed Ahmed al-Salmi of the Saudi Civil Aviation ministry, found him the accommodation (see [September 1998-July 1999](#)). After 9/11, the FBI will detain al-Salmi as a material witness and question him because of his contacts with Alhazmi, and he will testify before a grand jury before being deported to Saudi Arabia. However, al-Salmi does not mention the traveler's checks in the interrogation and the FBI will not find out about them until after he is deported. Also, another associate of the hijackers, Mohdar Abdullah, will later claim that al-Salmi tells him he previously knew hijacker pilot Hani Hanjour as a child in Saudi Arabia (see [Early 2000-November 2000](#)). When the FBI interviews al-Salmi again, in Saudi Arabia in 2004, he will claim he no longer remembers the \$1,900 transaction and the FBI will fail to ask him about his alleged childhood ties to Hanjour. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 222, 518](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 139](#); [Burger 8/22/2004](#)) There are later indications that al-Salmi and some of his associates have some foreknowledge of 9/11 (see [Late August-September 10, 2001](#)).

September 7-October 2000: Predator Flights over Afghanistan Are Initiated Then Halted



The first Predator flight over Afghanistan on September 7, 2000 captures bin Laden circled by security in his Tarnak Farms complex. [Source: CBC] An unmanned spy plane called the Predator begins flying over Afghanistan, showing incomparably detailed real-time video and photographs of the movements of what appears to be bin Laden and his aides. It flies successfully over Afghanistan 16 times. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) President Clinton is impressed by a two-minute video of bin Laden crossing a street heading toward a mosque inside his Tarnak Farms complex. Bin Laden is surrounded by a team of a dozen armed men creating a professional forward security perimeter as he moves. The Predator has been used since 1996, in the Balkans and Iraq. One Predator crashes on takeoff and another is chased by a fighter, but it apparently identifies bin Laden on three occasions. Its use is stopped in Afghanistan after a few trials, mostly because seasonal winds are picking up. It is agreed to resume the flights in the spring, but the Predator fails to fly over Afghanistan again until after 9/11. ([Gellman 12/19/2001](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 220-21](#)) On September 15, 2001, CIA Director Tenet apparently inaccurately tells President Bush, “The unmanned Predator surveillance aircraft that was now armed with Hellfire missiles had been operating for more than a year out of Uzbekistan to provide real-time video of Afghanistan.” ([Balz, Woodward, and Himmelman 1/29/2002](#))

September 15-October 1, 2000: Sydney Olympics **Officials’ Top Concern: Airliner-Based Al-Qaeda Attack**

Olympics officials later reveal, “A fully loaded, fueled airliner crashing into the opening ceremony before a worldwide television audience at the Sydney Olympics is one of the greatest security fears for the Games.” During the Olympics, Australia has six planes in the sky at all times ready to intercept any wayward aircraft. In fact, “IOC officials [say] the scenario of a plane crash during the opening ceremony was uppermost in their security planning at every Olympics since terrorists struck in Munich in 1972.” bin Laden is considered the number-one threat. ([Magnay 9/20/2001](#)) These security measures are similar to those used in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and other events, including Clinton’s

second inauguration. Similar planning is already underway before 9/11 for the 2002 Winter Olympics in Utah. ([Paltrow 4/1/2004](#))

Around September 15-16 and October 10-21, 2000: Bin Al-Shibh in Yemen, Reportedly Takes Part in *Cole* Bombing

Before the bombing of the USS *Cole* in Aden, Yemen, Ramzi bin al-Shibh makes two trips to Yemen's capital, Sana'a, and will later be said to play a role in the attack. Although bin al-Shibh is never named as a certain participant in the operation, he travels to Yemen from Germany a month before the attack, and again one day before the bombing (see [October 12, 2000](#)). ([Lichtblau and Williams 10/24/2001](#); [Khan 8/11/2002](#); [Abuza 12/24/2002](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 209](#)) He apparently attended an al-Qaeda summit with the other commanders of the ship-bombing operation (see January 5-8, 2000) and some media reports indicate an application for a US visa he makes after the attack is rejected due to concerns about his involvement in the bombing. For example, the Los Angeles Times, based on conversations with law enforcement officials, will report that bin al-Shibh is "linked to the terrorist attack in Yemen on the US Navy destroyer *Cole*." ([Lichtblau and Williams 10/21/2001](#)) Newsweek, the BBC, and Al Jazeera journalist Yosri Fouda will also report similar statements by law enforcement officials (see [May 17, 2000-May 2001](#)). ([Thomas 11/26/2001](#); [BBC 9/14/2002](#); [TBS Journal 10/2002](#)) One of the 9/11 hijackers, Khalid Almihdhar, may also be involved in the bombing (see [Around October 12, 2000](#)).

Mid-September 2000: Bin Laden Message Gives Hint of Upcoming USS *Cole* Attack

A videotape message featuring bin Laden calling for more attacks on the US is aired on Al Jazeera. The video ends with al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri saying, "Enough of words, it is time to take action against this iniquitous and faithless force [the United States], which has spread troops through Egypt, Yemen and Saudi Arabia." ([CNN 10/20/2000](#); [Gertz 8/26/2002](#)) Further, bin Laden is wearing a distinctive, curved Yemeni dagger. Lawrence Wright will later mention in the book *The Looming Tower* that this was a "teasing clue" similar to other clues he had left before other attacks. ([Wright 2006, pp. 318](#)) DIA analyst Kie Fallis later recalls, "Every time he put out one of these videotapes, it was a signal that action was coming." He claims that after hearing of the video, he "knew then it would be within a month or two." But nonetheless, his suggestion to put out a general attack warning will go unheeded (see [May 2000-Late September 2000](#)). An al-Qaeda attack on the USS *Cole* follows less than a month later (see [October 12, 2000](#)). ([Gertz 8/26/2002](#))

September 21, 2000: Al-Qaeda Leaders Vow to 'Spill Blood' to Free 'Blind Sheikh'



Ayman al-Zawahiri (left), Ahmed Refai Taha (center), and Osama bin Laden (right) on Al Jazeera. [Source: *Al Jazeera*] Al Jazeera broadcasts a video featuring Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Ahmed Refai Taha, head of the Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya militant group formerly led by the "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. In the video, filmed in Afghanistan several months earlier, bin Laden promises "to do all we can" to liberate Abdul-Rahman from his imprisonment in the US. Al-Zawahiri says that he is "talking business" about helping to free Abdul-Rahman. "I'm talking jihad." Additionally, Mohammed Omar Abdul-Rahman, one of the Blind Sheikh's sons, is heard on the tape saying, "O brothers, everywhere, avenge your leaders, avenge your sheik. Let's go to the grounds of jihad. Let us spill blood. Let's go spill blood." ([Preston 9/8/2004](#)) In July 2001, the FBI will overhear an Arabic translator tell the Blind Sheikh that the October 2000 bombing of the USS 'Cole' was done for him "so he could be released." The translator is also overheard saying that if he is not released, the bombers are prepared to "execute another operation." ([Weiser 6/6/2002](#))

September 2000-July 24, 2001: Alleged CIA Informant Said to Be in Contact with Atta

In September 2000, Luai Sakra enters Germany seeking asylum, using the name "Louia Sakka" (one of several ways his name is transliterated). He moves with his wife and two children to a government asylum dormitory in a small town in central Germany while waiting for a verdict. ([Cziesche, Dahlkamp, and Stark 8/15/2005](#); [Agence France-Presse 10/27/2005](#)) After his 2005 arrest in Turkey, Sakra will confess to helping some of the 9/11 hijackers. He will claim to have helped some of the 9/11 hijackers while in Bursa, a city in Turkey 60 miles south of Istanbul (see [Late 1999-2000](#)). ([Vick 2/20/2006](#)) But he will also say that he knew Mohamed Atta, which presumably would take place during Sakra's time in Germany (see [Early August 2005](#)). He will warn the Syrian government about the 9/11 attacks one day before they happen (see [September 10, 2001](#)) and evidence will suggest he was an informant working for the CIA and other governments (see [2000](#)). He will later admit meeting Asaf Shawkat, head of Syrian intelligence, in Germany, but it is not known when this meeting took place. ([BBC 11/10/2005](#)) Apparently while still living in Germany, Sakra is indicted in Jordan for allegedly supporting planned attacks around the turn of the millennium (see [November 30, 1999](#)). His 2001 Jordanian indictment reads, "Current residence: Germany, on the run." It is not clear if Jordan

communicated with the German government about his whereabouts at this time. He will be convicted in absentia in Jordan in early 2002 and sentenced to 15 years in prison. Meanwhile, in Germany he loses his asylum appeal and leaves the country on July 24, 2001. His family flies to Syria around the same time. ([Cziesche, Dahlkamp, and Stark 8/15/2005](#))

September 26, 2000: US Sees Pakistani Support for Taliban Is ‘Unprecedented’ and Increasing

A classified State Department cable observes that “while Pakistani support for the Taliban has been long-standing, the magnitude of recent support is unprecedented.” The US has “seen reports that Pakistan is providing the Taliban with materiel, fuel, funding, technical assistance, and military advisers. We also understand that large numbers of Pakistani nationals have recently moved into Afghanistan to fight for the Taliban, apparently with the tacit acquiescence of the Pakistani government.” Direct Pakistani involvement in Taliban military operations has increased. In response, the US Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, is ordered to confront Pakistani officials on the issue and make clear that the US will not accept a Taliban military victory in Afghanistan. ([US Department of State 9/26/2000](#) [A](#))

Late September 2000: Able Danger Warns of Increased Al-Qaeda Activity in Aden Harbor Shortly Before Attack There

Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer will later claim that Capt. Scott Phillpott, leader of the Able Danger program, briefs Gen. Peter Schoomaker, head of Special Operations Command (SOCOM), that Able Danger has uncovered information of increased al-Qaeda “activity” in Aden harbor, Yemen. Shaffer, plus two other officials familiar with Able Danger later tell the New York Post that this warning was gleaned through a search of bin Laden’s business ties. Shaffer later recalls, “Yemen was elevated by Able Danger to be one of the top three hot spots for al-Qaeda in the entire world.” This warning, plus another possibly connected warning from Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) analyst Kie Fallis (see [May 2000-Late September 2000](#)), go unheeded and no official warning is issued. The USS *Cole* is attacked by al-Qaeda terrorists in Aden harbor in October 2000 (see [October 12, 2000](#)). Shaffer later claims that Phillpott tells the 9/11 Commission about this warning in 2004 to show that Able Danger could have had a significant impact, but the Commission’s findings fail to mention the warning, or in fact anything else about Able Danger (see [July 12, 2004](#)). ([Lathem 9/17/2005](#); [Shaffer 9/20/2005](#)) Rep. Curt Weldon (R) will similarly tell Fox News, “[T]wo weeks before the attack on the *Cole*, in fact, two days before the attack on the *Cole*, [Able Danger] saw an increase of activity that led them to say to the senior leadership in the Pentagon at that time, in the Clinton administration, there’s something going to happen in Yemen and we better be on high alert, but it was discounted. That story has yet to be told to the American people.” ([Fox News 10/8/2005](#))

Late September 2000: Able Danger Data Collection Begins Again; Mohamed Atta Supposedly Identified Again

The Able Danger data collection program—which lost the support of the US Army’s Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA) unit last April (see [April 2000](#))—is reconstituted and moved to a private intelligence research center run by Raytheon in Garland, Texas. While the program worked only with unclassified data under LIWA, the new Able Danger, referred to by some as “Able Danger II,” has permission to mine classified information as well. ([US Congress 9/21/2005](#); [US Congress 9/21/2005](#)) SOCOM apparently believes that this new arrangement will allow Able Danger to do its work free of some of the political interference that had hobbled the earlier effort. Other data mining teams at LIWA work on non-al-Qaeda related projects while Able Danger continue to focus on al-Qaeda. ([Harris 12/3/2005](#)) Most accounts have the first version of Able Danger in early 2000 being the version that identified Mohamed Atta and three other 9/11 hijackers. However, according to Rep. Curt Weldon (R), a Raytheon employee named Bob Johnson will later claim that Atta is independently identified by this second version of Able Danger as well (see [November 11, 2005](#)).

(Late September 2000): Suspicious Activity Report Possibly Filed about 9/11 Hijackers’ Banking Activity

After 9/11 it will be claimed that a suspicious activity report was filed about one of the money transfers made to the hijackers. The report is sometimes associated with a transfer of around \$70,000 made from the United Arab Emirates to the joint SunTrust Bank account of Marwan Alshehhi and Mohamed Atta. This transaction is one of several transfers totaling about \$100,000 that are made to Alshehhi and Atta in 2000 (see [June 29, 2000-September 18, 2000](#)). ([Eggen and Day 10/7/2001](#); [Willman 11/29/2001](#); [Heifetz 9/2002](#)) The claim will also be made in a UN report, but will be denied by the Treasury Department’s Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN). The FinCEN will state no report was filed before 9/11 “on terrorist Mohamed Atta.” However, the transfer was allegedly made to a joint account of which Alshehhi was the primary holder. ([Associated Press 5/24/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 528](#)) If filed, it is not clear what impact such report would have, as Law and Policy in International Business comments, “most of these reports are stashed away in basements and remain unread by overworked and under-resourced government employees.” ([Heifetz 9/2002](#)) In addition, the Wall Street Journal will comment that the bank that handled Atta’s “transaction was sufficiently suspicious that some crime was involved that it alerted authorities last year... But the first time [FinCEN], which is the chief reviewer of [SARs], became aware of the document in its own file was after Mr. Atta is believed to have flown a plane into the side of the World Trade Center... James Sloan, director of FinCEN, declined comment on the report filed about Mr. Atta, citing legal constraints.” ([Phillips 10/10/2001](#)) United Arab Emirates Central Bank governor Sultan Nasser al-Suwaidi will also claim that the \$70,000 transfer

was reported to US officials, but will apparently later back away from this statement in discussions with the FBI. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 135](#) ^{ال})

Late September-Early October 2000: Sarasota Flight School Finds Atta and Alshehhi Poor Students With ‘Bad Attitudes’



Jones Aviation [*Source: Jones Aviation*] (click image to enlarge) Having attended Huffman Aviation flight school in Venice, Florida since early July, Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi move to Jones Aviation in Sarasota, about 20 miles north of Venice, to continue their training. However, their instructor finds them rude and aggressive, and claims they sometimes fight with him to take over the controls of the training plane. The instructor later says that when he talks to Atta, “he could not look you in the eye. His attention span was very short.... [T]hey didn’t live up to our standards.” Atta and Alshehhi each complete about 20 hours of flying time in single-engine planes, but early in October fail their Stage I exam for instruments rating. Gary Jones, the vice president of the school, later states, “We told them we wouldn’t teach them anymore. We told them, one, they couldn’t speak English and, two, they had bad attitudes. They wouldn’t listen to what the instructors had to instruct.” The two then return to Huffman Aviation to continue their training. ([Hedges and Zeleny 9/16/2001](#); [Fainaru and Whoriskey 9/19/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 224](#))

October 2000: Hijazi Identifies Al-Marabh as Al-Qaeda Operative Living in US



Raed Hijazi. *[Source: Associated Press]* Raed Hijazi participated in a failed attempt to bomb a hotel in Jordan at the start of the millennium (see [November 30, 1999](#)) and helped plan the USS *Cole* bombing in early October 2000 (see [October 12, 2000](#)). Hijazi knew Nabil al-Marabh in Boston, where they were roommates and drove taxis for the same company. In May 1999, the FBI had already approached al-Marabh looking for Hijazi, but al-Marabh will later claim he lied and said he did not know him. ([Fainaru 9/4/2002](#)) Hijazi is arrested in Syria this month and imprisoned in Jordan, where he has just been convicted for his failed bomb attempt there. He quickly begins to cooperate with investigators, identifies himself as an al-Qaeda operative, and also identifies al-Marabh as an al-Qaeda operative still living in the US. Customs agents soon discover that al-Marabh had on at least one occasion wired money to Hijazi that was used to fund the failed millennium plot. These agents will eventually learn that al-Marabh repeatedly sent money overseas to Hijazi. Ahmed Ressam, arrested in late 1999 for attempting to bomb the Los Angeles airport, helps confirm the connection between al-Marabh and Hijazi. Ressam will start cooperating with US investigators in early 2001, but it is not clear if he gave this information before 9/11 or just after it. ([Golden and Miller 9/18/2001](#); [Risen and Engelberg 10/14/2001](#); [Fisher 10/14/2001](#); [Godfrey 11/16/2001](#); [ABC News 1/31/2002](#)) Yet, the New York Times will note, “For months after the CIA learned of his ties to the bin Laden network, Mr. Marabh moved about unfettered—traveling around the [US], moving large amounts of money, getting duplicate driver’s licenses, and forging immigration documents.” ([Risen and Engelberg 10/14/2001](#))

October 2000: Swiss Bank Still Lets Al-Qaeda Leaders Use Secret Bank Account

In a January 2002 letter to Swiss authorities, a senior Treasury Department official will claim that the Al Taqwa Bank in Switzerland had set up a highly secretive line of credit for al-Qaeda, and that it is still in use in October 2000. (Apparently its status is unknown after this time.) It states that Al Taqwa “appeared to be providing a clandestine line of credit for a close associate of bin Laden.... This bin Laden lieutenant had a line of credit with a Middle East financial institution that drew on an identical account number at Bank Al Taqwa. Unlike other accounts—even accounts of private banking customers—this account was blocked by the computer system and special privileges were required to

access it.” The letter calls the circumstances surrounding the account “highly unusual” and suggests that they were created “to conceal the association of the bin Laden organization with Bank Al Taqwa.” Another document reveals that the account was originally set up for Mamdouh Mahmoud Salim, an al-Qaeda leader who was arrested in Germany in late 1998 (see [September 20, 1998](#)). It is believed that other al-Qaeda figures continued to access the account after Salim’s arrest. ([US Department of the Treasury 8/29/2002](#); [Isikoff and Hosenball 4/12/2004](#)) The US will declare Al Taqwa Bank a terrorist financier in November 2001 (see [November 7, 2001](#)).

October 2000: DIA Official Refuses to Look at Information about Al-Qaeda, Mohamed Atta

Able Danger member Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer meets with the DIA deputy director and offers him a computer disc with information about al-Qaeda (including Mohamed Atta), but the DIA official declines to accept the disc. ([Rosen 11/24/2005](#))

October 2000: FISA Court Imposes New Requirements on Dissemination of Intelligence

The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance (FISA) Court implements new rules requiring any FBI employee who sees FISA-obtained materials or other FISA-derived intelligence to sign a certification acknowledging that the court’s approval is needed before the information is disseminated to criminal investigators. This comes after the FISA Court was informed that approximately 100 FISA applications submitted by the FBI had misrepresented how criminal and intelligence agents were working together in the Catcher’s Mitt program (see [Summer 2000-September 11, 2001](#) and [Summer-October 2000](#)). The new rules also require that the CIA and NSA place a caveat on all FISA-derived intelligence sent to the bureau. In an effort to speed up inter-agency reporting, the NSA will reportedly go a step further, placing caveats on all information it sends to the FBI. The caveats warn that the information being sent might be FISA-derived and that an intelligence agent wishing to pass it to a criminal agent must first obtain assurance from the NSA that the intelligence is not FISA-derived. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 37-38](#) )

October 2000: Almihdhar Visits Kuala Lumpur to Discuss Attack on US Interests in Singapore

Faiz abu Baker Bafana, an operative of al-Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, receives an Arab visitor and they discuss attacks on US interests in Singapore. Bafana knows the Arab as “Bandar,” but this is not his real name and it appears that “Bandar” is an alias for 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar. Almihdhar again stays in Yazid Sufaat’s apartment and travels to Afghanistan after the meeting. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#); [US](#)

[District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#)) The apartment is also used by Zacarias Moussaoui at around the same time (see [September-October 2000](#)), and Almihdhar and several other al-Qaeda commanders had used it for a summit at the start of the year (see January 5-8, 2000). Malaysian intelligence had been monitoring the apartment and passing the results on to the US, but the CIA did not ask for the surveillance to continue and it ended, apparently before this visit. Malaysian Legal Affairs minister Rais Yatim will express puzzlement over the CIA's lack of interest in the apartment: "We couldn't fathom it, really. There was no show of concern." ([Isikoff and Klaidman 6/2/2002](#)) Almihdhar will return to Malaysia to continue the planning for the Singapore attack in the middle of 2001 (see [June 2001](#)).

October 2000: Bin Laden Decides Next Action Against US Will Involve Hijacking; French Later Pass Warning to US

Bin Laden has personally approves an al-Qaeda plan to hijack a US airplane. A French intelligence report in January 2001 will describe an al-Qaeda plot to hijack aircraft, possibly one flying from Frankfurt to the US (see [January 5, 2001](#)). The report notes that, "In October 2000 bin Laden attended a meeting in Afghanistan at which the decision to mount this action was upheld." ([Le Monde \(Paris\) 4/17/2007](#)) At the meeting, bin Laden also decides that his next action against the US will involve a hijacking. However, there is still disagreement among al-Qaeda leaders over how the plot would work. ([Agence France-Presse 4/16/2007](#)) The French report also claims that in early 2000, bin Laden met with Chechen rebels, the Taliban, and other al-Qaeda leaders to begin planning this hijacking (see [Early 2000](#)). 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 is said to be planning an attack against the US with him around this time (see [Before April 13, 2001](#)). The French will apparently pass all this information to the CIA in early 2001 (see [January 5, 2001](#)).

October 2000-February 2001: Moussaoui Travels to London and Afghanistan

Zacarias Moussaoui had been staying in Malaysia so that he could take flight training classes at the Malaysian Flying Academy in Malacca. However, he is unhappy with the quality of training there. He takes the \$35,000 given to him by his hosts, Yazid Sufaat and Hambali, and spends it to buy fertilizer to construct bombs. Then he gives up and travels to London in early December (see [Mid-2000-December 9, 2000](#)), where he meets with Ramzi bin al-Shibh (who stays in London from December 2 to 9). Hambali sends a messenger to Khalid Shaikh Mohammed in Afghanistan to complain about Moussaoui's attitude. On December 9, Moussaoui leaves London. He makes his way to Afghanistan and meets with Mohammed. Mohammed decides to send him to take flight training classes in the US instead. He is given \$35,000 in cash to pay for flying lessons by someone in Pakistan. After he enters the US in February, bin al-Shibh wires him another

\$14,000 from Germany. ([Rubin and Dorgan 9/9/2002](#); [Eggen 3/28/2003](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ²¹)

October 2000-September 14, 2001: US Interagency Terrorism Finance Tracking Center Slow to Get Started

In October 2000, Congress authorizes a new unit within the Treasury Department called the Foreign Terrorist Asset Tracking Center. Its task is to blend the expertise of the Treasury Department, CIA, FBI, and NSA in tracking and disrupting the finances of US-designated terrorist groups. Similar efforts had been tried twice before and fizzled out (see [October 21, 1995](#); [Late 1998](#)). However, the unit is still getting organized at the time of the 9/11 attacks. Spurred by the attacks, the unit gets up and running on September 14, 2001. A Treasury spokesperson cites the logistical difficulties of bringing together representatives from different agencies in explaining the delay. ([Levin and Meyer 10/15/2001](#))

October-November 2000: Suspected 9/11 Hijacker Associates Meet with Prominent Muslim Activist in US



Agus Budiman. [*Source: Der Spiegel*]Mohammed bin Nasser Belfas and Agus Budiman, two Muslims living in Hamburg, Germany, travel to the US where they stay for two months. During this period, they meet with Abdurahman Alamoudi, a prominent Muslim activist whom the US has linked to Osama bin Laden. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 10/1/2003](#)) In 1994, the FBI learned that bin Laden sent Alamoudi money, which he then passed on to Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, known as the “blind sheikh” (see [Shortly After March 1994](#)). ([Myers 10/23/2003](#)) Belfas will later say the purpose behind their meetings with Alamoudi was to request some favors. For instance, at Belfas’s request, Alamoudi writes a letter of recommendation for him. But after 9/11, investigators will suspect that the two were part of the Hamburg cell and that their trip to the US was related to the 9/11 attacks, for both Belfas and Budiman have connections to Mohamed Atta and other al-Qaeda operatives. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 10/1/2003](#)) In 1998, Belfas shared an apartment with Ramzi bin al-Shibh, led a prayer group attended by Atta and others (see [1999](#)), and worked in a computer warehouse packing boxes with Atta, bin al-Shibh, and Marwan Alshehhi. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#))

October-November 2000: Hijackers' Associate Fraudulently Obtains Virginia ID

Mohammed Belfas, mentor of lead hijacker Mohamed Atta and a former roommate of his associate Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and Belfas' companion Agus Budiman travel to the US. Belfas, who led an Islamic study group that Atta attended in Hamburg (see [1999](#)) and also worked in a computer warehouse with Atta, bin al-Shibh, and Marwan Alshehhi, obtains an ID card in the same fraudulent way as the 9/11 hijackers later will. After 9/11, investigators will suspect the trip was related to the attacks, as Belfas and Budiman meet a bin Laden associate in the US (see [October-November 2000](#)). Belfas and Budiman stay with Budiman's brother, who lives in the suburbs of Washington, DC, and Budiman takes a job as a night driver for a restaurant delivery service. Belfas often accompanies him to work and offers to help drive the delivery car if Budiman helps him get a US driver's license, which he does not need to drive the delivery route, but merely claims to want as a souvenir. On November 4 they go to the Department of Motor Vehicles and Belfas gets a Virginia ID card, after Budiman affirms he lives in Arlington. Two days later Belfas uses the ID card to get a Virginia driver's license. He returns to Germany soon after and has an alleged chance meeting on a train with bin al-Shibh, whom he tells about the trip and the driver's license. ([McDermott 2005, pp. 57-8](#)) Several of the 9/11 hijackers will fraudulently obtain Virginia IDs in 2001 (see [August 1-2, 2001](#)). Bin al-Shibh will also explain his and Atta's travel to Afghanistan to join al-Qaeda to another chance meeting on a train. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 165](#))

(October-December 2000): Fellow Flight Student Suspicious of Atta and Alshehhi



Anne Greaves. [*Source: History Channel*] While they attend Huffman Aviation flying school in Venice, Florida, hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi use the same training airplane as Anne Greaves, a 56-year-old former osteopath from England. Later interviewed for Australian television, Greaves says she saw Atta and Alshehhi on an almost daily basis over roughly six weeks, although earlier reports claim she attended the school with them for as long as six months. ([BBC 9/24/2001](#); [Britten 9/25/2001](#); [Australian Broadcasting Corporation 10/18/2001](#)) Her instructor tells her that Atta is an Arab prince and Alshehhi is his bodyguard. ([Associated Press 9/24/2001](#)) Yet Rudi Dekkers, the school's owner, later claims the two only said they were cousins from

Germany. ([USA Today 9/13/2001](#)) (Atta and Alshehhi are in fact unrelated. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 160-162](#))) Greaves says, “I was really a little bit jealous in that they were always given preference with one of the Warriors which was a much newer, much neater aircraft,” and comments that for Atta “to have progressed as rapidly as he seemed to have done at Huffman he must have had flying skills before he came to Huffman Aviation.” (This fits with claims made by Rudi Dekkers, that Atta already had a private pilot’s license when he first arrived at the school (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)).) However, though the pair always flies together, she says, “I never saw Alshehhi take the controls of the aircraft. It was always Mohamed Atta.” ([Associated Press 9/24/2001](#); [Australian Broadcasting Corporation 10/18/2001](#); [US Congress 3/19/2002](#)) Whereas Alshehhi dresses casually, Greaves sees Atta “always very formally dressed... always neatly pressed trousers of a wool type. A shirt and a waistcoat to match the trousers.” This is in spite of the “extremely hot” weather. ([Australian Broadcasting Corporation 10/18/2001](#)) She says Atta never shows any emotion and appears hypnotized. ([BBC 9/24/2001](#); [Associated Press 9/24/2001](#)) The only time she sees him and Alshehhi show any enthusiasm is around the “middle end of October” or “possibly early in November,” when they have been busy on the Internet in the school’s computer room. She sees them “hugging each other with joy and almost dancing in the room.” Several reports later speculate that this celebrating is in response to the al-Qaeda bombing of the USS *Cole* in Yemen (see [October 12, 2000](#)), though Greaves is unsure. ([Australian Broadcasting Corporation 10/18/2001](#); [BBC 12/12/2001](#); [PBS 1/17/2002](#)) She later says, “I couldn’t help but be suspicious as to why [Atta] was there [at Huffman]. There was no love of flying in him.” Although she never considers terrorism, she thinks at the time that there is “an ulterior motive, maybe drug smuggling.” After the 9/11 attacks, due to her suspicion of the pair, she will contact the FBI with her concerns before the names of the suspected hijackers are made public. ([Britten 9/25/2001](#); [BBC 12/12/2001](#); [Corbin 7/5/2002](#))

October 5, 2000: Vice Presidential Candidates Advocate Tough Stance Toward Iraq; Cheney Says the Use of Force against Iraq May Be Necessary

During the vice presidential debates, both Joe Lieberman and Dick Cheney advocate a tough stance toward Saddam Hussein. Lieberman says he and Gore would continue to support Iraqi opposition groups “until the Iraqi people rise up and do what the people of Serbia have done in the last few days: get rid of a despot.” Cheney says it might be necessary “to take military action to forcibly remove Saddam from power.” ([CATO Daily Dispatch 10/6/2000](#))

October 10, 2000: Able Danger Members Warn of Imminent Event at Port of Aden

Special Operations Command official Christopher Chope will later claim that in early October 2000, “one of the intelligence analysts assigned to the Able Danger effort began

to get what he calls gut feel that things were going awry in Yemen; he didn't have any hard intelligence. He asked then Commander Scott Philpott if that could be briefed at a high level briefing." The briefing takes place on this day during a VIP visit to Garland, Texas, where the Able Danger program is based in late 2000 (see [Late September 2000](#)). ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#)) Rep. Curt Weldon (R) will later describe the warning in more serious terms than Chope, saying, "They saw information that led them to unequivocally understand that something was going to happen in the port at Yemen involving an American entity. Two days before the attack, they were jumping up and down because they knew something was going to happen... at the port of Aden." ([Rosenberg 11/10/2005](#)) Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer will also later describe the warning in serious terms, claiming that the Able Danger team he was on determined that Yemen was one of the three most dangerous locations for al-Qaeda activity in the world (see [Late September 2000](#)). According to Shaffer, Gen. Pete Schoomaker, commander of Special Operations Command, attends the briefing. Shaffer says that "Philpott requested they do something with it, they take action on it," but apparently the warning does not reach the military commanders in Yemen before the USS *Cole* is bombed in Yemen two days later. Rep. Curt Weldon (R) will later say that the commander of the *Cole* told him in an interview that he "had three options on that day. He could have refueled the ship at sea. He had two other harbors. If he would have had any indication that there was a problem with Aden in Yemen, he would not have gone there. He was never given that information." ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#))

October 10, 2000: Future Madrid Bombers Arrested in Turkey and Then Let Go

Three suspected al-Qaeda operatives, Said Berraj, Amer el-Azizi, and Salaheddin Benyaich, are arrested in Turkey. Berraj and el-Azizi will later be involved in an attack in Madrid, Spain, that kills nearly 200 people (see [Before March 11, 2004](#) and [March 11, 2004](#)) and Benyaich will later be jailed in Morocco on terrorism charges following a bombing in Casablanca (see [May 16, 2003](#)). El-Azizi will also apparently be involved in setting up a meeting where details of the 9/11 plot are finalized (see [Before July 8, 2001](#)). They are arrested two weeks after arriving in Turkey, apparently for failing to produce identification papers. They are later released, but the reason for releasing them is unknown. Turkey is a transit center and logistics base for al-Qaeda (see [November 1996-September 1998](#) and Mid-1996) and el-Azizi is said to operate there, as well as in Iran and, possibly, Iraq. ([Rotella 4/14/2004](#); [Fuchs 4/29/2004](#); [Fuchs 4/30/2004](#)) El-Azizi is also arrested for passport forgery at one point, and then let go, although it is not clear when. ([Johnson et al. 3/19/2004](#)) Turkish intelligence is aware of extremists' use of Turkey as a base (see [1996](#)), but it is unclear whether this is related to the arrest of the three men. El-Azizi will repeatedly evade arrest in Spain after 9/11, apparently with the help of Spanish intelligence (see [October 2001](#) and [Shortly After November 21, 2001](#)).

October 11, 2000: Candidate Bush Falsely Asserts 'Humble' Middle East Foreign Policy

Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush describes a Middle East foreign policy he would implement that is very different from the policy described in the papers that his advisers have drawn up. On this day, Bush takes part in the second presidential debate with Democratic candidate Al Gore. The topic is foreign policy. Questioned when it would be appropriate to use American military force, especially with regard to the Middle East, Bush responds, “Our nation stands alone right now in the world in terms of power. And that’s why we’ve got to be humble and yet project strength in a way that promotes freedom... If we’re an arrogant nation, they’ll view us that way, but if we’re a humble nation, they’ll respect us.” Bush dismisses toppling Saddam Hussein in Iraq because it smacks of what he calls “nation-building.” He criticizes the Clinton administration for not maintaining the multilateral anti-Iraq coalition Bush Sr. had built in the Gulf War. Author Craig Unger will later comment, “To the tens of millions of voters who had their eyes trained on their televisions, Bush had put forth a moderate foreign policy with regard to the Middle East that was not substantively different from the policy proposed by Al Gore, or, for that matter, from Bill Clinton’s. Only a few people who had read the papers put forth by the Project for a New American Century might have guessed a far more radical policy had been developed.” ([Unger 3/15/2004](#)) Just one month before, the Project for a New American Century released a position paper that went completely unnoticed by the media at the time (see [September 2000](#)). Many future Bush administration officials, including Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz are involved with the paper. It articulates a bold new policy to establish a more forceful US military presence in the Middle East. Regarding Iraq, it states, “The United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.” ([Unger 3/15/2004](#)) From Bush’s first cabinet meeting in January 2001, the focus will be on getting rid of Hussein. Secretary of Treasury Paul O’Neill will later recall, “From the very beginning, there was a conviction, that Saddam Hussein was a bad person and that he needed to go... From the very first instance, it was about Iraq. It was about what we can do to change this regime. Day one, these things were laid and sealed” (see [January 30, 2001](#)). Cheney similarly misstates his true foreign policy intentions. In an NBC interview during the 2000 presidential campaign, Cheney defends Bush’s position of maintaining Clinton’s policy not to attack Iraq, asserting that the US should not act as though “we were an imperialist power, willy-nilly moving into capitals in that part of the world, taking down governments.” ([Masters 1/12/2002](#))

Before October 12, 2000: Commander of *Cole* Attack Reportedly Meets Monitored Al-Qaeda Operative and Bin Al-Shibh

Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, an al-Qaeda leader involved in the attack on the USS *Cole*, is said to meet two associates, Ahmed al-Hada and al-Hada’s nephew Ramzi bin al-Shibh, in Yemen. ([Schrom 10/1/2002](#); [Hosenball 12/2/2002](#)) Al-Hada, an operative who runs a communications hub for Osama bin Laden, has been under surveillance since 1998, at

least (see [August 5-25, 1998](#)). The surveillance of al-Hada is reportedly so important that his house is monitored by spy satellites, to visually identify everyone coming and going (see [Late August 1998](#)), although it is unclear where the meeting with al-Nashiri takes place. The exact timing of this meeting and that with bin al-Shibh is not known, although bin al-Shibh makes a trip to Yemen a month before the bombing (see [Around September 15-16 and October 10-21, 2000](#)). ([Hosenball 12/2/2002](#)) Bin al-Shibh is repeatedly denied a US visa. Although the earlier applications are denied on the grounds he may stay in the US, it will later be suggested that his presumed role in the *Cole* bombing may have influenced one or more later denials (see [May 17, 2000-May 2001](#)).

October 12, 2000: USS *Cole* Bombed by Al-Qaeda



Damage to the USS Cole. [*Source: Department of Defense*] The USS *Cole* is bombed in the Aden, Yemen harbor by two al-Qaeda militants, Hassan al-Khamri and Ibrahim al-Thawar (a.k.a. Nibras). Seventeen US soldiers are killed and 30 are wounded. The CIA will later conclude that with just slightly more skilled execution, the attack would have killed 300 and sunk the ship. ([ABC News 10/13/2000](#); [Coll 2004, pp. 532](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 191](#)) The Islamic Army of Aden immediately takes credit for the attack. This is a Yemen-based Muslim militant group widely believed to have close ties to al-Qaeda (see [1996-1997 and After](#)). ([Whitaker 10/14/2000](#)) The prime minister of Yemen at the time of the bombing will say shortly after 9/11, “The Islamic Army was part of al-Qaeda.” ([Whitaker 10/13/2001](#)) The US soon learns the names of some al-Qaeda operatives involved in the attack, including Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Tawfiq bin Attash and Fahad al-Quso (see [Early December 2000](#)), and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (see [November-December 2000](#)). 9/11 hijackers Ramzi bin al-Shibh (see [Around September 15-16 and October 10-21, 2000](#)) and Khalid Almihdhar (see [Around October 12, 2000](#)) may also have been involved. This is a repeat of a previously attempted attack, against the USS *The Sullivans*, which failed and was apparently undetected (see [January 3, 2000](#)). ([McDermott, Meyer, and McDonnell 12/22/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission will later say the *Cole* bombing “was a full-fledged al-Qaeda operation, supervised directly by bin Laden. He chose the target and location of the attack, selected the suicide operatives, and provided the money needed to purchase explosives and equipment.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 190](#))

October 12, 2000: Candidate Bush Responds to Terrorism Question with Missile Shield Proposal

Hours after the USS *Cole* is bombed (see [October 12, 2000](#)), presidential candidate Governor George W. Bush is asked about the bombing. He replies, “Today, we lost sailors because of what looks like to be a terrorist attack. Terror is the enemy. Uncertainty is what the world is going to be about, and the next president must be able to address uncertainty. And that’s why I want our nation to develop an antiballistic missile system that will have the capacity to bring certainty into this uncertain world.” Author Craig Unger comments, “Bush’s proposal of an antiballistic missile system suggests that he failed to understand that al-Qaeda’s terrorism was fundamentally different from conventional warfare.” ([Unger 2004, pp. 107, 479](#)) Bush will make similar comments on other occasions, causing the 9/11 Commission to later note, “Public references by candidate and then President Bush about terrorism before 9/11 tended to reflect [his] priorities, focusing on state-sponsored terrorism and [weapons of mass destruction] as a reason to mount a missile defense.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 509](#))

[Around October 12, 2000: Hijacker Almihdhar in Yemen, Reportedly Involved in *Cole* Bombing](#)



Damage to the USS Cole, shown in dry dock.

[Source: US Navy] 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar is in Yemen when the USS *Cole* is attacked in Aden harbor there (see [October 12, 2000](#)), and is reported to have had a role in the bombing. Almihdhar leaves shortly after the attack, together with al-Qaeda operative Khallad bin Attash. ([McDermott 2005, pp. 209](#)) Bin Attash is quickly identified as one of the masterminds of the operation (see [Late October-Late November 2000](#)). Almihdhar will subsequently be accused of participating in the operation by the prime ministers of Yemen and Britain (see [Early October 2001](#) and [October 4, 2001](#)). The *Cole* attack was a repeat of a failed attempt to bomb the USS *The Sullivans* (see [January 3, 2000](#)), of which Almihdhar had foreknowledge (see [Late 1999](#)). Almihdhar, who trained with the *Cole* bombers (see [Late 1999](#)) and attended an apparent planning session for the operation (see January 5-8, 2000), may also be involved in a later ship-bombing operation in Singapore (see [June 2001](#)). Ramzi bin al-Shibh, a close associate of the hijackers, also leaves Yemen around this time and is also suspected of involvement in the bombing (see [Around September 15-16 and October 10-21, 2000](#)).

[October 12, 2000: Cameraman Misses *Cole* Attack because He Oversleeps](#)

Al-Qaeda operative Fahad al-Quso is supposed to video the attack on the USS *Cole* that occurs on this day (see [October 12, 2000](#)). However, al-Quso sleeps through his alarm and is not able to set his camera up in time. The bombers call him repeatedly on his cell phone until seconds before the crash, but he is in a taxi when the explosion occurs. He immediately goes into hiding and the camera is later found at his sister's house. Osama bin Laden had specifically asked that the attack be videoed and had allocated funds for this purpose. The CIA will later trace \$5,000 sent by bin Laden to the bombers' cell in Yemen. ([Miniter 2003, pp. 217, 229](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#).)

Mid-October 2000-Summer 2001: NSA Intercepts Calls between Hijacker in US and Al-Qaeda Communications Hub

In the months after the USS *Cole* is bombed in autumn 2000 (see [October 12, 2000](#)), the NSA intercepts about half a dozen communications between hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi in the US and an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana'a, Yemen, run by hijacker Khalid Almihdhar's father in law, Ahmed al-Hada. ([Myers 7/21/2004](#); [Meyer 12/21/2005](#); [US President 12/26/2005](#).) The hub and people associated with it are thought to have played a support role in the *Cole* bombing (see also [October 14-Late November, 2000](#) and [October 4, 2001](#)). ([CNN 2/14/2002](#); [Myers 7/21/2004](#)) It was also involved in the bombing of US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya (see [August 5-25, 1998](#)). The NSA has been monitoring the number for at least two years (see [Late August 1998](#)) and the FBI has used it to map al-Qaeda's global organisation (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). The NSA had previously intercepted calls between hijacker Khalid Almihdhar in the US and the hub (see [Spring-Summer 2000](#) and [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)) and also intercepts a call between Alhazmi and the hub a few weeks before 9/11 (see [August 2001](#)).

After October 12, 2000: Clinton Administration Sets High Threshold for Response to *Cole* Bombing

Following the attack on the USS *Cole* in Yemen (see [October 12, 2000](#)), the Clinton administration discusses what standard of evidence it needs to launch a counter-strike against al-Qaeda, which it suspects of the bombing. Following the bombing of the US embassies in East Africa (see [August 7, 1998](#)), the administration fired a number of cruise missiles at suspected al-Qaeda targets (see [August 20, 1998](#)). However, the administration decides it must have evidence that bin Laden and al-Qaeda's leadership has authority, direction, and control of the attack before initiating a response. CIA director George J. Tenet will comment: "This is a high threshold to cross." Tenet will also say that this threshold was not set by the CIA, but by "policy makers." ([Tenet 2007, pp. 128](#)) Although the bombing is tied to three known leading al-Qaeda operatives, Khallad bin Attash (see [November 11, 2000](#)), Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (see [November-December 2000](#)), and Ahmed al-Hada (see [November 2000 or After](#)), early on in the investigation, no counterstrike is initiated (see [Shortly After October 12, 2000](#) and [Late October 2000](#)). Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke will express his frustration with the inaction:

“[I]n Washington neither CIA nor FBI would state the obvious: al-Qaeda did it. We knew there was a large al-Qaeda cell in Yemen. There was also a large cell of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, but that group had now announced its complete merger into al-Qaeda, so what difference did it make which group did the attack? [Counterterrorism staff] had worked around the clock piecing together the evidence and had made a very credible case against al-Qaeda. CIA would agree only months later.” ([Clarke 2004, pp. 223](#)) The authors of the 2002 book *The Cell* will later write: “The links to bin Laden were everywhere. Each of the suspects being held in Yemen had admitted training in the Afghan camps run by bin Laden... neither the FBI nor the CIA was ever able to tell the president that they had direct proof that the *Cole* was a bin Laden-ordered job, though now, in retrospect, it seems terribly obvious. In any case, even if there had been compelling proof that bin Laden was behind the *Cole* bombing, there was little chance that the Clinton administration would have launched an attack on any Islamic country while he was trying to get the Israelis and Palestinians to the peace table.” ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 238](#))

After October 12, 2000: Possible Links Between *Cole* Bombing and Yemeni Government Hinders US Investigation

Author Lawrence Wright will later write about the FBI’s investigation of the USS *Cole* bombing in Yemen (see [October 12, 2000](#)), “The FBI was convinced that the [*Cole*] bombers had been tipped off about the arrival of the *Cole*, and they wanted to expand the investigation to include a member of the president’s own family and a colonel in [the Yemeni equivalent of the FBI]. There was scant interest on the part of the Yemeni authorities in pursuing such leads.” Wright will also point out: “Yemen was a particularly difficult place to start a terrorist investigation, as it was filled with active al-Qaeda cells and with sympathizers at very high levels of government. On television, Yemeni politicians called for jihad against America. Just getting permission from the Yemeni government to go to the crime scene—the wounded warship in the Aden harbor—required lengthy negotiations with hostile officials.” Cooperation from the Yemeni government is erratic at best. For instance, the Yemenis eventually show the FBI a videotape taken by a harborside security camera, but it appears the moment of the explosion has been edited out. ([Wright 2006, pp. 325](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#)) Later, when the FBI is finally allowed to interview Fahad al-Quso, who the FBI believes is one of the main *Cole* plotters, a Yemeni colonel enters the room and kisses Quso on both cheeks. This is a recognized signal to everyone that al-Quso is protected. ([Wright 2006, pp. 330](#)) Between Yemeni obstructions, infighting between US officials (see [October 14-Late November, 2000](#)), and security concerns hindering movement, there will never be the same kind of investigation and trial as there was with the 1998 embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#) and [February-July 2001](#)).

Shortly After October 12, 2000: US Decides Against Immediate Counterstrike on Al-Qaeda after *Cole* Bombing



Michael Sheehan. [Source: *Center on Law and Security*] In the wake of the USS *Cole* bombing (see [October 12, 2000](#)), Clinton administration officials hold a high level meeting to discuss what the US response should be. The meeting attendees include: Counterterrorism “Tsar” Richard Clarke, Defense Secretary William Cohen, CIA Director George Tenet, Attorney General Janet Reno, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Deputy National Security Advisor Jim Steinberg, and State Department Coordinator for Counterterrorism Michael Sheehan.

- Clarke suggests that al-Qaeda was behind the attacks. There is no hard evidence of this yet but he argues that the attack matches their profile and capabilities. He presents a detailed plan, which he’d been working on before the bombing, to level all the al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan as well as key Taliban buildings in such towns as Kandahar and Kabul.

- Reno argues there’s no clear evidence yet who was behind the bombing. If there is such evidence, any US actions should not be for retaliation but only for self-protection against future attacks.

- Tenet says that he suspects al-Qaeda is behind the bombing but also wants to wait until an investigation determines that before acting.

- Cohen is against any counterattack. Clarke will later recall Cohen saying at the meeting that the *Cole* bombing “was not sufficient provocation.” Sheehan will later say that the “entire Pentagon” was generally against a counterattack.

- Albright is against a counterattack for diplomatic reasons. The Clinton administration is involved in trying to create a peace settlement between the Israelis and Palestinians and bombing Afghanistan could ruin such talks.

Many also argue that if Afghanistan is attacked and bin Laden is not killed, he could emerge a greater hero in the Muslim world, just as he did after a 1998 US missile strike (see [Late 1998](#)). Clarke argues that the continual creation of new trained militants in Afghanistan needs to stop, and if bin Laden is killed, that would merely be a “bonus.” At the end of the meeting, the highest-ranking officials cast votes, and seven vote against Clarke’s counterstrike plan, while only Clarke votes in favor of it. After the meeting, Sheehan will meet with Clarke and express frustration with the outcome, saying, “What’s it going to take to get them to hit al-Qaeda in Afghanistan? Does al-Qaeda have to hit the Pentagon?” ([Miniter 2003, pp. 222-227](#))

October 14-Late November, 2000: Investigation Into USS Cole Bombing Is Thwarted



Barbara Bodine at a press conference days after the bombing of the USS Cole. [Source: Reuters] The first FBI agents enter Yemen two days after the bombing of the USS *Cole* in an attempt to discover who was responsible. However, the main part of the team initially gets stuck in Germany because they do not have permission to enter Yemen and they are then unable to accomplish much due to restrictions placed on them and tensions between lead investigator John O'Neill and US Ambassador to Yemen Barbara Bodine. All but about 50 investigators are forced to leave by the end of October. O'Neill's boss Barry Mawn visits to assess the situation. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 237](#); [Wright 1/14/2002](#); [Sunday Times \(London\) 2/3/2002](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#).) Mawn will later comment, "It became clear [Bodine] simply hated his guts." After a ten day investigation, he concludes O'Neill is doing a fine job, tells Bodine that she is O'Neill's "only detractor," and refuses her request to recall him. ([Wright 2006, pp. 32](#)) But O'Neill and much of his team are pressured to leave by late November and Bodine will not give him permission to return any time after that. The investigation stalls without his personal relationships to top Yemeni officials. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 237](#); [Wright 1/14/2002](#); [Sunday Times \(London\) 2/3/2002](#)) Increased security threats force the reduced FBI team still in Yemen to withdraw altogether in June 2001. ([PBS Frontline 10/3/2002](#)) The prime minister of Yemen at the time later claims (see [Early October 2001](#)) that hijacker "Khalid Almihdhar was one of the *Cole* perpetrators, involved in preparations. He was in Yemen at the time and stayed after the *Cole* bombing for a while, then he left." The Sunday Times later notes, "The failure in Yemen may have blocked off lines of investigation that could have led directly to the terrorists preparing for September 11." ([Sunday Times \(London\) 2/3/2002](#))

(Between October 15 and November 21, 2000): FBI Expert Warns of Al-Qaeda Threat to WTC

Los Angeles FBI agent Pat Patterson is sent to Yemen to assist in the investigation of the USS *Cole* bombing (see [October 14-Late November, 2000](#)). While there, he spends several evenings with John O'Neill, the special agent in charge of the FBI's National Security Division in New York, who is leading the investigation. O'Neill is the FBI's top

expert on al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. The two men speculate about what bin Laden's next target might be, and end up considering the World Trade Center. Patterson later recalls, "I thought it was unlikely they would hit a target a second time, but John was convinced of it. He said, 'No, they definitely want to bring that building down.' He just had that sense and was insistent about it." ([Kolker 12/17/2001](#); [Weiss 2003, pp. 291-292 and 321](#)) After leaving the FBI, John O'Neill will actually start work as director of security for the World Trade Center shortly before 9/11 (see [August 23, 2001](#)).

October 20, 2000: Ali Mohamed Pleads Guilty of Involvement in 1998 Embassy Bombings

Ali Mohamed pleads guilty to five counts of conspiracy to kill nationals of the US in connection with the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. The charges include plotting to kill US soldiers in Somalia and Saudi Arabia, plotting to murder US ambassadors and other embassy officials, and plotting to kill "United States civilians anywhere in the world." The nature of the plea agreement is secret. ([United States of America v. Ali Mohamed 10/20/2000](#); [Aita 5/15/2001](#)) One newspaper will note, "Mohamed's relationship with the FBI and intelligence services remains wrapped in secrecy. His plea agreement is sealed, as are many of the court documents and much of the testimony. Mohamed was expected to testify—but did not—at the trial at which the four others were convicted. Mohamed and his lawyer have declined all interview requests." ([Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#))

Between October 24 and 28, 2000: Military Holds Exercise Rehearsing Response to a Plane Crash at the Pentagon



A plane crash is simulated inside the cardboard courtyard of a model Pentagon. [Source: *Dennis Ryan, MDW News Service*] Pentagon and Arlington County emergency responders assemble in the office of the Secretary of Defense's conference room in the Pentagon for a mass casualty exercise ("MASCAL"). The exercise involves three mock-scenarios. One is of a commercial airliner crashing into the Pentagon and killing 342 people, while the other two involve a terrorist attack at the Pentagon's subway stop and a construction accident. The exercises are conducted using a large-scale model of the Pentagon with a model airplane literally on fire in the central courtyard of the building. An Army medic who participates in the mock attack calls it "a

real good scenario and one that could happen easily,” while a fire chief notes: “You have to plan for this. Look at all the air traffic around here.” ([Ryan 11/3/2000](#); [Lines 5/24/2002](#); [United Press International 4/22/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 314)

Late October 2000: Clinton Considers Missile Attack on Bin Laden

Shortly after the USS *Cole* bombing (see [October 12, 2000](#)), the US supposedly obtains intelligence that prompts President Clinton to consider another missile strike on bin Laden. The US presidential election is in early November. Author Lawrence Wright will later write, “Clinton maintains that, despite the awkward political timing, his administration came close to launching another missile attack... but at the last minute the CIA recommended calling it off because [bin Laden’s] presence at the site was not completely certain.” ([Wright 2006](#), pp. 244) Additionally, the tie between the *Cole* bombing and al-Qaeda had not yet been confirmed. The first strong evidence of such a tie will come in late November 2000 when details of an al-Qaeda operative’s confession are given to the FBI (see [Late October-Late November 2000](#)). The 9/11 Commission will make no mention of any planned strikes around this time in their final report while discussing the missed opportunities to strike at bin Laden. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 237) However, the Washington Post will detail the opportunity, saying the target was a “stone compound, built around a central courtyard full of al-Qaeda operatives.” But the strike is canceled when CIA Director George Tenet calls National Security Adviser Sandy Berger and says about the quality of intelligence, “We just don’t have it.” ([Gellman 12/19/2001](#)) Ironically, it appears bin Laden was actually hoping to be attacked, anticipating that it would boost his reputation in the Muslim world. In the summer of 2001, the NSA will monitor two al-Qaeda operatives discussing how disappointed they are that the US did not retaliate after the *Cole* bombing (see [June 30-July 1, 2001](#)).

Late October-Late November 2000: Confession Leads FBI to *Cole* Mastermind

Fahad al-Quso, a Yemeni and known associate of Osama bin Laden, turns himself in to the Yemeni government after some of his relatives are questioned in the wake of the USS *Cole* bombing (see [October 12, 2000](#)). ([Wright 7/10/2006](#) ^٥) He admits that he and one of the two *Cole* suicide bombers went to Bangkok, Thailand, and gave several thousand dollars to a man known as Khallad, who is identified as one of the masterminds of the *Cole* bombing. He says the money is to buy a new artificial leg for the one-legged Khallad. The transcript of the interrogation is given to the FBI a month later. FBI agent Ali Soufan sees the transcript and remembers a source he recruited in Afghanistan who spoke of a one-legged man named Khallad who is close to bin Laden. Khallad is his nickname; his real name is Tawfiq bin Attash. A mug shot of bin Attash is sent to this source, who makes a positive identification. Soufan wonders why money was being sent away from the *Cole* plotters and away from Yemen prior to a major planned attack and speculates that it may mean another al-Qaeda operation is being planned elsewhere.

Soufan asks the CIA for information about Khallad and this other attack, which turns out to be 9/11, but the CIA withholds the information (see [Late November 2000](#)). Al-Quso will later reveal more to the FBI, leading to more missed opportunities (see [Early December 2000](#)). ([Wright 2006, pp. 328-329](#))

Late October 2000-July 4, 2001: Hijacker Almihdhar Travels around Asia

After leaving Yemen following the bombing of the USS *Cole* (see [Around October 12, 2000](#)), 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar travels to Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Malaysia (see [October 2000](#) and [June 2001](#)), and also back to Yemen. He may also travel to the United Arab Emirates (see [June 2001](#)). From late 2000 to February 2001 he stays with his cousin in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, even though he is apparently on the terrorist watch list there (see [1997](#)). He then returns to Yemen, to stay with his family at an al-Qaeda communications hub monitored by US intelligence (see [Late August 1998](#)). Following this he goes to Afghanistan, then to the United Arab Emirates, from where he travels to stay with his cousin in Mecca for another month. Before flying to New York (see [July 4, 2001](#)), Almihdhar tells his cousin that Osama bin Laden is planning five attacks on the US and asks the cousin to watch over his family, because he has a job to do. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 237](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 137](#)). After 9/11, there will be speculation that during this period Almihdhar is coordinating the arrival of the other muscle hijackers. According to FBI Director Robert Mueller, this would explain his stay in Saudi Arabia and his return only after all the other hijackers had arrived. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) However, there is some evidence suggesting that Almihdhar may have visited the US in this time frame, perhaps using a passport in a false name (see [June 10, 2000](#)).

November 2000-Spring 2002: Florida FBI Investigates Plot to Blow Up Mount Rushmore



Imran Mandhai. [*Source: crimelibrary (.com)*]The FBI in Florida investigates a group of Muslims it suspects of being terrorists, including an apparent associate of Mohamed Atta named Adnan Shukrijumah (see [April-May 2001](#) and [May 2, 2001](#)). The investigation starts with the November 2000 Florida arrest of Turkish

immigrant Hakki Aksoy, who is found to be in possession of instructions for making a car bomb. An FBI informant named Howard Gilbert enters the Darul Aloom mosque in Pembroke Pines (a town just north of Miami) to check out one of Aksoy's associates, Imran Mandhai. Gilbert starts plotting with Mandhai and a friend of Mandhai's named Shuyeb Mossa Jokhan. ([Norman 8/1/2002](#); [Norman 8/8/2002](#); [Willing 6/15/2003](#)) Gilbert is replaced by another FBI informant known as "Mohamed the bomb maker," who agrees to wear a wire and testify in court. Mohamed and Mandhai drive around South Florida selecting local bomb targets including a National Guard armory, electrical substations, Jewish-owned businesses, the Israeli consulate in Miami, plus Mount Rushmore in the Midwest. Mandhai and Jokhan are unable to buy weapons themselves, but Gilbert, the first informant, had given Mandhai a copy of a bomb-making manual, and Mohamed, the second informant, shows Mandhai the range of guns and explosives he can provide. ([Broward Herald 5/29/2002](#); [Kaufman and Rabinowitz 10/27/2003](#); [US Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit: appeal 7/2/2004](#).) The FBI interviews Mandhai and Jokhan in late spring 2001 and they acknowledge they are training for jihad. However, the FBI's surveillance of them stops shortly after this. The FBI takes no action against them for a year, and then indicts them in May 2002. At the trial they are both found guilty; Mandhai receives twelve years and Jokhan five. It is unclear why the FBI acts in this way, although it is possibly related to a forced curtailment of electronic surveillance that is taking place at this time. In the summer of 2000, the bureau was ordered to shutdown certain wiretaps after an FBI official was found to have been misrepresenting petitions for taps on terror suspects (see [Summer 2000-September 11, 2001](#)). Coincidentally, after Gilbert and Mandhai develop a series of courses for potential recruits entitled "Skills Necessary for Jihad" in the spring of 2001, Mandhai prints them at the same Kinko's copy shop in Hollywood that is used by Mohamed Atta and Hamza Alghamdi to buy their tickets for 9/11 (see [August 25-September 5, 2001](#)). ([Broward Herald 5/29/2002](#); [Manjoo 12/3/2002](#); [Willing 6/15/2003](#))

Late Autumn 2000: CIA Support for Massoud Weakens

Covert CIA support for Ahmed Shah Massoud, the Northern Alliance guerrilla leader fighting the Taliban, is minimal and fraying. In the wake of the USS *Cole* bombing, the CIA develops a plan where the US would increase support for Massoud if he produces strong intelligence about bin Laden's whereabouts. Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke outlines this CIA proposal to National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, but Berger rejects it. Aid to Massoud continues to languish under the new Bush administration, until Clarke's proposal (slightly modified) is tentatively approved a week before 9/11. ([Coll 2/23/2004](#))

November 2000: Taliban Allegedly Offers to Hand bin Laden to US Officials



Kabir Mohabbat. [Source: ZDF] In 1999, Kabir Mohabbat, an Afghan-American businessman, had initiated conversations about bin Laden between the US government and the Taliban. According to Mohabbat, the Taliban were ready to hand bin Laden over to a third country, or the International Court of Justice, in exchange for having the US-led sanctions against Afghanistan lifted. (Elmar Brok, a German member of the European Parliament, later confirms that he helps Mohabbat make contact with the US government in 1999.) The initial talks lead to a secret meeting this month between Taliban ministers and US officials in a Frankfurt hotel. Taliban Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil reportedly says in the meeting, “You can have him whenever the Americans are ready. Name us a country and we will extradite him.” However, after this face-to-face meeting, further discussions are never held because, Brok believes, a “political decision” has been made by US officials not to continue the negotiations. He does not clarify when he believes such a decision was made. ([Reuters 6/5/2004](#) Sources: [Elmar Brok](#))

November-December 2000: Able Danger Stops Data Collection and Moves into Operational Phase

Special Assistant to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense Stephen Cambone will later state, “[T]he purpose of Able Danger was to develop a campaign plan. By November of 2000, the Garland effort was terminated—that is, the activity with Raytheon—and resources were shifted to the development of the actual draft of the campaign plan. That is, for a period of about five months or so, continuous effort was made to develop the tools. But by the time we come to the end of 2000, we need the plan. And so, SOCOM decides that it’s going to put its resources against developing the plan, terminate the activity at Garland, Texas, and begins to draft the plan. That plan, in the end, was rolled into a larger activity within the Joint Staff in the early 2001 timeframe, and that larger plan has within it components that are very much connected to the heritage of the Able Danger activity.... As best we can ascertain, US SOCOM had Raytheon, at the end of its effort in November of 2000, take most of the data that had been generated at Raytheon, and take it out of its system, essentially to purge it. A small percentage of information, roughly about one percent of that developed at Garland, was in turn transferred over to US Special Operations Command.” Cambone says the reason for this second massive data purge was, “[W]here we are by the end of the year 2000 is that, information that had been generated at LIWA [Land Information Warfare Activity] runs up against the concern about US persons information being stored improperly, as well as having the authority to do the operation for the Army.” ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#)) Lt. Col.

Anthony Shaffer will later blame the retirement of Gen. Pete Schoomaker in October 2000 and his replacement by Gen. Charles Holland as a major reason for the shut down of the data mining effort. He says, “Gen. Holland, in my judgment, did not understand the concept, and order[ed] the effort to terminate its activities in Garland, Texas, and for the personnel to return to Tampa [Florida, the location of SOCOM headquarters].” Over the next few months, Holland will direct Able Danger to change into the Special Operations Joint Integration Center (SOJIC). According to Shaffer, “the teeth and operational focus [are] removed and the capability to do the complex data mining and mission planning support (leadership support) is eliminated,” effectively ending Able Danger. ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#))

November-December 2000: Key Suspect in *Cole* Bombing Identified



Rahim al-Nashiri [*Source: AP*] After several weeks of investigation, US authorities learn that al-Qaeda leader Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri was involved in the plot to attack the USS *Cole*. Investigators find a second safe house used by the bombing team, and learn it was registered to al-Nashiri under a name variant. Al-Nashiri's name is dimly familiar to FBI agent Ali Soufan, who remembers that a source said al-Nashiri was planning a seaborne attack against a US vessel in Aden (see [After August 7, 1998](#)). The FBI then finds that al-Nashiri rented a car in Aden before the bombing. Author Lawrence Wright will comment, “It was another strong link between al-Qaeda and the *Cole* attack.” ([Wright 7/10/2006](#)) In addition, one of the bombers detained by Yemeni authorities, Jamal Badawi, identifies al-Nashiri as a person who gave instructions for the attack. Badawi also says he thought al-Nashiri was working for bin Laden, but al-Nashiri did not tell Badawi this directly. ([CNN 12/13/2000](#)) Although al-Nashiri was the operational manager, he was actually in Afghanistan for a meeting with Osama bin Laden when the opportunity to attack arose and was not physically present at the bombing. Investigators are aware that he is the cousin of one of the bombers of the US embassy in Nairobi, which he facilitated, and a captured embassy bomber identified a photo of him for the FBI two years earlier (see [August 7, 1998](#) and [August 22-25 1998](#)). Al-Nashiri has been known to various intelligence agencies since 1998, at least, and was monitored at the Malaysia summit of top al-Qaeda leaders at the start of the year (see January 5-8, 2000). ([CNN 12/11/2000](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 152-3](#); [Wright](#)

[2006, pp. 318](#)) US investigators also identify another leading suspect in the case, Khallad bin Attash, at around the same time (see [January 4, 2001](#)).

(Early November 2000): Tipoff Leads to Break in *Cole* Investigation, Safe House Found

A local boy in Aden, Yemen, goes to the police and tells them he met the people who bombed the USS *Cole* before the attack, and the ensuing investigation reveals the vehicle and a safe house used by the bombers. The boy says that he was fishing when the bombers placed the boat in the water and that he was paid to watch the truck and the boat trailer, but the men never returned. The Yemeni police initially arrest him and his father, but the FBI obtains permission to talk to him and he takes them to the launch site. He says the bombers invited him and his family to ride in the boat before the attack, indicating the bombers were trying to find out how much weight the boat would carry. The truck and trailer are still at the launch site and the registration records lead investigators to a safe house that was used by the bombers. The FBI team finds that the bathroom sink in the house is full of body hair, as the bombers apparently shaved entirely before death. The FBI collects a razor and hair samples for future DNA identification. ([Wright 7/10/2006](#).)

November 5, 2000-June 20, 2001: Atta, Alhazmi, and Moussaoui Purchase Equipment from Same Pilot Store

Zacarias Moussaoui and two of the 9/11 hijackers purchase flight training equipment from Sporty's Pilot Shop in Batavia, Ohio.

- November 5, 2000: Mohamed Atta purchases flight deck videos for a Boeing 747-200 and a Boeing 757-200, as well as other items;
- December 11, 2000: Atta purchases flight deck videos for a Boeing 767-300ER and an Airbus A320-200;
- March 19, 2001: Nawaf Alhazmi purchases flight deck videos for a Boeing 747-400, a Boeing 747-200, and a Boeing 777-200, as well as another video. Alhazmi also purchases maps around this time from another shop (see [March 23, 2001](#));
- June 20, 2001: Zacarias Moussaoui purchases flight deck videos for a Boeing 747-400 and a Boeing 747-200. ([Sporty's 6/20/2001](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 12/11/2001](#).) However, it is not clear whether Moussaoui was to take part in 9/11 or some other operation (see [January 30, 2003](#)).

November 7, 2000: Plans to Target Bin Laden Delayed Pending 2000 Election

In the wake of the USS *Cole* bombing, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger meets with Defense Secretary William Cohen to discuss a new approach to targeting bin Laden. Berger says, "We've been hit many times, and we'll be hit again. Yet we have no option

beyond cruise missiles.” He once again brings up the idea of a “boots on the ground” option—a Delta Force special operation to get bin Laden. A plan is drawn up but the order to execute it is never given. Cohen and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Henry Shelton oppose the plan. By December 21, the CIA reports that it strongly suspects that al-Qaeda was behind the bombing, but fails to definitively make that conclusion. That makes such an attack politically difficult. Says a former senior Clinton aide, “If we had done anything, say, two weeks before the election, we’d be accused of helping [presidential candidate] Al Gore.” ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))

November 11, 2000: Cole Investigators Find Link to Embassy Bombings



Jamal Badawi. [*Source: Rewards for Justice*]Based on information from interviews of suspects detained during the USS *Cole* bombings (see [Late October-Late November 2000](#)), the FBI finds that one of the lead bombers was Khallad bin Attash, an operative also involved in the 1998 East African embassy bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#)). The detained men, Jamal Badawi and Fahad al-Quso, say that they recently traveled to Afghanistan and met bin Attash there. Badawi also says bin Attash helped purchase a boat used in the *Cole* bombing. The head of the FBI’s investigation, Ali Soufan, is startled by this news, as an informer has already provided information on bin Attash, describing him as one of bin Laden’s top lieutenants. Although the FBI wants to interview the two detained men to obtain more information, the Yemeni authorities refuse at this point, saying they have both sworn on the Koran they were not involved in the attack, so they must be innocent. Limited access to al-Quso will be granted to the FBI later, but the Yemeni authorities will indicate to him that he is still under their protection (see [Early December 2000](#)). ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/9/1998](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 192](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#))

November 17, 2000: US Issues International Arrest Warrant for KSM

The US puts out an international arrest warrant for Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM). The warrant seeks KSM in connection with the 1995 Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)). ([Hall 3/13/2003](#)) It is not clear why the US waited so long to issue this warrant, considering that the US connected him to a major terrorist act back in 1993 (see [March](#)

[20, 1993](#)), learned he was a major figure in the Bojinka plot in 1995 (see [After February 7, 1995-January 1996](#)), secretly indicted him in January 1996, and placed a \$2 million reward on his head in January 1998 (see [January 8, 1998](#)).

Late November 2000: FBI Formally Asks CIA about Al-Qaeda Leader and Possible Meeting in Southeast Asia, but Gets No Answer

Based on information obtained during the investigation of the USS *Cole* bombing (see [Late October-Late November 2000](#)), the FBI asks the CIA for information about al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash and a possible al-Qaeda meeting in Southeast Asia in early 2000, but the CIA withholds the information. The request is sent by FBI Director Louis Freeh on behalf of agent Ali Soufan, who is working on the *Cole* investigation. Soufan began to suspect such a meeting may have taken place when he learned that two of the operatives involved in the bombing had taken money out of Yemen to give to bin Attash in Thailand before the attack (see [January 8-15, 2000](#)), making him think the money may have been intended for a bigger plot. The CIA is highly aware of the January 2000 al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see [January 5-8, 2000](#)), which was considered so important that CIA Director George Tenet and other CIA leaders were repeatedly briefed about it (see [January 6-9, 2000](#)). The CIA has photos of bin Attash and al-Quso attending the meeting (see [January 6-9, 2000](#)), which took place only a few days before al-Quso's meeting with bin Attash in Thailand. Yet the CIA does not respond to Soufan's clearly stated request. Author Lawrence Wright will later comment, "The fact that the CIA withheld information about the mastermind of the *Cole* bombing and the meeting in Malaysia, when directly asked by the FBI, amount[s] to obstruction of justice in the death of seventeen American sailors [who were killed in the *Cole* bombing]." Although he was not told one of the 9/11 hijackers had a US visa, Freeh was briefed on the Malaysia summit when it took place (see [January 6, 2000](#)), but apparently he does not tell Soufan what he knows, and Soufan remains unaware that any kind of al-Qaeda meeting in Southeast Asia even occurred. ([Wright 2006, pp. 328-9](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#) ³)

November 22-December 16, 2000: Yemen Provides Photos of Al-Qaeda Leader to *Cole* Investigators, Bombing Linked to Al-Qaeda



Khallad bin Attash. [Source: FBI] After talks that last some time, Yemeni authorities agree to provide the FBI team investigating the USS *Cole* bombing with passport photos of suspects in the attack, including al-Qaeda commander Khallad bin Attash. The photos are provided to lead investigators John O'Neill and Ali Soufan, and Soufan immediately sends bin Attash's photo to the CIA and to an FBI colleague in Islamabad, Pakistan. The colleague shows the photo to a source, and the source confirms that the man in the photo is bin Attash. Author Lawrence Wright will comment: "This suggested strongly that al-Qaeda was behind the *Cole* attack." However, this does not motivate the US to retaliate against al-Qaeda (see [Shortly After October 12, 2000](#)). Around this time, the FBI also learns that Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, another al-Qaeda operative involved in the embassy bombings had a hand in the *Cole* attack as well (see [November-December 2000](#)). (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 192; Wright 7/10/2006.)

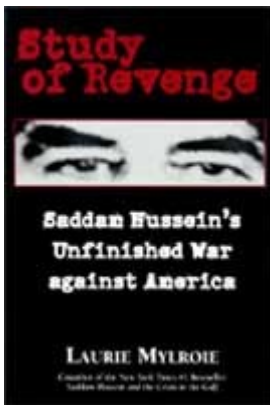
Late November 2000-January 30, 2001: Conflicting Accounts of Hijacker Jarrah's Location



Two images of Ziad Jarrah. The photo on the right is from the wreckage of Flight 93. [Source: FBI] There is some evidence indicating hijacker pilot Ziad Jarrah transits Dubai on January 30, 2001 after spending two months in Afghanistan (see [January 30, 2001](#)). (Crewdson 12/13/2001; MacVicar and Faraj 8/1/2002) However, the Florida Flight Training Center, where Jarrah has been studying for the previous six months, later says he is in school there until January 15,

2001. His family later reports he arrives in Lebanon to visit them on January 26, five days before he supposedly passes through Dubai. His father had just undergone open-heart surgery, and Jarrah visits him every day in the hospital until after January 30. Pointing out this incident, his uncle Jamal Jarrah later asks, “How could he be in two places at one time?” ([Longman 2002, pp. 101-02](#)) Other accounts place Jarrah in Dubai one year earlier, not in 2001 (see [January 30, 2000](#)). If the 2001 version is correct, this is not the only example of Jarrah being in two places at the same time—there is also evidence he was in different places at once from March 1995-February 1996 (see [March 1995-February 1996](#)).

Late 2000: Book Favored by Prominent Neoconservatives Argues that Hussein Was Behind 1993 WTC Bombing



The book *Study of Revenge*. [Source: Public domain] Laurie Mylroie, a researcher who held faculty positions at Harvard and the US Naval War College, publishes the book *Study of Revenge: Saddam Hussein's Unfinished War Against America*. She argues that the Iraqi government was behind the 1993 WTC bombing. The book is published by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a prominent neoconservative think tank, and her book has strong support from many important neoconservatives. Richard Perle calls the book “splendid and wholly convincing,” while Paul Wolfowitz calls it a “provocative and disturbing book.” Former CIA Director James Woolsey says, “Anyone who wishes to continue to deal with Saddam [Hussein] by ignoring his role in international terrorism...and by giving only office furniture to the Iraqi resistance now has the staggering task of trying to refute this superb work.” In her acknowledgements, she thanks John Bolton, I. Lewis Libby, and Wolfowitz for their support and help in writing the book. All of them will go on to take prominent positions in the Bush administration. But journalist Peter Bergen will later comment, “Mylroie became enamored of her theory that Saddam was the mastermind of a vast anti-US terrorist conspiracy in the face of virtually all evidence and expert opinion to the contrary. In what amounts to the discovery of a unified field theory of terrorism, Mylroie believes that Saddam was not only behind the ‘93 Trade Center attack, but also every anti-American terrorist incident of the past decade...” However, “by the mid-‘90s, the Joint Terrorism Task Force in New York, the FBI, the US Attorney’s office in the Southern District of New York, the CIA, the NSC, and the State Department had all found no

evidence implicating the Iraqi government in the first Trade Center attack.” Bergen will comment that normally a book like this would not have mattered, except that the neoconservatives “believed her theories, bringing her on as a consultant at the Pentagon, and they seem to continue to entertain her eccentric belief that Saddam is the fount of the entire shadow war against America.” ([Bergen 12/2003](#)) In 2004, the 9/11 Commission will conclude, “We have found no credible evidence to support theories of Iraqi government involvement in the 1993 WTC bombing.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 559](#))

Late 2000-September 10, 2001: US Intelligence Makes No Strategic Assessment about Islamic Militant Threat

The US intelligence community considers creating a strategic analysis about terrorism, but none is done before 9/11. The last National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on terrorism was released in 1997 (see [1997](#)). The 9/11 Commission will later say that assessments such as NIEs can “provoke widespread thought and debate [and] have a major impact on their recipients, often in a wider circle of decision makers.” By late 2000, CIA Director George Tenet recognizes the lack of any recent strategic analysis about al-Qaeda or Islamic militancy in general. He appoints a senior manager, who briefs him in March 2001 about “creating a strategic assessment capability.” The CIA’s Counterterrorist Center (CTC) establishes a new strategic assessments branch in July 2001 and about ten analysts are slated to work for it. But it takes time to hire the new staff and the first head of this branch reports for work just one day before 9/11. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 342-343](#)) Not only is there no NIE or any other sweeping strategic assessment on al-Qaeda between 1997 and 9/11, but one still will not be completed five years after 9/11. Apparently the US military opposes such an assessment for fear it would reduce the military’s role in counterterrorism efforts (see [September 12, 2006](#)).

Shortly Before December 24, 2000: Operative Tied to Khalifa and Bojinka Plot Supplies Explosives for New Attack

Cosain Ramos (a.k.a. Abu Ali) supplies explosives for a series of bombings in Indonesia that take place just days later (see [December 24-30, 2000](#)). Ramos had worked with Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, bin Laden’s brother-in-law, and was part of Konsonjaya, a front company run by Hambali used to fund the 1995 Bojinka plot (see [June 1994](#)). For many years, US and Philippine authorities failed to track associates of Khalifa and associates connected to Konsonjaya. ([Ressa 2003, pp. 136](#); [Gulf News 6/10/2003](#)) Remarkably, after Ramos is arrested in 2002, not only will he not be charged, but he will be made a janitor in Camp Crame, the Philippine government’s most secure prison. He will then help Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi escape that prison in 2003. Al-Ghozi was not only an al-Qaeda leader, but was also the mastermind of the 2000 Indonesia bombings along with Hambali and was the very person Ramos gave the explosives to. Philippine

authorities have no explanation as to why Ramos was given access to his former accomplice. ([Lyll 7/18/2003](#))

December 2000: FBI and FAA Claim Threat of Terrorists Targeting US Aviation Is Low Despite Information Suggesting Otherwise

The FBI and FAA jointly publish the yearly National Intelligence Estimate report mandated by Congress. It reads, “FBI investigations confirm domestic and international terrorist groups operating within the US but do not suggest evidence of plans to target domestic civil aviation. Terrorist activity within the US has focused primarily on fundraising, recruiting new members, and disseminating propaganda. While international terrorists have conducted attacks on US soil, these acts represent anomalies in their traditional targeting which focuses on US interests overseas.” This differs from assessments in previous years that suggested there were groups targeting domestic aviation. The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will conclude that assessment is “relatively low... notwithstanding historical intelligence information to the contrary.” ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

December 2000: Pentagon Develops Plan to Attack Al-Qaeda

After the attack on the USS *Cole*, the military not only draws up plans to directly target bin Laden (see [November 7, 2000](#)), but also comes up with a larger plan looking at alternatives to assassination. Lt. Gen. Gregory Newbold, the director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, prepared a plan to incorporate military, economic, diplomatic, and political activities to pressure the Taliban to expel bin Laden. A “Phased Campaign Concept” calls for wider-ranging military strikes against the Taliban and other targets, but doesn’t include contingency plans for an invasion of Afghanistan. The concept is briefed to Deputy National Security Adviser Donald Kerrick and other officials in December 2000, but it is never acted on. The military makes no similar plans after Bush’s inauguration, and the CIA’s invasion plans are mostly relied upon when the US invades Afghanistan in October 2001. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [Johnston and Schmitt 4/4/2004](#))

December 2000: CIA Develops Plan to Increase Support to Massoud, Strike Bin Laden

The CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center develops a plan to strike at bin Laden in Afghanistan called the “Blue Sky Memo.” It recommends increased support to anti-Taliban groups and especially a major effort to back Ahmed Shah Massoud’s Northern Alliance, to tie down al-Qaeda personnel before they leave Afghanistan. No action is taken in the last few weeks of the Clinton administration; the CIA presses the ideas unsuccessfully early

in the new Bush administration. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) The National Security Council counterterrorism staff also prepares a strategy paper, incorporating ideas from the Blue Sky Memo. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))

December 2000: Incoming Bush Administration Briefed on Terrorism Threat; Apparently Ignores Recommendations

CIA Director Tenet and other top CIA officials brief President-elect Bush, Vice President-elect Cheney, future National Security Adviser Rice, and other incoming national security officials on al-Qaeda and covert action programs in Afghanistan. Deputy Director for Operations James Pavitt recalls conveying that bin Laden is one of the gravest threats to the country. Bush asks whether killing bin Laden would end the problem. Pavitt says he answers that killing bin Laden would have an impact but not stop the threat. The CIA recommends the most important action to combat al-Qaeda is to arm the Predator drone and use it over Afghanistan. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [Zakaria 3/24/2004](#)) However, while the drone is soon armed, Bush never gives the order to use it in Afghanistan until after 9/11 (see [September 4, 2001](#)).

December 2000-April 2001: Israeli Investigators Deported After Identifying Two Hijackers

According to later German reports, “a whole horde of Israeli counter-terror investigators, posing as students, [follow] the trails of Arab terrorists and their cells in the United States.... In the town of Hollywood, Florida, they [identify]... Atta and Marwan Alshehhi as possible terrorists. Agents [live] in the vicinity of the apartment of the two seemingly normal flight school students, observing them around the clock.” Supposedly, around April, the Israeli agents are discovered and deported, terminating the investigation. ([Gebauer 10/1/2002](#))

(December 2000-January 2001): Nawaf Alhazmi Tells Associates He Is in Flight Training

Nawaf Alhazmi tells two associates, Mohdar Abdullah and FBI asset Abdussattar Shaikh, that he has re-entered flight training, but it is unclear if this is true. He calls Abdullah twice in December 2000/January 2001, initially saying that he is in San Francisco and will have flight training there, but he later says that he has moved to Arizona and both he and Hani Hanjour are in flight training. He also calls Shaikh to say that he and Hanjour are to have flight training in Arizona. Alhazmi lived with Shaikh for several months, but moved out in the middle of December (see [May 10-Mid-December 2000](#) and [December 12, 2000-March 2001](#)). ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 276](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 223](#)) Hanjour is known to undergo flight training in Arizona at this time (see [January-February 2001](#) and [February 8-March 12, 2001](#)). There is no known public

record of Alhazmi training to be a pilot at this time, although there is other evidence Alhazmi trained to be a pilot (see [November 25, 2007](#)).

November 2000 or After: FBI Connects Al-Qaeda Communications Hub to *Cole* Bombing, No Apparent Action Taken

The FBI's investigation of the USS *Cole* bombing in Aden, Yemen, connects the bombers to an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana'a, the country's capital, which has been monitored by the US for at least two years (see [Late August 1998](#) and [Mid-August 1998-October 2000](#)). It was also used in the East African embassy bombings (see [August 5-25, 1998](#)) and will be used by the 9/11 hijackers (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). It is not known when this connection is made. No apparent action is taken against Ahmed al-Hada, the operative who runs the communications hub, before 9/11. However, this may be due to the importance of intelligence generated from his phone (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). In early 2001, al-Hada will be publicly identified as an al-Qaeda operative at the embassy bombings trial, when his phone number is disclosed openly in court and reported in the media (see [February 2001 and After](#)). Yet he still is not publicly indicted for either the embassy bombings or the *Cole* bombing, even though a number of other fugitives are publicly indicted. In 2002, US officials will describe al-Hada as a "prominent al-Qaeda member who is believed to have been involved in the *Cole* bombing," and say his phone was used by the bombers to relay messages and "put everything together" before the attack. ([MSNBC 2/14/2002](#); [Windrem 5/2005](#))

Early December 2000: Confession Brings FBI Close to Learning about Hijackers Coming to US, but CIA Withholds Key Information Again



Fahad al-Quso. [Source: FBI] In late October 2000, al-Qaeda operative Fahad al-Quso was interrogated by authorities in Yemen, and FBI agent Ali Soufan was able to use that information to discover the identity of one of the USS

Cole bombing masterminds, Khallad bin Attash (see [Late October-Late November 2000](#)). In early December, while most FBI investigators are having to leave Yemen, Soufan is given the chance to interrogate al-Quso directly. Soufan gets al-Quso to admit that he had met with bin Attash and one of the *Cole* suicide bombers in Bangkok, Thailand, in January 2000 (see [January 8-15, 2000](#)). Quso admits he gave bin Attash \$36,000 and not the \$5,000 for medical expenses that al-Quso had claimed when talking to the Yemenis the month before. Al-Quso says they stayed in the Washington Hotel in Bangkok, so Soufan checks telephone records to verify his account. Soufan finds records of phone calls between the hotel and al-Quso's house in Yemen. They also find calls to both places from a pay phone in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The phone happens to be directly outside the condominium where an al-Qaeda summit was taking place a few days before al-Quso went to Bangkok (see January 5-8, 2000). Soufan asks the CIA for information about bin Attash, but the CIA wrongly claims it knows nothing, and doesn't even tell Soufan of the Malaysia summit that it had closely monitored (see [Late November 2000](#)). ([Johnston and Risen 4/11/2004](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 330-331](#)) Meanwhile, FBI head investigator John O'Neill correctly believes that al-Quso is still holding back important information (at the very least, al-Quso is still hiding his participation in the Malaysia summit). However, O'Neill had been kicked out of Yemen by his superiors a week or two before (see [October 14-Late November, 2000](#)), and without his influential presence the Yemeni government will not allow any more interrogations. After 9/11, al-Quso will finally admit to meeting with Alhazmi and Almihdhar. One investigator calls the missed opportunity of exposing the 9/11 plot through al-Quso's connections "mind-boggling." ([Gilmore and Wiser 10/3/2002](#)) In April 2003, al-Quso will escape from a Yemeni prison and apparently remains free. ([Al-Haj 4/11/2003](#))

December 5, 2000: Hijacker Hanjour Opens Dubai Account

Hijacker pilot Hani Hanjour opens an account with Citibank in Deira, Dubai, with a deposit of \$3,000. Hanjour's movements between September 25, 2000, when he obtained a US visa in Jeddah, and this date are unclear, but he flies to the US three days later (see [December 8, 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 13-14](#) ³) According to the 9/11 Commission, plot facilitator Ali Abdul Aziz Ali gave him the initial \$3,000 and later deposits another \$5,000 in the account. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 138](#) ³) However, these deposits will not be mentioned at a military hearing to determine Ali's combat status, although other transactions between Ali and the hijackers will be (see [March 30, 2007](#)). ([US Department of Defense 4/12/2007](#) ³) Hanjour uses the money on this account, together with \$9,600 that is deposited in his account with the Saudi British Bank, to pay some of his expenses in the US. Hijackers Fayeze Ahmed Banihammed (see [June 25, 2001](#)), Marwan Alshehhi (see [July 1999-November 2000](#)), and possibly Mohamed Atta (see [Late October 2001](#)) also have accounts in the UAE through which money is passed to fund the plot. Khalid Almihdhar and Abdulaziz Alomari (see [September 7, 2001](#)) also draw on money from Saudi bank accounts. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 138](#) ³)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA			
	Issuing Post Name	Control Number	
	JEDDAH	2000254370001	
	Surname		
	HANJOUR		
	Given Name	Visa Type /Class	
HANI S H	R B1/B2		
Passport Number	Sex	Birth Date	Nationality
C241922	M	30AUG1972	SARB
Entries	Issue Date	Expiration Date	1010
M	25SEP2000	24SEP2001	
Annotation			
ELS LANGUAGE CENTER			
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA			
39730222			

December 12, 2000-March 2001: Hanjour and Alhazmi Live in Arizona

December 14, 2000: Government Report Warns Terrorist Attack ‘Inside Our Borders Is Inevitable’



James Gilmore. *[Source: Publicity photo]* A federal panel chaired by former Virginia Governor James Gilmore (R) warns President-elect Bush that the US is vulnerable to terrorist attack and urges him to bolster US preparedness within one year. Gilmore states, "The United States has no coherent, functional national strategy for combating terrorism. The terrorist threat is real, and it is serious." The panel urges the US counterterrorism effort should be consolidated into one new agency. It further argues the US has no clear counterterrorism program and argues for dozens of special changes at all levels of government. Gilmore says, "We are impelled by the stark realization that a terrorist attack on some level inside our borders is inevitable and the United States must be ready." The panel also calls for improvement in human intelligence instead of a reliance on technology. ([Vise 12/15/2000](#)) The 9/11 Commission will later make many of the same recommendations. However, the Commission will barely mention the Gilmore panel in their report, except to note that Congress appointed the panel and failed to follow through on implementing the recommendations. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 107, 479](#))

December 15, 2000-January 8, 2001: Ziad Jarrah Takes Flight Simulator Lessons



Ziad Jarrah using a flight simulator in January 2001. *[Source: Los Angeles Times]* From December 15-18, 2000, hijacker Ziad Jarrah attends Aeroservice Aviation in Miami, Florida where he takes lessons in Boeing 727 and 737 simulators. Around this same time, Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi take lessons in a 727 simulator, but at a different Florida center (see [December 29-31, 2000](#)). After returning to the US from a visit home to Beirut, Jarrah again attends Aeroservice Aviation on January 8, 2001. His girlfriend Aysel Senguen is with him for a ten-day stay at the time, accompanies him to the flight training session, and photographs him in the

simulator. ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 10/10/2001](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [Laabs and McDermott 1/27/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 227](#)) However, some accounts conflict with him being in Florida on this second occasion (see [Late November 2000-January 30, 2001](#) and [January 30, 2001](#)). ([Crewdson 12/13/2001](#); [MacVicar and Faraj 8/1/2002](#))

Mid-Late December 2000: CIA Receives Additional Confirmation of Almihdhar's Al-Qaeda Connection

The CIA station in Islamabad, Pakistan, writes a cable noting that further connections have been made between hijacker Khalid Almihdhar and al-Qaeda. This CIA station is already aware that Almihdhar attended an al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia in January 2000 (see [January 5-8, 2000](#)). Due to these additional connections, the CIA believes that there may be a connection between Almihdhar and the USS *Cole* bombers and that Almihdhar may have met Fahad al-Quso and Khallad bin Attash, two of the operatives involved in the bombing, in Southeast Asia in January 2000 (see [January 8-15, 2000](#) and [Early December 2000](#)). The station realizes this is important because bin Attash is linked to Osama bin Laden, but also speculates that bin Attash and Almihdhar may be the same person. The reason given for this speculation is that both Khallad and Almihdhar are in Bangkok, Thailand, at the same time, in the second week of January 2000 (see [Mid-Late December 2000](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 269-270](#) ³)

After December 16, 2000: US Misses Opportunity to Connect Alias to Al-Qaeda Leader

After the FBI and CIA obtain a passport photo of al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash (see [November 22-December 16, 2000](#)), they are unable to connect him to one of his aliases, Salah Saeed Mohammed bin Yousaf, even though he had submitted an application for a US visa using this alias the year before (see [April 3, 1999](#)). Presumably, a search of visa applications would have turned up a photograph similar to the one the US now has of him, allowing the US to connect bin Attash to the alias. However, no such search is made, even though the CIA knows the alias is connected to 9/11 hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar (see [January 8, 2000](#)), who obtained US visas at the same time bin Attash's application was denied (see [April 3-7, 1999](#)). No such search is made even after the CIA connects bin Attash to Alhazmi and Almihdhar under bin Attash's real name as well in early 2001 (see [January 4, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 192-3, 538](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 248, 267-278](#) ³) The US misses other opportunities to learn more about this alias (see [After January 8, 2000](#) and [After August 23, 2001](#)).

Mid-Late December 2000: Some CIA Officers Speculate Almihdhar May Be Al-Qaeda Leader Bin Attash, FBI Not Informed



Khallad bin Attash (left) and Khalid Almihdhar (right) were apparently confused by the CIA. [Source: *FBI*] Because the CIA thinks hijacker Khalid Almihdhar and al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash are in the same place at the same time—in Bangkok, Thailand, for a meeting with Fahad al-Quso, an operative involved in the attack of the USS *Cole*, in January 2000—and possibly because of the similarity between Almihdhar’s first name Khalid and bin Attash’s nickname Khallad, some officers apparently theorize that bin Attash and Almihdhar may be the same person. However, the FBI is not informed of this. In order to confirm or refute this theory, the CIA station in Islamabad, Pakistan, asks for surveillance photos of an al-Qaeda summit that Almihdhar attended, intending to show the photos to a source who knows bin Attash and has previously identified him in another photo (see [November 22-December 16, 2000](#) and [Early January 2001](#)). However, there is no record of this theory being communicated to the FBI, even though the CIA knows bin Attash was involved in the *Cole* bombing and the FBI is investigating him (see [Late October-Late November 2000](#)). Some CIA cables drafted at this time contain information about bin Attash and information not related to bin Attash; CIA officers are instructed to share the information not related to bin Attash with the FBI, but are not instructed to share the information about bin Attash and al-Qaeda’s Malaysia summit. The Justice Department’s Office of Inspector General will later say that if the CIA had told the FBI more about bin Attash around this time, the FBI would have asked for more information about Almihdhar and had a better chance of locating him before 9/11. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 269-270, 278](#).)

December 19, 2000: US Seeks Taliban Overthrow; Considers Russia-US Invasion of Afghanistan

The Washington Post reports, “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. Until it backed off under local pressure, it went so far as to explore whether a Central Asian country would permit the use of its territory for such a purpose.” Russia and the US are discussing “what kind of government should replace the Taliban. Thus, while claiming to oppose a military solution to the Afghan problem, the United States is now talking about the overthrow of a regime that controls nearly the entire country, in the hope it can be replaced with a hypothetical government that does not exist even on paper.” ([Starr 12/19/2000](#)) It appears that all pre-9/11 plans to invade Afghanistan involve attacking from the north with Russia.

December 19, 2000: Clinton Tells Bush His Top Priority Should Be Bin Laden; Bush Says It's Saddam Hussein Instead



Clinton and Bush meeting in the White House on December 19, 2000. [Source: *NBC*] President Clinton and President-Elect Bush meet for their "exit interview," in a two-hour meeting. ([King, Ferullo, and AP 12/19/2000](#)) Clinton gives Bush his list of his top five priorities. At the top of the list is dealing with Osama bin Laden. Clinton also discusses the tensions between Pakistan and India, who are threatening each other with nuclear strikes; the crisis in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine; he discusses North Korea; and he discusses Iraq and Saddam Hussein. Bush shakes Clinton's hand after Clinton wraps up his presentation, and says, "Thanks for your advice, Mr. President, but I think you've got your priorities wrong. I'm putting Saddam at the top of the list." ([Moore 3/15/2004, pp. 16-17](#)) In 2003, Clinton will speak about the interview, saying that he recognized Bush felt the biggest security issues facing the US was Iraq and a national missile defense: "I told him that in my opinion, the biggest security problem was Osama bin Laden." ([Reuters 10/16/2003](#))

December 20, 2000: Clarke Plan to Neutralize Al-Qaeda Deferred Pending Administration Transition

Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke submits a plan to "roll back" al-Qaeda over a period of three to five years until it is ineffectual. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) The main component is a dramatic increase in covert aid to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan to first tie down the terrorists and then "eliminate the sanctuary" for bin Laden. Financial support for terrorist activities will be systematically attacked, nations fighting al-Qaeda will be given aid to defeat them, and the US will plan for direct military and covert action in Afghanistan. The plan will cost several hundred million dollars. However, since there are only a few weeks left before the Bush administration takes over, it is decided to defer the decision until the new administration is in place. One senior Clinton official later says, "We would be handing [the Bush administration] a war when they took office on January 20. That wasn't going to happen." However, the plan is rejected by the Bush administration and no action is taken (see [January 25, 2001](#)). According to one senior Bush administration official, the proposal amounts to "everything we've done since 9/11." ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#))

December 24-30, 2000: Al-Qaeda Linked Group Bombings Kill Dozens in Indonesia and Philippines

Al-Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) sets off two series of bombs, first in Indonesia, then in the Philippines. The Christmas Eve attacks in Indonesia comprise a series of 38 bombings in 11 cities and are directed against churches. Nineteen people are killed and over a hundred injured. ([LaMoshi 10/8/2004](#)) The attacks in the Philippines kill 22 and injure 120 in the country's capital, Manila. The operation, involving attacks on a train, a bus, an abandoned petrol station, an airport car park, and a park, is apparently carried out by Indonesian JI operative Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi. ([BBC 2/27/2002](#)) Many militants are arrested after the attacks. The investigation leads to JI and al-Qaeda leader Hambali, a veteran Islamic fighter who was involved in the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)), is tied to 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (see [June 1994](#)), and attended an al-Qaeda Malaysia summit in 2000, which was monitored by Malaysia intelligence and the CIA (see January 5-8, 2000). Although Hambali, an Indonesian, has lived in Malaysia since the mid-1990s, the authorities cannot find him and say that he has fled to Saudi Arabia (see [January 2001 and after](#)). ([Jakarta Post 2/7/2001](#)) JI's spiritual leader, Abu Bakar Bashir, is also arrested, but then released. ([CNN 2/26/2004](#)) Hambali will finally be captured in August 2003 in Thailand (see [August 12, 2003](#)).

December 26, 2000: Hijackers Abandon Stalled Plane on Florida Runway; No Investigation Ensues

Hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi, while learning to fly in Florida, stall a small plane on a Miami International Airport runway. Unable to start the plane, they simply walk away. Flight controllers have to guide the waiting passenger airliners around the stalled aircraft until it is towed away 35 minutes later. They weren't supposed to be using that airport in the first place. The FAA threatens to investigate the two students and the flight school they are attending. The flight school sends records to the FAA, but no more is heard of the investigation. ([Yardley 10/17/2001](#)) "Students do stupid things during their flight course, but this is quite stupid," says the owner of the flight school. Nothing was wrong with the plane. ([CNN 10/17/2001](#))

December 29-31, 2000: Atta and Alshehhi Train on Flight Simulator; Uncertainty over Whether They Gain Skills Needed for 9/11 Attacks



The Pan Am Boeing 767 flight simulator used by the hijackers. [Source: FBI] Having finished their flight training at Huffman Aviation and passed their commercial pilot license tests (see [August 14-December 19, 2000](#)), Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi spend December 29 and 30 at the SimCenter flight school at Opa-Locka Airport, near Miami. Saying they want to join an Egyptian airline and need experience in a large plane, they each pay \$1,500 in cash and spend six hours, split over the two days, training in the school's Boeing 727 simulator. Henry George, the school's owner who trains them, describes their training as a "mini, mini introduction," and they spend most of their time practicing maneuvers and turns. George later describes Atta and Alshehhi as "average pilots," and says they are "quite ordinary. They were respectful and quiet almost to the point of being shy." ([Firestone and Canedy 9/15/2001](#); [Freedberg 9/27/2001](#); [Lombardo 11/2001](#); [BBC 12/12/2001](#)) The FBI claims that Atta and Alshehhi spend December 31 at Pan Am International, also in Opa-Locka, training on a Boeing 767 simulator there. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [United States of America v. Zacarias Moussaoui, a/k/a Shaqil, a/k/a Abu Khalid al Sahrawi, Defendant 3/7/2006](#)) Yet no other reports, including the 9/11 Commission Report, mention this. The South Florida Sun-Sentinel specifically claims the alleged hijackers "never approached Pan Am," although it does not say how it arrived at this conclusion. It points out that, in contrast to the 767s they allegedly pilot on 9/11, the 727 Atta and Alshehhi train to fly at the SimCenter "is a rather old three-engine jet with an old-fashioned cockpit, including a cramped instrument panel loaded down with small dials, knobs and gauges.... But the 767 and 757 have highly sophisticated 'glass cockpits,' featuring video screens and digital readouts, and requiring an advanced level of computer skills." Furthermore, according to Steven Wallach, an aviation consultant and former airline captain, if the hijackers "took the controls at high altitude and a long distance from their targets, then they likely had considerable training in a 767 or 757. They would have had to descend and navigate to Washington and New York. They would have had to know how to operate the autopilot, as well as other intricate functions." However, "if the hijackers took over the controls at the last moment, that would indicate a minimum of 767-757 training." ([Kaye 9/22/2001](#)) SimCenter owner Henry George claims, "I suppose Atta had just enough training to keep the plane in the air—how to make turns and move it up and down. He could not, however, have taxied a 757 or 767 from the gate, got it airborne or landed it safely." ([Ball 9/14/2001](#))

December 30, 2000: Three 9/11 Hijackers Possibly in Eastern US, Despite Official Claims to the Contrary

Documents obtained by Nawaf Alhazmi, Khalid Almihdhar, and Salem Alhazmi indicate that they are in the New Jersey / New York area at this time, although the cards may be later fakes. All three hijackers obtain USA ID cards whose expiry date is December 30, 2006. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 191-2](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) USAID Systems, the Florida firm that manufactured the system through which the cards were issued, will later tell *Time* magazine that Almihdhar's card was issued exactly six years before its expiration date. ([Burger and Bennett 8/29/2005](#)) However, according to the FBI and the 9/11 Commission, Nawaf Alhazmi is in Arizona (see [December 12, 2000-March 2001](#)), and Salem Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar are in the Middle East at this time (see [June 10, 2000](#), [Late October 2000-July 4, 2001](#), and [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)). Almihdhar's card later proves to be a forgery, and may therefore not have been issued on this date. The Alhazmi brothers' cards may also be forgeries (see [July-August 2001](#))

Late 2000: Military Prepares Options for Striking at Bin Laden, but Not Serious about Using Them



Gen. Anthony Zinni [*Source: US Marine Corps.*] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Henry Shelton prepares a paper with 13 options for using force against bin Laden. Several of the options describe Special Forces raids to capture or kill bin Laden. But counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke will later say that when military operations on al-Qaeda were discussed, "the overwhelming message to the White House from the uniformed military leadership was, 'We don't want to do this.'" Shelton's chief of operations will later describe the paper as a tool to "educate" National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, Clarke, and others about the "extraordinary complexity" of going ahead with any of the options. The military repeatedly complains that the CIA's intelligence about bin Laden isn't good enough while the CIA complains that the military's intelligence requirements are too demanding. One CIA document notes that there is "lots of desire" for a military strike against bin Laden amongst lower-level US military officials, but "reluctance at the political level." ([Miller 7/25/2003](#); [Coll 2004, pp. 533](#)) One reason for such reluctance is the close ties between the US military and

Pakistan. Author Steve Coll will later note, “The Pentagon, especially General Anthony Zinni at Centcom, who remained close to [Pakistani President Pervez] Musharraf personally, emphasized the benefits of engagement with Pakistan’s generals.” ([Coll 2004, pp. 490](#))

2001: Al-Zarqawi Allegedly Arrested and Released in Jordan

Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian Muslim militant later alleged by the Bush administration to have ties to Osama bin Laden, is allegedly arrested in Jordan sometime in 2001 for his involvement in a late 1999 plot to blow up the Radisson SAS Hotel in Amman, Jordan (see [November 30, 1999](#)). This is according to an unnamed Bush administration official. Supposedly, some time after his arrest, he is released. ([Borger 10/9/2002](#); [Pincus 2/7/2003](#) *Sources*: Unnamed Bush administration official) However, there are no contemporary press accounts of this arrest and release, and no signs of a trial. According to other accounts, at some point he is convicted for his role in the plot and sentenced to death by a Jordanian court in absentia. ([Buncombe and Milmo 2/6/2003](#))

2001: FBI Discovers ‘Massive’ Israeli Spy Operation Inside US

Sometime this year, the FBI discovers a new and “massive” Israeli spying operation inside the US. In 2004, UPI will report that, according to a former senior US government official, the FBI learned of a spy operation in the East Coast of the US, including New York and New Jersey. The FBI begins intensive surveillance on certain Israeli diplomats and other suspects. As part of this surveillance, in 2003 the FBI will be videotaping Naor Gilon, chief of political affairs at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, when they will discover Gilon is meeting with Larry Franklin, Defense Department analyst. In 2005, Franklin will plead guilty to passing classified secrets to Israeli officials (see [October 5, 2005](#)). It appears that the surveillance of some Israeli diplomatic officials in the US actually began by April 1999 (see [April 13, 1999-2004](#)), though details remain murky. ([Sale 12/9/2004](#)) It is not known if this discovered spy operation is connected to or the same as the Israeli art student and moving van spy rings, which appears to have been discovered in 2001 (see [March 23, 2001](#) and [June 2001](#)), or something completely different. It is also not clear if the discovery came from an investigation of media leaks begun two days before 9/11 (see [September 9, 2001](#)), or if it predated that and the 9/11 attacks.

Early 2001: Bush Staffers Less Concerned with Terrorism



Donald Kerrick. [Source: White House] Clinton and Bush staff overlap for several months while new Bush appointees are appointed and confirmed. Clinton holdovers seem more concerned about al-Qaeda than the new Bush staffers. For instance, according to a colleague, Sandy Berger, Clinton's National Security Adviser, had become "totally preoccupied" with fears of a domestic terror attack. ([Hirsh and Isikoff 5/27/2002](#)) Brian Sheridan, Clinton's outgoing Deputy Defense Secretary for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, is astonished when his offers during the transition to bring the new military leadership up to speed on terrorism are brushed aside. "I offered to brief anyone, any time on any topic. Never took it up." ([Benjamin 3/30/2004](#)) Army Lieutenant General Donald Kerrick, Deputy National Security Adviser and manager of Clinton's NSC (National Security Council) staff, still remains at the NSC nearly four months after Bush takes office. He later notes that while Clinton's advisers met "nearly weekly" on terrorism by the end of his term, he does not detect the same kind of focus with the new Bush advisers: "That's not being derogatory. It's just a fact. I didn't detect any activity but what [Clinton holdover Richard] Clarke and the CSG [Counterterrorism Security Group] were doing." ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#)) Kerrick submits a memo to the new people at the NSC, warning, "We are going to be struck again." He says, "They never responded. It was not high on their priority list. I was never invited to one meeting. They never asked me to do anything. They were not focusing. They didn't see terrorism as the big megaissue that the Clinton administration saw it as." Kerrick adds, "They were gambling nothing would happen." ([Benjamin 3/30/2004](#)) Bush's first Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Henry Shelton, later says terrorism was relegated "to the back burner" until 9/11. ([Washington Post 10/2/2002](#))

Early 2001: Taliban Disinformation Project Is Cancelled

The heads of the US military, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have become frustrated by the lack of CIA disinformation operations to create dissent among the Taliban, and at the very end of the Clinton administration, they begin to develop a Taliban disinformation project of their own, which is to go into effect in 2001. When they are briefed, the Defense Department's new leaders kill the project. According to Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Henry Shelton, "[Defense Secretary] Rumsfeld and Deputy [Defense] Secretary Paul Wolfowitz were against the Joint Staff having the lead on this." They consider this a

distraction from their core military missions. As far as Rumsfeld is concerned, “This terrorism thing was out there, but it didn’t happen today, so maybe it belongs lower on the list... so it gets defused over a long period of time.” ([Benjamin 3/30/2004](#))

Early 2001: Top Military Leaders Attend Briefings on Able Danger

In January, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Henry Shelton is given a three hour briefing on Able Danger. Shelton supported the formation of Able Danger back in 1999 (see [Fall 1999](#)). The content of the briefing has never been reported. Then in March, during a briefing on another classified program called Door Hop Galley, Able Danger is again brought up. This briefing, given by Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer, is attended by Vice Adm. Thomas Wilson, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency; Richard Schiefren, an attorney at DOD; and Stephen Cambone, Special Assistant to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense. ([Goodwin 9/2005](#); [Office of Congressman Curt Weldon 9/17/2005](#) Sources: [Curt Weldon](#)) In mid-September 2005, Weldon will say, “I knew that the Clinton administration clearly knew about this. Now I know of at least two briefings in the Bush administration.” He calls these two briefings “very troubling.” He wants to know what became of the information presented in these briefings, suggesting it shouldn’t have been destroyed as part of the other Able Danger data purges. ([Bender 9/16/2005](#); [Office of Congressman Curt Weldon 9/17/2005](#))

Early 2001: FBI Slow to React to French Report on Bin Laden’s Finances

French experts give an in-depth report on bin Laden’s financial network to a senior FBI official, according to a source close to French intelligence. A month later, the FBI official admits to his French colleagues that the document still hasn’t been translated into English. ([Braun et al. 10/14/2001](#)) It is not known what the FBI does with the report after that, if anything.

Early 2001: Bin Laden Warns of Massive Attack on US in Training Camp Speech

During a post-9/11 trial in Germany, Shadi Abdellah, a militant who briefly served as one of bin Laden’s bodyguards, will claim that in early 2001, “Bin Laden spoke in a speech of an attack against the United States and said there would be thousands of dead.... When there was an attack, we weren’t told. They just said to us, ‘pray for your brothers.’” Abdellah spent time at al-Qaeda training camps from early 2000 until May 2001, so presumably this speech was in May or before. Abdellah will be captured in Germany in 2002 for a role in helping to plot attacks against Jewish targets there (see [April 2002](#)). ([Tanner 11/28/2002](#); [Rolfsmeier 11/2/2004](#)) Bin Laden will make other similar public comments hinting at a massive attack against the US later in the summer of 2001 (see

[Summer 2001](#)). While it is unknown if US intelligence is aware of such speeches before 9/11, by July 2001 the CIA will report that a source in Afghanistan has said, “Everyone is talking about an impending attack” (see [July 2001](#)).

January 2001-Summer 2001: Hijackers Live in Toronto Apartment Building with Al-Marabh

The landlord and at least twelve tenants of a Toronto high rise building see Marwan Alshehhi living there in the spring of 2001. Other witnesses recall seeing Alshehhi and/or Mohamed Atta in or near the building. Nabil al-Marabh is sporadically staying in the same building in an apartment unit owned by his uncle. None of the witnesses appear to have sighted any of the other hijackers. Alshehhi and Atta are also seen by eyewitnesses around this time at a Toronto photocopy shop owned by al-Marabh’s uncle, and there are even some who see Atta occasionally working there (see [January 2001-Summer 2001](#)). ([Botchford and Godfrey 9/28/2001](#); [Botchford and Godfrey 9/28/2001](#); [ABC News 1/31/2002](#)) The apartment where al-Marabh stayed will not be raided by police until about two weeks after 9/11, and one week after reports of al-Marabh’s connections to the hijackers has been in the newspapers. The Toronto Sun will report, “Many [building] residents questioned why police waited so long to raid [the] apartment after al-Marabh was arrested. Several tenants alleged they had seen a man late at night during the past week, taking away boxes from the apartment.” ([Botchford and Godfrey 9/28/2001](#)) Al-Marabh’s roommate in the apartment is Hassan Almrei, a Syrian national. Canadian authorities will later arrest Almrei and discover that he has extensive connections with al-Qaeda (see [October 19, 2001](#)). ([ABC News 1/31/2002](#)) Some of the 9/11 hijackers may have been in Toronto as late as the end of August 2001. A motel manager in Hollywood, Florida, will later say that Mohamed Atta and Ziad Jarrah stay at his motel on August 30, 2001. He will say they gave a non-existent Toronto address and drove a car with Ontario, Canada, license plates. They claimed to be computer engineers from Iran, and said they had just come down from Canada to find jobs. ([Fallis and Cha 10/4/2001](#); [Godfrey 10/5/2001](#))

January 2001-Summer 2001: Hijackers Witnessed Preparing False IDs in Toronto Photocopy Shop with al-Marabh



The Toronto photocopy shop owned by Nabil al-Marabh’s uncle. [Source: CTV] Many eyewitnesses see Marwan Alshehhi and Mohamed Atta at a Toronto photocopy shop owned by Nabil al-Marabh’s uncle. Some of the dozens of

eyewitness accounts say Atta sporadically works in the shop. There is a large picture of bin Laden hanging in the store. Alshehhi and Atta are also seen by other eyewitnesses in a Toronto apartment building during this same time period (see [January 2001-Summer 2001](#)). ([Godfrey 10/21/2001](#)) In a series of raids after 9/11, many partially completed fake IDs will be found in the store and at al-Marabh's apartment. A stack of tightly-controlled immigration forms enabling one to immigrate to Canada will also be found. ([Botchford and Godfrey 9/28/2001](#); [Godfrey 10/5/2001](#); [Godfrey 10/16/2001](#)) According to the Toronto Sun, "Forensic officers said there are similarities in the paper stock, laminates, and ink seized from the downtown store and that which was used in identification left behind by the [9/11 hijackers]." ([Godfrey 10/16/2001](#))

January 2001: Death of Operative Puts New FBI Focus on Boston Cell



Bassam Kanj. [*Source: FBI*] Bassam Kanj is killed in a battle in Lebanon. Kanj lived on and off in Boston for nearly 15 years, and was a friend of al-Qaeda operatives Nabil al-Marabh, Raed Hijazi, and Mohamad Kamal Elzahabi. All four of them fought together in Afghanistan in the late 1980s (see [Late 1980s](#)), then worked at the same Boston taxi company in the 1990s (see [June 1995-Early 1999](#)). In late 1998, Kanj left Boston for Lebanon where he apparently recruited a couple hundred people to take part in a rebellion to overthrow the Lebanese government. He is killed during a five day battle, along with 21 others. Two days after the battle, a Lebanese newspaper identifies him as an al-Qaeda operative who had received financial support from bin Laden. This leads to a renewed focus on him in the US. In February 2001, the Boston Globe will report, "The FBI is continuing to look at Kanj's and Hijazi's activities in the Boston area in hopes of learning more about their contacts inside bin Laden's far-flung organization." Michael Rolince, chief of international terrorism operations for the FBI, will tell the Globe that both men had a "higher station" than most in al-Qaeda, and will add, "We are still trying to sort out who played what role." ([Kurkjian and Rakowsky 2/5/2001](#)) Presumably, this leads the FBI to take another look at Nabil al-Marabh, who had been roommates with both Hijazi and Kanj and is already wanted for a variety of al-Qaeda contacts. An individual matching al-Marabh's description is even mentioned in a prominent New York Times story about al-Qaeda in January 2001. The article states, "In early 1997, Hijazi moved to Boston, where he had a friend from his years in Afghanistan." ([Miller 1/15/2001](#)) Yet apparently there is no concerted effort to find al-Marabh, who will even be set free after being arrested trying to illegally enter the US (see [June 27, 2001-July 11, 2001](#)). And while the FBI learns about Elzahabi, he will be

allowed to return from fighting as a sniper in Chechnya and apply for a license to transport hazardous materials (see [Mid-August 2001](#)).

Between January and February 2001: Atta and Alshehhi Allegedly Practice Nighttime Landings at Clearwater Airpark



Clearwater Airpark. [Source: Douglas R.

Clifford / *St. Petersburg Times*] Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi reportedly spend at least 30 minutes practicing landing a single-engine plane at Clearwater Airpark, Florida, after it has closed for the night. This is according to Daniel Pursell, the chief instructor at Huffman Aviation, the Venice flight school attended by the two during the latter half of 2000 (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)). What they are doing at Clearwater is unknown. Their activities draw the attention of a police aide acting as a night watchman, who leaves a voice message at Huffman complaining about the incident. The plane is subsequently identified as having been rented by Atta and Alshehhi. Pursell, along with fellow instructor Thierry Leklou, reprimands them when they return to Venice the following morning. According to the *St. Petersburg Times*, the two leave Huffman shortly afterwards. This incident first surfaces publicly in 2006, when Pursell testifies at the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui. However, others will dispute his allegations. Local police say no incident reports were filed describing the event, and neither the FAA nor city have any record of unauthorized landings during this period. According to Bill Morris, Clearwater's marine and aviation director, a police aide would have called for backup and recorded the plane's details in a log, rather than calling Huffman. He says even if the aide had wanted to contact the plane's owner, it would have been impossible to ascertain who this was at night, as allegedly occurred, because the FAA's offices would have been closed. ([Hirschorn 3/23/2006](#); [Sharockman 3/30/2006](#); [Dailey 4/6/2006](#)) Furthermore, Atta and Alshehhi supposedly finished training at Huffman Aviation in December 2000, and the school's owner Rudi Dekkers will claim Huffman last heard from them around the end of that month. ([US Congress 3/19/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 17](#)) However, a similar incident to this is known to have occurred previously, where Atta and Alshehhi abandoned one of Huffman's planes at Miami International Airport (see [December 26, 2000](#)). ([Hirschorn 3/23/2006](#)) And according to the 9/11 Commission, after passing their instrument rating airplane tests on November 6, 2000, the pair was "able to sign out planes. They did so on a number of occasions, often returning at 2:00

and 3:00 A.M. after logging four or five hours of flying time.” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 15](#)) The St. Petersburg Times reports that Atta and Alshehhi “would rent a plane from Huffman and be gone for days at a time, Pursell said. They could fly to 20 airports across the state and never be noticed.” ([Sharockman 3/30/2006](#))

January 2001: High Ranking Official Refuses to Hear about Able Danger

Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer will later claim that DIA Deputy Director of Human Intelligence William Huntington is briefed by Shaffer at this time about a project named Dorhawk Galley. Some information about Able Danger’s methodology comes up. According to Shaffer, Huntington refuses to hear it and announces, “I can’t be here, I can’t see this.” Huntington immediately leaves Shaffer’s office and refuses to hear the information. Commenting on the episode, Shaffer later notes, “By doing this, he could later feign ignorance of the project should it have been compromised to the public. It is my belief that he is an example of the cultural problem—senior bureaucrats who are more focused on their own career and having ‘plausible deniability’ to never allow anything ‘controversial or risky’ to ‘touch them.’” Shaffer will also state, “It is of grave concern that Mr. Huntington is the one who is behind the troubling coincidence regarding my security clearance being suspended in March of 2004, just after reporting to my DIA chain of command [to include Mr. Huntington] of my contact with the 9-11 Commission, and my offer to share the Able Danger information to the 9-11 commission.” ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#); [US Congress 2/15/2006](#))

January 2001: CIA Report on USS *Cole* Bombing Only Finds Circumstantial Evidence of Bin Laden Link, Fails to Mention Some Connections

The CIA’s Counterterrorist Center completes a report on the bombing of the USS *Cole* (see [October 12, 2000](#)). The report, drafted by CIA officer Clark Shannon, finds that Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda are circumstantially tied to the attack. However, the report fails to mention details known to the CIA involving figures later connected to the 9/11 plot. The Justice Department’s Office of Inspector General will later observe, “The report did not mention [hijacker Khalid Almihdhar’s] visa, [hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi’s] travel to the United States or the Khallad [bin Attash] identification from the Kuala Lumpur photographs” (see [January 2-5, 2000](#), [March 5, 2000](#), and [January 4, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 283](#))

January-August 2001: Airlines Receive FAA Warnings, But Later Claim They Were Given No Real Hints of Possible Terrorist Attacks

The FAA gives 15 warnings to domestic airlines between January and August 2001, but about one general security warning a month had been common for a long time. ([Lewandowski and Davis 5/17/2002](#)) Even a government official later calls the content of these 15 warnings “standard fare.” ([Cordle and Weaver 5/17/2002](#)) As one newspaper later reports, “there were so many [warnings] that airline officials grew numb to them.” ([Adair 9/23/2002](#)) In May 2002, in response to recent revelations about what was known before 9/11, the major airlines will hold a press conference claiming they were never warned of a specific hijacking threat, and were not told to tighten security. For instance, an American Airlines spokesman states that the airline “received no specific information from the US government advising the carrier of a potential terrorist hijacking in the United States in the months prior to September 11, 2001. American receives FAA security information bulletins periodically, but the bulletins were extremely general in nature and did not identify a specific threat or recommend any specific security enhancements.” ([Cordle and Weaver 5/17/2002](#)) Bush administration officials later state that the terror information they are receiving is so vague that tighter security does not seem required. ([Salant 5/18/2002](#)) However, it seems that even these general warnings are never passed on to airline employees. Rosemary Dillard, a supervisor for American Airlines, states, “My job was supervision over all the flight attendants who flew out of National, Baltimore, or Dulles. In the summer of 2001, we had absolutely no warnings about any threats of hijackings or terrorism, from the airline or from the FAA.” ([Sheehy 6/17/2004](#)) The content of these seemingly harmless warnings remain classified after 9/11. They are said to be exempted from public disclosure by a federal statute that covers “information that would be detrimental to the security of transportation if disclosed.” ([Sheehy 6/17/2004](#))

January-June 2001: 9/11 Hijackers Pass Through Britain for Training or Fundraising



Ahmed Alnami in prayer. [Source: *Spiegel*

TV] Eleven of the 9/11 hijackers stay in or pass through Britain, according to the British Home Secretary and top investigators. Most are in Britain between April and June, just passing through from Dubai, United Arab Emirates (see [April 22-June 27, 2001](#)). However, investigators suspect some stay in Britain for training and fundraising (see [June 2001](#)). The eleven are Satam al-Suqami, Waleed Alshehri, Majed Moqed, Ahmed al-Ghamdi, Hamza Alghamdi, Ahmed Alnami, Mohand Alshehri, Ahmed Alhaznawi, Wail Alshehri, Fayez Ahmed Banihammad, and Saeed Alghamdi. Ahmed Alghamdi was one of several that should have been “instantly ‘red-flagged’ by British intelligence,” because of

his links to Raed Hijazi, a suspected ally of bin Laden being held in Jordan on charges of conspiring to destroy holy sites. Apparently, the investigation concludes that other “muscle” hijackers and leaders like Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi did not pass through Britain at this time. ([McGrory and Kennedy 9/26/2001](#); [Allen 9/27/2001](#); [BBC 9/28/2001](#); [MacKay 9/30/2001](#)) However, police will investigate whether Atta visited Britain in 1999 and 2000, together with some Algerians. ([Bamber, Hastings, and Syal 9/30/2001](#)) The London Times will also write, “Officials hope that the inquiries in Britain will disclose the true identities of the suicide team. Some are known to have arrived in Britain using false passports and fake identities that they kept for the hijack.” ([McGrory and Kennedy 9/26/2001](#))

January-March 2001: Intelligence Unit Tracking Al-Qaeda is Closed Down; Change in Leadership Factors in Closure

A secret military intelligence unit called Able Danger, which is tasked with assembling information about al-Qaeda networks around the world, is shut down. Some accounts say the program is shut down in January, some say February, and some say March. ([Phucas 6/19/2005](#); [Phucas 9/12/2005](#); [US Congress 9/21/2005](#)) The unit has identified Mohamed Atta and three other 9/11 hijackers as members of an al-Qaeda cell operating in the United States (see [January-February 2000](#)). According to James D. Smith, a Pentagon contractor involved with the unit, the inspector general shuts down the operation “because of a claim that we were collecting information on US citizens,” and it is illegal for the military to do this. ([Green 9/1/2005](#)) Others familiar with the unit later say it is closed down because it might have led to the exposure of another data mining project that was investigating US citizens allegedly illegally transferring sensitive US technology to the Chinese government. ([Green 9/1/2005](#)) Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer blames the change in leadership brought by the new Bush administration. “Once the four star [General Schoomaker] went away, it was pretty much like the world closing around us [Schoomaker retired in November 2000, but returned as Army Chief of Staff in 2003]. There was no political will to continue this at that point in time. Plus, my direct leadership: Colonel [Jerry] York and General [Bob] Harding had moved on as well. Therefore, I had a new chain of command above me. They were very risk adverse. This [Able Danger] operation, as with other operations which were very high risk / high gain, some of which are still ongoing—seemed to not be appreciated by the incoming leadership.” ([American Forces Press Service 6/17/2003](#); [Goodwin 9/2005](#)) For example, Shaffer will say that Col. Mary Moffitt, who replaces Col. Gerry York around this time (“spring 2001”), “dismantled the Defense [human intelligence] support to Able Danger just months before the 9-11 attacks... [and] became focused on shutting down our support to Able Danger under the guise of ‘reorganization’ and in the end, disestablished Stratus Ivy [the unit Shaffer headed] and its cutting edge focus.” ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#))

January-March 2001: Wright Told to ‘Let Sleeping Dogs Lie’



Kathleen McChesney. [Source: *FBI*] FBI agent Robert Wright is continuing to protest and fight the cancellation of the Vulgar Betrayal investigation (see [August 2000](#)). In January 2001, he claims that his supervisor tells him, “I think it’s just better to let sleeping dogs lie.” FBI agent John Vincent backs up the allegation. ([ABC News 12/19/2002](#)) In March 2001, Wright meets with the Chicago special agent-in-charge, who appears to be Kathleen McChesney, given that Wright calls this person “she” and McChesney held that position since January 1999. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 12/2001](#); [Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#)) He tells her that “the international terrorism unit of the FBI is a complete joke.” Within three weeks, the FBI opens another disciplinary investigation on Wright, charging that he had supplied classified information to an assistant US attorney. Wright is later cleared of the charges. In 2002, Wright will claim, “This was a pathetic attempt... before the Sept. 11th attacks, to further silence me from going public about the FBI’s negligence and incompetence.” ([Novak 6/19/2003](#); [Schlussel 7/14/2004](#)) A lawyer speaking for Wright after 9/11 will blame Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division Michael Chertoff for refusing to take Wright’s concerns seriously before 9/11. Chertoff will later be promoted to head the Department of Homeland Security. ([McCaleb 5/30/2002](#))

January-February 2001: Flight School’s Repeated Warnings About Hijacker Hanjour Ignored by FAA



Hani Hanjour, from a 2000 US visa application. [Source: 9/11 Commission] In January 2001, the Arizona flight school JetTech alerts the FAA about hijacker Hani Hanjour. No one at the school suspects Hanjour of terrorist intent, but they tell the FAA he lacks both the English and flying skills necessary for the commercial pilot's license he has already obtained. For instance, he had taken classes at the University of Arizona but failed his English classes with a 0.26 grade point average. A JetTech flight school manager "couldn't believe he had a commercial license of any kind with the skills that he had." A former employee says, "I'm still to this day amazed that he could have flown into the Pentagon. He could not fly at all." They also note he is an exceptionally poor student who does not seem to care about passing his courses. ([Yardley 5/4/2002](#); [CBS News 5/10/2002](#)) An FAA official named John Anthony actually sits next to Hanjour in class and observes his skills. He suggests the use of a translator to help Hanjour pass, but the flight school points out that goes "against the rules that require a pilot to be able to write and speak English fluently before they even get their license." ([Associated Press 5/10/2002](#)) The FAA verifies that Hanjour's 1999 pilot's license is legitimate (see [April 15, 1999](#)), but takes no other action. However, his license should have been rejected because it had already expired in late 1999 when he failed to take a mandatory medical test. ([Kelley 9/15/2001](#); [CBS News 5/10/2002](#)) An Arizona FAA inspector later says, "There should have been a stop right then and there." He will claim that federal law would have required Hanjour to be re-examined. ([Associated Press 6/13/2002](#)) In February, Hanjour begins advanced simulator training, "a far more complicated task than he had faced in earning a commercial license." ([Yardley and Thomas 6/19/2002](#)) The flight school again alerts the FAA about this and gives a total of five alerts about Hanjour, but no further action on him is taken. The FBI is not told about Hanjour. ([CBS News 5/10/2002](#)) Ironically, in July 2001, Arizona FBI agent Ken Williams will recommend in a memo that the FBI liaison with local flight schools and keep track of suspicious activity by Middle Eastern students (see [July 10, 2001](#)).

January-March 2001: CIA Director, National Security Counsel Briefed on Able Danger

In addition to briefings about Able Danger with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Early 2001](#)) and other military leaders (see [March 2001](#)), Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer claims that there are other briefings about the project in the same early 2001 time frame. In one briefing, Shaffer says CIA Director George Tenet approves "our conduct of this special project—I

did specifically mention the Able Danger effort to him regarding the use of its methodology to separate out US Person issues.” Shaffer also claims that the National Security Counsel (NSC) is briefed twice on Able Danger around this time. He says, “I cannot recall the specific dates of, or individuals present at, the briefing.” ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#))

January 2001 and after: Security Services Increase Surveillance of Jemaah Islamiyah after Bombing Campaign

Following a wave of bombings in Indonesia and the Philippines in late 2000 (see [December 24-30, 2000](#)), regional intelligence services increase surveillance of al-Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Police find that a call claiming responsibility for the bombing was made from a phone registered to JI operative Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi and trace calls from this phone to JI leader Hambali and one of his subordinates, Faiz abu Baker Bafana. Philippines authorities then keep al-Ghozi under surveillance for a year, before arresting him in January 2002. ([Murphy 2/14/2002](#)) Hambali is named in the media as a JI leader around this time (see [January 24, 2001](#)).

Early January 2001: Al-Qaeda Threat Highlighted for Powell

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke briefs Secretary of State Powell about the al-Qaeda threat. He urges decisive and quick action against the organization. Powell meets with the Counterterrorism Security Group (CSG)—made up of senior counterterrorism officials from many agencies—and sees to it that all members of the group agree al-Qaeda is a serious threat. For instance, Deputy Defense Secretary Brian Sheridan says to Powell, “Make al-Qaeda your number one priority.” ([Clarke 2004, pp. 227-30](#))

Early January 2001: CIA Passes Photos of Hijackers Alhazmi and Almihdhar for Source to Identify

The CIA’s Counterterrorist Center passes a photo of hijacker Khalid Almihdhar and a photo of hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi taken at al-Qaeda’s Malaysia summit (see January 5-8, 2000) to the CIA station in Islamabad, Pakistan. The station is to show the photos to a source, later referred to as “Omar,” to see if he can identify Khalid Almihdhar or al-Qaeda manager Khallad bin Attash, as Omar has previously identified bin Attash in another photo (see [November 22-December 16, 2000](#)). According to cables drafted at this time, the overseas station requested the photo of Almihdhar because it thinks that Almihdhar and bin Attash might be the same person (see [Mid-Late December 2000](#)). It is unclear why the photo of Alhazmi is also passed at the same time. The CIA has numerous other photos taken at the Malaysia summit as well as video (see January 5, 2000), but these are not passed. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 269-270](#).)

Before January 20, 2001: Pre-Inaugural Discussions about Removing Saddam Hussein

There are discussions among future members of the Bush administration, including Bush himself, about making the removal of Saddam Hussein a top priority once they are in office. After the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Richard Clarke, who serves as Bush's counterterrorism advisor, will say that the Bush team had been planning regime change in Iraq since before coming to office. "Since the beginning of the administration, indeed well before, they had been pressing for a war with Iraq," he will write in his book, *Against All Enemies*. "My friends in the Pentagon had been telling me that the word was we would be invading Iraq sometime in 2002." ([Clarke 2004, pp. 7-9](#)) During an appearance on Good Morning America on March 22, 2004, he will say, "[T]hey had been planning to do something about Iraq from before the time they came into office." ([Clarke 3/22/2004](#)) Evidence of pre-inaugural discussions on regime change in Iraq comes from other sources as well. Imam Sayed Hassan al-Qazwini, who heads the Islamic Center of America in Detroit, will tell the New York Times in early 2004 that he spoke with Bush about removing Saddam Hussein six or seven times, both before and after the 2000 elections. ([Stevenson 1/12/2004](#) Sources: [Imam Sayed Hassan al-Qazwini](#))

January 3, 2001: Clarke Briefs Rice on Al-Qaeda Threat

Richard Clarke, counterterrorism "tsar" for the Clinton administration, briefs National Security Adviser Rice and her deputy, Steve Hadley, about al-Qaeda. ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#)) Outgoing National Security Adviser Sandy Berger makes an unusual appearance at the start of the meeting, saying to Rice, "I'm coming to this briefing to underscore how important I think this subject is." He claims that he tells Rice during the transition between administrations, "I believe that the Bush administration will spend more time on terrorism generally, and on al-Qaeda specifically, than any other subject." Clarke presents his plan to "roll back" al-Qaeda that he had given to the outgoing Clinton administration a couple of weeks earlier. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#)) He gets the impression that Rice has never heard the term al-Qaeda before. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 227-30](#); [Blumenthal 3/25/2004](#)) Clarke is told at the meeting that he will keep his job but the position is being downgraded and he will no longer have direct access to the president (see [January 3, 2001](#)).

January 3, 2001: Clarke Demoted by Rice and Future 9/11 Commission Executive Director

National Security Adviser Rice decides this day to retain Richard Clarke, counterterrorism "tsar" for the Clinton administration, and his staff. However, she downgrades his official position as National Coordinator for Counterterrorism. While he is still known as the counterterrorism "tsar," he has less power and now reports to deputy

secretaries instead of attending Cabinet-level meetings. He no longer is able to send memos directly to the president, or easily interact with Cabinet-level officials. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 227-30](#); [Blumenthal 3/25/2004](#)) Clarke will not be able to meet with President Bush even a single time before 9/11 to discuss al-Qaeda (see [January 25, 2001-September 10, 2001](#)). In 2004, Rice will reveal that the person she tasks with considering changes to Clarke and his staff is Philip Zelikow, the future Executive Director of the 9/11 Commission. Zelikow recuses himself from those parts of the 9/11 Commission's investigation directly relating to his role in this and other matters. However, 9/11 victims' relatives are not satisfied. For instance, one relative says, "Zelikow has conflicts. I'm not sure that his recusal is sufficient. His fingerprints are all over that decision [to demote Clarke]." ([Waterman 4/9/2004](#))

January 3, 2001: Yemen Authorities Receive Malaysia Photographs from CIA, but FBI Does Not

Yemeni authorities receive photographs of operatives who attended al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit. The exact number of photographs they receive is not known, but they include three photos, of 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar, Nawaf Alhazmi, and a man who looks like one of their associates, Fahad al-Quso, that are later shown to the FBI (see [June 11, 2001](#)). It is unclear who provides the photos to the Yemenis, but the CIA has them and is interested in the bombing of the USS *Cole* in Yemen (see [October 12, 2000](#)), so presumably they come from the CIA. The photos are highly relevant to the FBI, as they connect extremists known to be involved in the *Cole* attack to Almihdhar and Alhazmi, but even though the FBI is in charge of the *Cole* investigation, the CIA continues to withhold the information from the FBI for months (see [January 5, 2001 and After](#), [February 1, 2001](#), [Late May, 2001](#) and [August 30, 2001](#)). The Yemenis' response to the photographs is unknown. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 293](#)) The CIA is aware by June 2001 that Almihdhar is the son-in-law of Ahmed al-Hada, a Yemeni extremist who runs a communications hub for Osama bin Laden (see [Late August 1998](#)), but it is not known whether they obtain this information now or at some other time. ([Wright 2006, pp. 343](#))

January 4, 2001: Informer Sees Known Al-Qaeda Leader in Malaysia Summit Photos



Nawaf Alhazmi (left) and Khallad bin Attash (right) are said to have been confused by an informer. [Source: FBI] An overseas CIA officer shows a source known as “Omar,” who provides information on al-Qaeda, photographs of hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi taken at the al-Qaeda Malaysia summit (see January 5-8, 2000). Omar has previously identified a photo of al-Qaeda commander Khallad bin Attash (see [November 22-December 16, 2000](#)) and the officer thinks that bin Attash and Almihdhar might be the same person (see [Mid-Late December 2000](#)). Omar says that the photo of Alhazmi, who the CIA apparently do not recognize at this time, actually shows bin Attash. As Omar cannot identify Almihdhar, but says he can identify bin Attash, this indicates Almihdhar and bin Attash are not the same person. The identification causes the CIA to believe that bin Attash attended al-Qaeda’s Malaysia summit. Although this belief is based on a mistaken identification, it is actually correct, as bin Attash was present at the summit—the CIA has photos of bin Attash there, but fails to show them to Omar. This identification is important because bin Attash is a known bin Laden operative connected to the USS *Cole* attack and East African embassy bombings. The CIA also knows that Almihdhar and Alhazmi were at the summit, so this could connect them to the *Cole* attack. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 268-271](#))

January 4, 2001: Atta Moves Between US and Spain

Mohamed Atta flies from Miami, Florida, to Madrid, Spain. He has allegedly been in the US since June 3, 2000, learning to fly in Florida with Marwan Alshehhi. ([Morgan, Kidwell, and Corral 9/22/2001](#)) He returns to the US on January 10. He makes a second trip to Spain in July of the same year.

January 5, 2001: French Report Al-Qaeda Plan to Hijack Plane Possibly Headed to US; CIA Apparently Informed



Alain Chouet. [Source: *La Repubblica*] A five page summary French intelligence report dated on this day is entitled “Hijacking of an Airplane by Radical Islamists.” The report details tactical discussions since early 2000 between bin Laden, Chechen rebels, and the Taliban about a hijacking against US airlines ([Early 2000](#) and [October 2000](#)). The plot considers hijacking a US airliner flying from Frankfurt to the US or hijacking a French or German airliner. The French intelligence comes from Uzbek spies who have infiltrated the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a militant group based in Uzbekistan next door to Afghanistan and closely tied to bin Laden and the Taliban. Some of the spies ended up in al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. The French report makes clear that the information was independently verified from other sources, including satellite telephone intercepts and possibly spies recruited in France. ([DasquiÈ 4/15/2007](#); [Doland 4/16/2007](#); [Le Monde \(Paris\) 4/17/2007](#)) When this French report will be leaked to the press in 2007, French officials will insist that the information in it would have been forwarded to the CIA at the time. For instance, Pierre-Antoine Lorenzi, responsible at the time for communications between French and other foreign intelligence services, will say the information would have gone to Bill Murray, chief of the CIA Paris station. Lorenzi says, “That, typically, is the kind of information that would certainly have been forwarded to the CIA. It would even have been an error not to have done it.” ([DasquiÈ 4/15/2007](#)) Alain Chouet, head of the French intelligence subdivision tracking terrorist movements, also says the information was certainly passed to the CIA. “We transmitted everything to our American counterparts, everything that could have posed a threat, and they did the same with us.” Chouet thinks it is possible the information was deliberate misdirection by al-Qaeda, because it does not mention multiple hijackings or suicide pilots. No CIA officials have gone on record saying that they received the warning. ([DasquiÈ 4/15/2007](#); [Doland 4/16/2007](#)) However, 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 by April 2001 an FBI report says that Ibn Khattab and bin Laden are seriously planning an attack together, possibly against US interests (see [Before April 13, 2001](#)). In May 2001, President Bush will be given a warning entitled, “Terrorist Groups Said Cooperating on US Hostage Plot,” which could involve a hijacking to free al-Qaeda prisoners in the US (see [May 23, 2001](#)). The plot described by French intelligence is also designed to free al-Qaeda prisoners in the US, though this may just be coincidence as the terrorist groups in Bush’s warning have not been publicly named. ([Le Monde \(Paris\) 4/17/2007](#))

After January 4, 2001: 9/11 Hijackers Alhazmi, Almihdhar, and Al-Qaeda Leader Not Watchlisted, Despite Connection to Al-Qaeda Malaysia Summit

After an informant identifies a photo of al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash for the CIA, indicating that he was at al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit (see [January 4, 2001](#)), the CIA fails to place him on the US watch list. The identification links bin Attash, who was involved in the attack on the USS *Cole*, to 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi. The CIA has already been informed that Alhazmi entered the US in March 2000, yet once again they fail to watchlist either Alhazmi or Almihdhar. The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will point out, "In January 2001, Khalid Almihdhar was abroad, his visa had expired, and he would have to clear a watch list check before obtaining a new visa to re-enter the United States." ([Meyer 9/22/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 148-150](#)) CNN later notes that at this point the CIA, at the very least, "could have put Alhazmi and Almihdhar and all others who attended the [summit] in Malaysia on a watch list to be kept out of this country. It was not done." ([Ensor 6/4/2002](#)) One of bin Attash's aliases, Salah Saeed Muhammed bin Yousaf, will be placed on the US watch list on August 23, at the same time as Alhazmi and Almihdhar (see August 23, 2001), but US authorities apparently will not be aware that this is actually one of his aliases at that point. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 152](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 538](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 302](#))

January 5, 2001 and After: CIA Does Not Tell FBI about Identification of Al-Qaeda Leader by Informer, but Allegedly Thinks It Has Done So

After an informer later referred to as "Omar" tells the CIA that al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash was at al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit (see [January 4, 2001](#)), the CIA fails to communicate this information to the FBI, even though it is important for their investigation of the USS *Cole* bombing and connects 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi to the *Cole* bombers. Omar is a joint FBI/CIA source, but the FBI assistant legal attaché responsible for him will later say he does not know of this identification and documentation he drafts at this time indicates he is unaware of it. It is unclear why the FBI agent is unaware of the identification, although he does not speak Omar's language and may have been out of the room making photocopies when Omar identified bin Attash in a photo of the Malaysia summit for his CIA counterpart. The CIA officer who shows the photos will later say he has no independent recollection of any particular meeting with Omar. However, when Omar previously identified a photo of bin Attash provided by Yemeni authorities on December 16, 2000 (see [November 22-December 16, 2000](#)), the CIA officer had the source repeat the identification specifically for the benefit of the FBI assistant legal attaché and the cable he drafted about the meeting said this clearly. In addition, the assistant legal attaché will later say that he recalls the specific circumstances of the previous debriefing and will be able to recount

them, including the identification of bin Attash in the photograph provided by the Yemenis. The CIA officer drafts three cables about the January 4 meeting; one internal cable provides little detail about the meeting, but says bin Attash was identified in one of the photos, a cable to the general US intelligence community fails to mention the identification of bin Attash, as does a third cable, which is sent to the CIA. However, according to statements made by CIA officials after 9/11, at this time the CIA thinks that the FBI knows that bin Attash has been identified in the photos. For example, Director of the CIA's Counterterrorist Center Cofer Black will tell the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, "[O]ur records establish that the Special Agents from the FBI's New York Field Office who were investigating the USS *Cole* attack reviewed the information about the Kuala Lumpur photo in late January 2001." However, there is no documentary record of information about the second identification placing bin Attash in Kuala Lumpur with the two hijackers being passed to the FBI. In addition, in July 2001 CIA manager Tom Wilshire will suggest passing this information to the FBI (see [July 13, 2001](#)), possibly meaning he thinks it is not passed at this time. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 264-278](#))

January 7, 2001: Rumsfeld Report Echoes 'New Pearl Harbor' Language

Donald Rumsfeld publishes a report as chairperson of the Rumsfeld Commission that makes proposals for the US Space Command. Rumsfeld is in the process of becoming defense secretary for the incoming Bush administration. His commission's report says with respect to attacks in space: "The question is whether the US will be wise enough to act responsibly and soon enough to reduce US space vulnerabilities. Or whether, as in the past, a disabling attack against the country and its people—a 'Space Pearl Harbor'—will be the only event able to galvanize the nation and cause the US government to act." Author Peter Dale Scott will later note the similarity between this language and that of a Project for the New American Century (PNAC) think tank report published several months before, signed by Rumsfeld and others, that warned of impediments to overhauling the US military "absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor" (see [September 2000](#)). Scott will comment that such quotes indicate that the US oil industry and military had achieved a quiet consensus by this time that "America would need full-spectrum dominance to guarantee access to oil and other resources in the rest of the world. This program would require massive expenditures, perhaps as much as a trillion dollars, and this could not be expected from Congress—except in response to an attack as massive and frightening as Pearl Harbor." ([Scott 2007, pp. 24](#))

January 10, 2001: Two Attas Enter the US on the Same Day?

"INS documents, matched against an FBI alert given to German police, show two men named Mohamed Atta [arrive] in Miami on January 10, each offering different

destination addresses to INS agents, one in Nokomis, near Venice, the other at a Coral Springs condo. He (they?) is admitted, despite having overstayed his previous visa by a month. The double entry could be a paperwork error, or confusion over a visa extension. It could be Atta arrived in Miami, flew to another country like the Bahamas, and returned the same day. Or it could be that two men somehow cleared immigration with the same name using the same passport number.” ([Morgan, Kidwell, and Corral 9/22/2001](#)) Officials later call this a bureaucratic snafu, and insist that only one Atta entered the US on this date. ([Corte 10/28/2001](#)) In addition, while Atta arrives on a tourist visa, he tells immigration inspectors that he is taking flying lessons in the US, which requires an M-1 student visa. ([Lardner 10/28/2001](#)) The fact that he had overstayed his visa over a month on a previous visit also does not cause a problem. ([Los Angeles Times 9/27/2001](#)) The INS later defends its decision, but “immigration experts outside the agency dispute the INS position vigorously.” For instance, Stephen Yale-Loehr, co-author of a 20-volume treatise on immigration law, asserts, “They just don’t want to tell you they blew it. They should just admit they made a mistake.” ([Lardner 10/28/2001](#))

January 10-25, 2001: Rice Rejects Resuming Use of Surveillance Drone to Track Bin Laden



The Predator drone. [*Source: US military*] (click image to enlarge) Even before President Bush’s official inauguration, Clinton holdover counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke pushes National Security Adviser Rice and other incoming Bush officials to resume Predator drone flights over Afghanistan (originally carried out in September and October 2000) in an attempt to find and assassinate bin Laden. ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#); [CBS News 6/25/2003](#)) On January 10, Rice is shown a video clip of bin Laden filmed by a Predator the year before. ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#)) Aware of an Air Force plan to arm the Predator, when Clarke outlines a series of steps to take against al-Qaeda on January 25 (see [January 25, 2001](#)), one suggestion is to go forward with new Predator drone reconnaissance missions in the spring and use an armed version when it is ready. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) The original Air Force development plan calls for three years of Predator testing, but Clarke pushes so hard that a Hellfire missile is successfully test fired from a Predator on February 16, 2001. The armed Predator will be fully ready by early June 2001 (see [Early June-September 10, 2001](#)). ([CBS News 6/25/2003](#); [Mayer 7/28/2003](#)) However, Rice apparently approves the use of the Predator but only as part of a broader strategy against al-Qaeda. Since that strategy will still not be ready before 9/11, the Predator will not be put into use before 9/11. ([Bridis and Solomon 6/22/2003](#))

January 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Warns of Surprise Attack Like Pearl Harbor

At his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Secretary of Defense-designate Donald Rumsfeld warns of the danger of a surprise attack like Pearl Harbor happening again. He testifies, “We all know that history is filled with instances where people were surprised. There were plenty of signals, plenty of warnings, plenty of cautions. But they weren’t taken aboard. They didn’t register. They weren’t sufficient to cause a person to act on those.” He continues, “We know that the thing that tends to register on people is fear, and we know that that tends to happen after there’s a Pearl Harbor, tends to happen after there’s a crisis. And that’s too late for us. We’ve got to be smarter than that. We’ve got to be wiser than that. We have to be more forward-looking.” As ABC News later comments, “eight months to the day after his warning of a surprise attack, Rumsfeld’s fears became reality with the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.” ([Ferullo 1/11/2001](#); [Scarborough 2004, pp. 165-166](#); [ABC News 7 \(Chicago\) 3/25/2004](#)) Rumsfeld will again refer to the danger of military surprises four months later, during meetings with the House and Senate Armed Services Committees (see [May 23-24, 2001](#)).

January 11-18, 2001: Overstaying Visa No Obstacle for Alshehhi



Marwan Alshehhi. [*Source: FBI*] Hijacker Marwan Alshehhi flies from the US to Casablanca, Morocco, and back, for reasons unknown. He is able to reenter the US without trouble, despite having overstayed his previous visa by about five weeks. ([Los Angeles Times 9/27/2001](#); [US Department of Justice 5/20/2002](#)) Curiously, Mohamed Atta’s cell phone is used on January 2 to call the Moroccan embassy in Washington, DC. Abdelghani Mzoudi, a Hamburg associate, is also in Morocco at the same time as Alshehhi, but there’s no documentation of them meeting there. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 17](#))

January 17, 2001: Hijacker Atta Wires Money from US to Bin Al-Shibh in Germany

Lead hijacker Mohamed Atta uses the name variant Mahmoud Elsayed to wire \$1,500 to Ramzi bin al-Shibh in Germany. The money is wired from a Western Union office in Temple Terrace, near Tampa on Florida's Gulf Coast. The 9/11 Commission will comment, "There is no known explanation for this transaction, which seems especially odd because bin al-Shibh had access to Alshehhi's German account at the time." ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 143](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/3/2006](#))

January 19, 2001: UN Sanctions on Taliban Do Not Stop Illegal Trade Network

New United Nations sanctions against Afghanistan take effect, adding to those from November 1999 (see [November 14, 1999](#)). The sanctions limit travel by senior Taliban authorities, freeze bin Laden's and the Taliban's assets, and order the closure of Ariana Airlines offices abroad. The sanctions also impose an arms embargo against the Taliban, but not against Northern Alliance forces battling the Taliban. ([Associated Press 12/19/2000](#)) The arms embargo has no visible effect because the sanctions fail to stop Pakistani military assistance. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) The sanctions also fail to stop the illegal trade network that the Taliban is secretly running through Ariana. Two companies, Air Cess and Flying Dolphin, take over most of Ariana's traffic. Air Cess is owned by the Russian arms dealer Victor Bout (see [Mid-1996-October 2001](#)), and Flying Dolphin is owned by the United Arab Emirates' former ambassador to the US, who is also an associate of Bout. In late 2000, despite reports linking Flying Dolphin to arms smuggling, the United Nations will give Flying Dolphin permission to take over Ariana's closed routes, which it does until the new sanctions take effect. Bout's operations are still functioning and he has not been arrested. ([Pasternak and Braun 1/20/2002](#); [van Niekerk and Verloy 2/5/2002](#)) Ariana will essentially be destroyed in the October 2001 US bombing of Afghanistan. ([Williams 11/18/2001](#))

January 19, 2001: US and Pakistan Discuss Operation to Snatch Bin Laden

The US considers mounting an operation to snatch Osama bin Laden from Afghanistan and discusses this with Pakistan, but this operation apparently will not be attempted before 9/11. Pakistan is asked to support the operation, which is to be conducted by US special forces inside Afghanistan, and the matter is discussed by US general Tommy Franks and Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf in January 2001. However, the Pakistani government advises the US that such an operation would be counterproductive and would further inflame religious sentiment in the region. ([Roelofsma 8/17/2001](#)) The plan apparently will be foiled when details about it are leaked to a Pakistani newspaper in August 2001 (see [August 17, 2001](#)).

January 20-September 10, 2001: Bush Administration Sees Rogue States with Missiles as Top Security Threat Instead of Al-Qaeda



Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley (R) and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz (L) speak to reporters in Moscow after taking part in negotiations with Russia regarding an anti-ballistic missile shield on May 11, 2001. [Source: Yuri Kochetkov/ Corbis] While still campaigning to become president, George W. Bush frequently argued the US should build an anti-ballistic missile shield (see [October 12, 2000](#)). After Bush is made president, the development of such a shield and getting out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty the US has signed that would prevent such a shield, becomes the top US security priority. Senior officials and cabinet members make it their top agenda item in meetings with European allies, Russia, and China. Five Cabinet-level officials, including Condoleezza Rice, travel to Moscow to persuade Russia to abandon the ABM Treaty. Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith is there on September 10 to make the same case. ([Cirincione 9/5/2004](#)) In a major speech given on May 1, 2001, Bush calls the possible possession of missiles by rogue states “today’s most urgent threat.” ([New York Times 5/2/2001](#)) In a June 2001 meeting with European heads of state, Bush names missile defense as his top defense priority and terrorism is not mentioned at all (see [June 13, 2001](#)). It will later be reported that Rice was scheduled to give a major speech on 9/11, in which, according to the Washington Post, she planned “to promote missile defense as the cornerstone of a new national security strategy, and [made] no mention of al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, or Islamic extremist groups...” However, the speech will be cancelled due to the 9/11 attacks.(see [September 11, 2001](#)). ([Wright 4/1/2004](#)) Bush’s missile shield stance is highly controversial. For instance, in July 2001 a Guardian article is titled, “US Defies Global Fury Over Missile Shield.” ([New York Times 5/2/2001](#)) Domestic critics suggest the missile shield could start a new arms race and cost over \$500 billion. ([Ferraro 5/3/2001](#)) Some argue that Bush’s missile focus is diverting attention from terrorism. For instance, Sen. Carl Levin (D) tells Defense Secretary Rumsfeld at a June 2001 hearing that the US is spending too much money on missile defense and not “putting enough emphasis on countering the most likely threats to our national security... like terrorist attacks.” ([Cirincione 9/5/2004](#)) On September 5, 2001, New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd writes, “And why can George W. Bush think of nothing but a missile shield? Our president is caught in the grip of an obsession worthy of literature” and notes that “sophisticated antimissile interceptors can’t stop primitive, wobbly missiles from rogue

nations, much less germ warfare from terrorists...” ([Dowd 9/5/2001](#)) On September 10, 2001, Sen. Joseph Biden (D) warns that if the US spends billions on missile defense, “we will have diverted all that money to address the least likely threat, while the real threats come into this country in the hold of ship, or the belly of a plane.” In 2004, a San Francisco Chronicle editorial will suggest that if the Bush administration had focused less on the missile shield and had “devoted more attention, more focus and more resources to the terrorist threat, the events of Sept. 11 might have been prevented.” ([Cirincione 9/5/2004](#))

January 20-September 10, 2001: Bush Briefed on Al-Qaeda over 40 Times

National Security Adviser Rice later testifies to the 9/11 Commission that in the first eight months of Bush’s presidency before 9/11, “the president receive[s] at these [Presidential Daily Briefings] more than 40 briefing items on al-Qaeda, and 13 of those [are] in response to questions he or his top advisers posed.” ([Washington Post 4/8/2004](#)) The content of the warnings in these briefings are unknown. However, CIA Director George Tenet claims that none of the warnings specifically indicates terrorists plan to fly hijacked commercial aircraft into buildings in the US. ([Semple 4/4/2004](#)) Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke will later emphasize, “Tenet on 40 occasions in... morning meetings mentioned al-Qaeda to the president. Forty times, many of them in a very alarmed way, about a pending attack.” ([Zeman et al. 11/2004](#)) These briefings are normally given in person by CIA Director George Tenet, and are usually attended by Vice President Cheney and National Security Adviser Rice. In the Clinton administration, up to 25 officials received the PDB. But in the Bush administration before 9/11, this was sharply reduced to only six people (see [After January 20, 2001](#)). Other top officials have to make due with an Senior Executive Intelligence Brief generally released one day later, which is similar to the PDB but often contains less information (see [August 7, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 256, 533](#))

January 21, 2001: George W. Bush Inaugurated



George W. Bush taking the oath of office. [Source: *White House/ Wally McNamara*] George W. Bush is inaugurated as president, replacing President Bill Clinton. ([Bruni and Sanger 1/21/2001](#))

January 21, 2001: Bush Administration Takes Over; Many Have Oil Industry Connections



The Chevron oil tanker named after National Security Advisor Rice. [Source: ABC News] George W. Bush is inaugurated as the 43rd US President, replacing Bill Clinton. The only Cabinet-level figure to remain permanently in office is CIA Director Tenet, appointed in 1997 and reputedly a long-time friend of George H. W. Bush. FBI Director Louis Freeh stays on until June 2001. Numerous figures in Bush's administration have been directly employed in the oil industry, including Bush, Vice President Cheney, and National Security Adviser Rice. Rice had been on Chevron's Board of Directors since 1991, and even had a Chevron oil tanker named after her. ([Cave 11/19/2001](#)) It is later revealed that Cheney is still being paid up to \$1 million a year in "deferred payments" from Halliburton, the oil company he headed. ([Bryce and Borger 3/12/2003](#)) Enron's ties also reach deep into the administration. ([Milbank and Kessler 1/18/2002](#))

January 21-September 10, 2001: Transportation Secretary Says Bush Administration Does Nothing to Fight Terrorism

In 2003, Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta will later be asked by the 9/11 Commission, "Did this higher level of [terrorist] chatter [before 9/11]... result in any action across the government? I take it your answer is no." He will reply, "That's correct." ([Arnold 5/23/2003](#))

Shortly Before February 1, 2001: CIA Bin Laden Unit Asked to 'Touch Base' with *Cole* Investigators about Identification of Al-Qaeda Leader, but Key Information Leading to Two 9/11 Hijackers Is Not Passed

A CIA officer in Islamabad, Pakistan, asks Alec Station, the CIA's bin Laden unit, to "touch base" with FBI agents investigating the bombing of the USS *Cole* who are preparing to come to Islamabad to interview a joint FBI/CIA source about the identification of one of the *Cole* bombers, but the suggested briefing is either never given,

or lacks a crucial detail. Alec Station is aware that the source, referred to later as “Omar,” has identified al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash as being present at al-Qaeda’s Malaysia summit (see [January 4, 2001](#)) and that the FBI agents are going to Islamabad specifically to document another identification of bin Attash by Omar (see [November 22-December 16, 2000](#)). The cable from Islamabad even notes that Omar is “currently of very high interest to our [FBI] colleagues,” but Alec Station fails to notify the *Cole* investigators that bin Attash attended the summit in Malaysia. This is important because it connects bin Attash to 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, who also attended the summit (see January 5-8, 2000). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 275-8](#)) The CIA officer will meet the FBI agents in Pakistan, but will also fail to mention the identification of bin Attash at the Malaysia meeting to them (see [February 1, 2001](#)).

January 24, 2001: Italians Hear of Brothers Going to US for ‘Very, Very Secret’ Plan, Other Clues

On this day, Italian intelligence hears an interesting wiretapped conversation eerily similar to the one from August 12, 2000 (see [August 12, 2000](#)). This one occurs between al-Qaeda operatives Mahmoud Es Sayed and Ben Soltane Adel, two members of al-Qaeda’s Milan cell. Adel asks, in reference to fake documents, “Will these work for the brothers who are going to the United States?” Sayed responds angrily, saying “don’t ever say those words again, not even joking!... If it’s necessary... whatever place we may be, come up and talk in my ear, because these are very important things. You must know... that this plan is very, very secret, as if you were protecting the security of the state.” This will be only one of many clues found from the Italian wiretaps and passed on to US intelligence in March 2001 (see [March 2001](#)). However, they apparently will not be properly understood until after 9/11. Adel is later arrested and convicted of belonging to a terrorist cell, and Es Sayed will flee to Afghanistan in July 2001. ([Carroll 5/30/2002](#))

January 24, 2001: Media Reports Tie 9/11 Plotter to Bombings in Indonesia

Following a series of bombings in Indonesia and the Philippines at the end of the previous year (see [December 24-30, 2000](#)), Southeast Asian authorities begin to investigate the Islamic militant group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) with more urgency (see [January 2001 and after](#)). One of the prime suspects in the bombings is Hambali, a JI leader, and his name appears in the media. Initially, Hambali is thought to have fled to Saudi Arabia. ([New Straits Times 1/25/2001](#); [New Straits Times 1/27/2001](#); [Jakarta Post 2/7/2001](#); [Jakarta Post 2/9/2001](#)) The Malaysian government finds more information out about him in the spring and puts out an all points bulletin for him (see [April-May 2001](#)). The FBI had previously connected Hambali to the Bojinka plot (see [May 23, 1999](#)) of Ramzi Yousef and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, and Hambali attended the Malaysia summit in January 2000 at which al-Qaeda apparently planned various attacks, including 9/11. The summit was monitored by Malaysian intelligence, which recognized Hambali as an attendee (see [Shortly After January 8, 2000](#)) and a report on the summit was passed

on to the CIA (see January 5-8, 2000). However, the publicity Hambali receives at this point apparently does not lead to a re-examination of the Malaysia summit.

January 25, 2001: Clarke Presents Plan to Roll Back Al-Qaeda, but Response Is Delayed



Richard Clarke. [Source: Robert Flores/ Defense

Information Systems Agency] Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke submits a proposal to National Security Adviser Rice and “urgently” asks for a Cabinet-level meeting on the al-Qaeda threat. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 230-31](#)) He forwards his December 2000 strategy paper and a copy of his 1998 “Delenda Plan” (see [August 27, 1998](#)). He lays out a proposed agenda for urgent action:

- Approve covert assistance to Ahmed Shah Massoud’s Northern Alliance fighting the Taliban. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))
- Significantly increase funding for CIA counterterrorism activity. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))
- Respond to the USS *Cole* bombing with an attack on al-Qaeda. (The link between al-Qaeda and that bombing had been assumed for months and is confirmed in the media two days later.) According to the Washington Post, “Clarke argue[s] that the camps [are] can’t-miss targets, and they [matter]. The facilities [amount] to conveyor belts for al-Qaeda’s human capital, with raw recruits arriving and trained fighters departing either for front lines against the Northern Alliance, the Afghan rebel coalition, or against American interests somewhere else. The US government had whole libraries of images filmed over Tarnak Qila and its sister camp, Garmabat Ghar, 19 miles farther west. Why watch al-Qaeda train several thousand men a year and then chase them around the world when they left?” No retaliation is taken on these camps until after 9/11. ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#))
- Go forward with new Predator drone reconnaissance missions in the spring and use an armed version when it is ready (see [January 10-25, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))
- Step up the fight against terrorist fundraising. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))
- Be aware that al-Qaeda sleeper cells in the US are not just a potential threat, but are a “major threat in being.” Additionally, more attacks have almost certainly been set in motion (see [January 25, 2001](#)). ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#)) Rice’s response to Clarke’s proposal is that the Cabinet will not address the issue until it has been “framed” at the deputy

secretary level. However, this initial deputy meeting is not given high priority and it does not take place until April 2001. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 230-31](#)) Henry Shelton, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman until 9/11, says, “The squeaky wheel was Dick Clarke, but he wasn’t at the top of their priority list, so the lights went out for a few months. Dick did a pretty good job because he’s abrasive as hell, but given the [bureaucratic] level he was at” there was no progress. ([Benjamin and Simon 2002, pp. 335-36](#); [Benjamin 3/30/2004](#)) Some counterterrorism officials think the new administration responds slowly simply because Clarke’s proposal originally came from the Clinton administration. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#)) For instance, Thomas Maertenson, on the National Security Council in both the Clinton and Bush administrations, says, “They really believed their campaign rhetoric about the Clinton administration. So anything [that administration] did was bad, and the Bushies were not going to repeat it.” ([Bumiller and Miller 3/24/2004](#); [Black 3/25/2004](#)) The Bush administration will finally address the gist of Clarke’s plan at a cabinet-level meeting on September 4, 2001, just one week before 9/11 (see [September 4, 2001](#)). Clarke will later comment that the plan adopted “on Sept. 4 is basically... what I proposed on Jan. 25. And so the time in between was wasted.”

January 25, 2001: WTC Construction Manager Says Tower Could Sustain Multiple Plane Impacts



Frank De Martini. [*Source: New York Times*] Frank De Martini, an architect who works as the World Trade Center’s construction manager, is interviewed for a History Channel documentary about the WTC towers. He says, “I believe the building probably could sustain multiple impacts of jetliners because this structure is like the mosquito netting on your screen door, this intense grid, and the jet plane is just a pencil puncturing the screen netting. It really does nothing to the screen netting.” ([Dwyer and Flynn 2005, pp. 149](#)) De Martini will be in his office on the 88th floor of the North Tower when it is hit on 9/11. He will die when the tower collapses, after helping more than 50 people escape. ([Associated Press 8/29/2003](#); [Dwyer 8/29/2003](#))

January 25, 2001: Clarke Warns Rice Al-Qaeda Cells Are Inside US and Are ‘Major Threat’

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke’s plan to deal with al-Qaeda is given to National Security Adviser Rice on this day. It includes a warning that al-Qaeda cells already exist in the US. The plan was outlined in a document he prepared in December 2000 (see

[January 25, 2001](#)), which stated that US intelligence believes there are al-Qaeda “sleeper cells” in the US and that they’re not just a potential problem but “a major threat in being.” Clarke noted in the document that two key al-Qaeda members involved in the Millennium plot were naturalized US citizens (presumably a reference to Raed Hijazi and Khalil Deek) and that one suspect in the 1998 embassy bombings had “informed the FBI that an extensive network of al-Qaeda ‘sleeper agents’ currently exists in the US” (see [August 12-25, 1998](#)). It also said that Ahmed Ressam’s attempted December 1999 attack revealed al-Qaeda supporters in the US (see [December 15-31, 1999](#)). Finally, the Clarke warned that more attacks have almost certainly been set in motion. ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 260, 535](#))

January 25, 2001-September 10, 2001: **Counterterrorism ‘Tsar’ Unable to Talk to Bush about** **Terrorism before 9/11**

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke submits a comprehensive plan to deal with al-Qaeda within days of President Bush’s inauguration (see [January 25, 2001](#)). He wants to meet with Bush directly to discuss it with him, but he is unable to do so before 9/11. Clarke will later recall, “I asked for a meeting with the president several times beginning, in fact, before [National Security Adviser] Rice even took office in the transition briefing. I said I have given this briefing to the vice president, I’ve given it to the secretary of state, I’ve given it now to you, I would like to give it to the president. And what I was told was I could brief the president on terrorism after the policy development process had been completed.” He does have one meeting with Bush before 9/11, but only to discuss cyber security because Clarke is planning to quit his current job to focus on that issue instead (see [June 2001](#)). When asked why he didn’t bring up al-Qaeda at that meeting, Clarke will reply, “Because I had been told by Dr. Rice and her deputy that this was a briefing on countering the cyber threats and not on al-Qaeda and that I would have my opportunity on al-Qaeda if I just held on, eventually they would get to it, probably in September.” ([Clarke 4/8/2004](#)) The Bush administration had downgraded Clarke’s position in early January 2001 and he was no longer able to send memos directly to the president as he could during the Clinton administration (see [January 3, 2001](#)).

(January 25-Early March, 2001): Atta and Alshehhi **Move to Georgia and Attend Flight School**

According to the FBI and 9/11 Commission, Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi move temporarily to Georgia on January 25, 2001, staying briefly in Norcross and Decatur, near Atlanta. The FBI says it believes they remain in the Atlanta area during February and March. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 229](#)) According to several news reports, between late February and early March, Atta and Alshehhi twice visit the Advanced Aviation Flight Training School in nearby Lawrenceville. They pay \$171 in total and on both occasions rent a small Piper Warrior plane for an hour. They are accompanied by an instructor on the first occasion, but fly alone the second time.

According to the school's owner Bruce Buell, the two are "well-dressed, polite and friendly." Two days after 9/11 Chrissy Ross, a flight dispatcher at the school, will recognize Atta's name when the identities of the suspected hijackers are made public. She calls the FBI, whose agents then come and take all the school's records. ([CNN 9/26/2001](#); [McClam 10/19/2001](#); [Associated Press 10/19/2001](#)) However, the FBI claims Atta and Alshehhi visit Advanced Aviation about a month earlier than news reports suggest, on January 31 and February 6. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#))

January 27, 2001: Confirmation of Al-Qaeda's Role in USS Cole Bombing Triggers No Immediate US Response

The Washington Post reports that the US has confirmed the link between al-Qaeda and the October 2000 USS *Cole* bombing (see [October 12, 2000](#)). ([Vise and Eggen 1/27/2001](#)) This conclusion is stated without hedge in a February 9 briefing for Vice President Cheney. ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#)) In the wake of that bombing, Bush stated on the campaign trail, "I hope that we can gather enough intelligence to figure out who did the act and take the necessary action.... There must be a consequence." ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#)) Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz later complains that by the time the new administration is in place, the *Cole* bombing was "stale." Defense Secretary Rumsfeld concurs, stating that too much time had passed to respond. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) The new Bush administration fails to resume the covert deployment of cruise missile submarines and gunships on six-hour alert near Afghanistan's borders that had begun under President Clinton. The standby force gave Clinton the option of an immediate strike against targets in Afghanistan harboring al-Qaeda's top leadership. This failure makes a possible assassination of bin Laden much more difficult. ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#))

January or July 28, 2001: Hijackers Rent Post Office Box in Florida, Some Reports Say Months before They Officially Arrive

Hijackers Hamza Alghamdi and Mohamed Alshehri rent a post office box in Delray Beach, Florida. The timing is uncertain. Some reports indicate this occurs in January, which would be several months before they arrive in the US according to the FBI and 9/11 Commission (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)). ([Goldstein 9/30/2001](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [Perry 6/30/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 528](#)) However, a document used as evidence at the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui will say the mailbox is actually rented on July 28, 2001. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 7](#))

January 30, 2001: Hijacker Jarrah Possibly Questioned at Request of CIA, Then Released

Hijacker pilot Ziad Jarrah is questioned at Dubai airport over suspected radical Islamist links in January of 2000 or 2001. Initial accounts place the stop in 2001, after Jarrah had received flight training in the US. ([Crewdson 12/13/2001](#); [MacVicar and Faraj 8/1/2002](#); [Corbin 2003](#)) However, other accounts place this a year earlier (see [January 30, 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 496](#); [Zeman et al. 11/2004](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 186-7](#); [Crewdson and Zajac 9/28/2005](#)) In the 2001 version, Jarrah has already started flight training and has a US visa, whereas in the 2000 version he merely tells UAE officials of his plans to get a US visa and receive flight training there. ([Corbin 2003](#); [History Channel 2004](#)) There is evidence to suggest Jarrah is not in Dubai on January 30, 2001 (see [Late November 2000-January 30, 2001](#)). In addition, there is evidence to suggest Jarrah was in Afghanistan in January 2000 (see [January 18, 2000](#)).

January 30, 2001: First National Security Council Meeting Focuses on Iraq and Israel, Not Terrorism

The Bush White House holds its first National Security Council meeting. The focus is on Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. ([Bamford 2004, pp. 261](#))

Israeli-Palestinian conflict - “We’re going to correct the imbalances of the previous administration on the Mideast conflict,” President Bush reportedly tells his national security team. “We’re going to tilt it back toward Israel.” His view is that the Israeli government, currently headed by Ariel Sharon, should be left alone to deal as it sees fit with the Palestinians. “I’m not going to go by past reputations when it comes to Sharon. I’m going to take him at face value. We’ll work on a relationship based on how things go.” Justifying his position, he recalls a recent trip he took to Israel with the Republican Jewish Coalition. “We flew over the Palestinian camps. Looked real bad down there.... I don’t see much we can do over there at this point.” Secretary of State Colin Powell, surprised by Bush’s intended policy towards the 50-year old Israeli-Palestinian conflict, objects. According to Secretary of Treasury Paul O’Neil, Powell “stresse[s] that a pullback by the United States would unleash Sharon and the Israeli army.” When Powell warns the president that the “consequences of that [policy] could be dire, especially for the Palestinians,” Bush shrugs. “Sometimes a show of strength by one side can really clarify things,” he suggests. ([Bamford 2004, pp. 265-266](#))

Iraq - The meeting then moves on to the subject of Iraq. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice begins noting “that Iraq might be the key to reshaping the entire region.” She turns the meeting over to CIA director George Tenet who summarizes current intelligence on Iraq. He mentions a factory that “might” be producing “either chemical or biological materials for weapons manufacture.” The evidence he provides is a picture of the factory with some truck activity, a water tower, and railroad tracks going into a building. He admits that there is “no confirming intelligence.” ([Bamford 2004, pp. 267](#)) US Secretary of Treasury Paul O’Neill, later recalls: “From the very beginning, there was a conviction, that Saddam Hussein was a bad person and that he needed to go... From the very first instance, it was about Iraq. It was about what we can do to change this regime. Day one, these things were laid and sealed.” O’Neill will say officials never questioned the logic behind this policy. No one ever asked, “Why Saddam?” and “Why now?” Instead, the issue that needed to be resolved was how this could be

accomplished. “It was all about finding a way to do it,” O’Neill will explain. “That was the tone of it. The president saying ‘Go find me a way to do this.’” ([CBS News 1/10/2004](#); [Stevenson 1/12/2004](#); [Borger 1/12/2004](#); [Burrough et al. 5/2004, pp. 234](#)) Another official who attends the meeting will later say that the tone of the meeting implied a policy much more aggressive than that of the previous administration. “The president told his Pentagon officials to explore the military options, including use of ground forces,” the official will tell ABC News. “That went beyond the Clinton administration’s halfhearted attempts to overthrow Hussein without force.” ([Cochran 1/13/2004](#)) The council does more than just discuss Iraq. It makes a decision to allow the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an Iraqi opposition group, to use \$4 million to fund efforts inside Iraq to compile information relating to Baghdad’s war crimes, military operations, and other internal developments. The money had been authorized by Congress in late 2004. The US has not directly funded Iraqi opposition activities inside Iraq itself since 1996. ([Kettle 2/3/2005](#)) After Paul O’Neill first provides his account of this meeting in 2004, the White House will attempt to downplay its significance. “... The stated policy of my administration toward Saddam Hussein was very clear,” Bush will tell reporters during a visit to Mexico In January 2004. “Like the previous administration, we were for regime change.... And in the initial stages of the administration, as you might remember, we were dealing with desert badger or fly-overs and fly-betweens and looks, and so we were fashioning policy along those lines.” ([Stevenson 1/12/2004](#))

Late January 2001: US Intelligence Told to Back Off from Bin Laden and Saudis



A. Q. Khan receiving a medal. [*Source: Associated Press*] The BBC later reports, “After the elections, [US intelligence] agencies [are] told to ‘back off’ investigating the bin Ladens and Saudi royals, and that anger[s] agents.” This follows previous orders to abandon an investigation of bin Laden relatives in 1996 (see [February-September 11, 1996](#)), and difficulties in investigating Saudi royalty. ([BBC 11/6/2001](#)) An unnamed “top-level CIA operative” says there is a “major policy shift” at the National Security Agency at this time. Bin Laden could still be investigated, but agents could not look too closely at how he got his money. One specific CIA investigation hampered by this new policy is an investigation in Pakistani nuclear scientist A. Q. Khan and his Khan Laboratories. Khan is considered the “father” of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons capability. But since the funding for this nuclear program gets traced back to Saudi Arabia,

restrictions are placed on the inquiry. ([Palast 2002, pp. 99-100](#)) Also in early 2001, FBI agent Robert Wright, attempting to pursue an investigation into Saudi multimillionaire Yassin al-Qadi, is told by FBI superiors, “it’s just better to let sleeping dogs lie”(see [January-March 2001](#)). Reporter Greg Palast notes that President Clinton was already hindering investigations by protecting Saudi interests. However, as he puts it, “Where Clinton said, ‘Go slow,’ Bush policymakers said, ‘No go.’ The difference is between closing one eye and closing them both.” ([Palast 2002, pp. 102](#))

Late January 2001: Islamic Militants Converge at Beirut Conference



Four members of the American delegation to the “First Conference on Jerusalem” (from right to left): Ahmed Yusef, Abdurrahman Alamoudi, Yaser Bushnaq, and Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad. [*Source: Minaret of Freedom Institute*] (click image to enlarge) Hundreds of the world’s most extreme Islamic militants attend an unprecedented conference in Beirut, Lebanon called “The First Conference on Jerusalem.” Participants include leaders of al-Qaeda, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and militants from Egypt, Pakistan, Jordan, Algeria, Sudan, Qatar, and Yemen. The conference is held with the purpose of uniting militant groups for holy war against Israel and the US. The participants create a new organization called “the Jerusalem Project,” with the goal of winning total Muslim control over Jerusalem. The participants produce a document which calls for a boycott on US and Israeli products and states, “The only decisive option to achieve this strategy [to regain Jerusalem] is the option of jihad [holy war] in all its forms and resistance... America today is a second Israel.” ([Radler 6/22/2001](#); [Cameron 5/17/2002](#)) At least four of the attendees come from the US. One of them, Abdurrahman Alamoudi, is a prominent lobbyist in the US for Muslim causes. Yet there is no indication Alamoudi faces any investigation in the US after attending this conference. In fact, in June 2001, Alamoudi will apparently take part in a meeting with Vice President Cheney at the White House for a briefing on the Bush administration’s domestic and foreign policies of interest to the American Muslim community. ([Radler 6/22/2001](#); [Jacoby 3/11/2003](#); [Ahmad 2/8/2005](#)) Another participant in the conference is Ahmad Huber, a director of the Al Taqwa Bank, which will be shut down in the months after 9/11 for suspected terrorism ties. Huber is known for his connections to both neo-Nazi and radical Muslim groups (see [1988](#)). After 9/11, Huber will claim that he met some al-Qaeda leaders in this conference and will praise them for being “very discreet, well-educated, and very intelligent people.” ([Williamson and Jaklin 11/8/2001](#); [Reynolds 2/1/2002](#)) Huber says that in the five years before 9/11, the bin Laden family sponsors Al Taqwa’s attendance at several international Muslim

conferences, possibly including this one. He nonetheless claims the family is estranged from Osama bin Laden. ([Le Monde \(Paris\) 5/3/2002](#)) It has not been reported if Alamoudi met with Huber or any al-Qaeda leaders while at the conference. Alamoudi will later be sentenced to 23 years in prison in the US for illegal dealings with Libya (see [October 15, 2004](#)).

January 31, 2001: Bipartisan Commission Issues Final Report on Terrorism, but Conclusions Are Ignored



Gary Hart (left) and Warren Rudman (right) testify before a Senate committee in 2002. [*Source: Reuters/ Win McNamee*] The final report of the US Commission on National Security/21st Century, co-chaired by former Senators Gary Hart (D) and Warren Rudman (R) is issued. The bipartisan report was put together in 1998 by then-President Bill Clinton and then-House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Hart and Rudman personally brief National Security Adviser Rice, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and Secretary of State Powell on their findings. The report has 50 recommendations on how to combat terrorism in the US, but all of them are ignored by the Bush administration. According to Senator Hart, Congress begins to take the commission's suggestions seriously in March and April, and legislation is introduced to implement some of the recommendations. Then, "Frankly, the White House shut it down... The president said 'Please wait, We're going to turn this over to the vice president'... and so Congress moved on to other things, like tax cuts and the issue of the day." The White House announces in May that it will have Vice President Cheney study the potential problem of domestic terrorism despite the fact that this commission had just studied the issue for 2 1/2 years. Interestingly, both this commission and the Bush administration were already assuming a new cabinet level National Homeland Security Agency would be enacted eventually, even as the public remained unaware of the term and the concept. ([Tapper 9/12/2001](#); [Talbot 4/2/2004](#)) Hart is incredulous that neither he nor any of the other members of this commission are ever asked to testify before the 9/11 Commission. ([Hart 4/6/2004](#)) The 9/11 Commission will later make many of the same recommendations. However, the Commission will barely mention the Hart/Rudman Commission in their final report, except to note that Congress appointed it and failed to follow through on implementing the recommendations. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 107, 479](#))

February 2001: US Fails to Back Plan to Overthrow Taliban

Abdul Haq, a famous Afghan leader of the mujaheddin, convinces Robert McFarlane, National Security Adviser under President Ronald Reagan, that Haq and about 50 fellow commanders could lead a force to start a revolt against the Taliban in Southern Afghanistan. However, Haq wants to do this under the authority of Zahir Shah, the popular former king of Afghanistan, whom the US does not support. The CIA fails to give any support to Haq. Says one CIA official to McFarlane a few months later, “We don’t yet have our marching orders concerning US policy; it may be that we will end up dealing with the Taliban.” Haq goes ahead with his plans without US support, and is killed in October (see [October 25, 2001](#)). ([Marshall 10/28/2001](#); [McFarlane 11/2/2001](#))

February 2001: Two Hijackers Seen Living in San Antonio with Swapped Identities

At least six people with no connections to one another later claim they recognize hijackers Satam Al Suqami and Salem Alhazmi living in San Antonio, Texas, until this month. The management of an apartment building says the two men abandoned their leases at about this time, and some apartment residents recognize them. However, all the witnesses say that Suqami was going by Alhazmi’s name, and vice versa! ([Conger 10/1/2001](#)) One pilot shop employee recognizes Alhazmi as a frequent visitor to the store and interested in a 757 or 767 handbook, though he also says Alhazmi used Suqami’s name. ([Conger 10/3/2001](#)) The apartment-leasing agent also recalls a Ziad Jarrah who once lived there in June 2001 and looked the same as the hijacker. ([Hendricks 9/22/2001](#); [Badger 9/22/2001](#)) Local FBI confirm that a Salem Alhazmi attended the nearby Alpha Tango Flight School and lived in that apartment building, but they say he is a different Salem Alhazmi who is still alive and living in Saudi Arabia. ([Conger 10/4/2001](#)) However, that “Salem Alhazmi” says he has never been to the US and has proven to the authorities that he did not leave Saudi Arabia in the two years prior to 9/11. ([Eggen, Lardner, and Schmidt 9/20/2001](#)) The FBI does not explain Satam Al Suqami’s presence. Neither hijacker is supposed to have arrived in the US before April 2001.

February 2001: Bin Laden’s Sisters Seen Handing Money to Al-Qaeda Member

A former CIA counterterrorism expert later claims that an allied intelligence agency sees “two of Osama’s sisters apparently taking cash to an airport in Abu Dhabi [United Arab Emirates], where they are suspected of handing it to a member of bin Laden’s al-Qaeda organization.” This is cited as one of many incidents showing an “interconnectedness” between bin Laden and the rest of his family. ([Mayer and Szechenyi 11/5/2001](#))

February 2001: Bush Administration Abandons Global Crackdown on Terrorist Funding

According to Time magazine, “The US was all set to join a global crackdown on criminal and terrorist money havens [in early 2001]. Thirty industrial nations were ready to tighten the screws on offshore financial centers like Liechtenstein and Antigua, whose banks have the potential to hide and often help launder billions of dollars for drug cartels, global crime syndicates—and groups like Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda organization. Then the Bush administration took office.” ([Cohen 10/15/2001](#)) After pressure from the powerful banking lobby, the Treasury Department under Paul O’Neill halts US cooperation with these international efforts begun in 2000 by the Clinton administration. Clinton had created a Foreign Terrorist Asset Tracking Center in his last budget, but under O’Neill no funding for the center is provided and the tracking of terrorist financing slows down. Spurred by the 9/11 attacks, the center will finally get started three days after 9/11 (see [October 2000-September 14, 2001](#)). ([Wechsler 7/2001](#); [Cohen 10/15/2001](#)) Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke will later claim that efforts to track al-Qaeda’s finances began to make significant headway in 2000, after Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin stepped down and was replaced by Larry Summers. But, Clarke will claim, “When the Bush administration came into office, I wanted to raise the profile of our efforts to combat terrorist financing, but found little interest. The new President’s economic advisor, Larry Lindsey, had long argued for weakening US anti-money laundering laws in a way that would undercut international standards. The new Secretary of the Treasury, Paul O’Neill, was lukewarm at best toward the multilateral effort to ‘name and shame’ foreign money laundering havens, and allowed the process to shut down before the status of Saudi Arabian cooperation was ever assessed.” ([Clarke 2004, pp. 195-196](#))

(February-April 2001): Hijacker Atta Possibly Has American Girlfriend; Several Witnesses Confirm Story, Though Supposed Girlfriend Later Denies the Connection



Amanda Keller. [Source: *Unknown*] A man, possibly Mohamed Atta, stays for a time at the apartment of a 21-year-old blonde-haired pizza restaurant manager named Amanda Keller. Keller lives in the Sandpiper Apartments in Venice,

Florida, the same complex in which Atta reportedly shared a (presumably) separate apartment with Marwan Alshehhi and four others months earlier (see [\(Mid-July 2000 - Early January 2001\)](#)). Stephanie Frederickson, a resident at the Sandpiper Apartments, later remembers Keller and Atta. She claims Keller moved in next door to her. She goes on to say, “Then one day in the middle of March she brought home Atta.” Her recollection of Atta mirrors that of others. She will call him “a really nasty guy,” and say that he “had no patience, and seemed mad at the world.” Charles Grapentine, the manager of the Sandpiper Apartments, later recalls seeing Atta at the complex for about three weeks in April, and confirms that he was living with Keller. Keller’s mother, Susan Payne, also meets Atta and later says, “I didn’t like him; he just seemed strange.” As well as his stay at the Sandpiper Apartments, the man, possibly Atta, briefly rents a home in North Port. Its owners, Tony and Vonnie LaConca, know him only as “Mohamed.” They will be questioned in the days after 9/11 by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), and describe him as 25 years old, “very polite,” “very handsome,” and with “beautiful, unblemished skin.” From talking with “Mohamed” and Keller, the couple learns he is training for a commercial pilot’s license at Huffman Aviation, the Venice flight school attended by Atta in 2000 (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)). The Sarasota Herald-Tribune will claim that Keller’s companion is not Mohamed Atta, but another man of Middle Eastern descent who also took flying lessons in Venice. But authorities will refuse to reveal the full name of this “unidentified fifth man,” and investigators are reportedly unable to find him. ([Allen-Emrich and Baty 9/14/2001](#); [Grier 9/23/2001](#); [Hopsicker 2004, pp. 57, 60-65 and 76](#)) According to official accounts, plus the testimony of Huffman Aviation’s owner Rudi Dekkers, Atta left the Venice flight school around the end of 2000, months before “Mohamed” stays in the apartment of Keller. ([US Congress 3/19/2002](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 17](#).) Investigative reporter Daniel Hopsicker later locates and interviews Amanda Keller, and she claims that the Middle Eastern man who was briefly her boyfriend was indeed Mohamed Atta (see [March 2004](#)). However, in 2006 she will retract this claim and say she lied to Hopsicker. She will say, “It was my bad for lying. I really didn’t think about it until after I did it.” ([Allen 9/10/2006](#)) Keller, Charles Grapentine, and Stephanie Frederickson will all later allege that the FBI intimidated them after 9/11, and told them to keep quiet about what they knew (see [\(September 12, 2001-2002\)](#)).

February 2001: London Home of Prominent Al-Qaeda Imam Is Raided, Police Find Cash for Chechen Fighters

British police raid the house of radical London imam Abu Qatada and find the equivalent of \$250,000 in cash under his bed. Abu Qatada claims that the money is for the construction of a new mosque. However, \$1,174 is in an envelope marked “for the Mujaheddin in Chechnya.” ([BBC 8/11/2005](#)) Authors Sean O’Niell and Daniel McGrory will later write, “Jihad supporters have since confirmed that Abu Qatada was known throughout Britain as a conduit for funds destined for the Chechen fighters. Some of that money had been raised—directly and indirectly—in British mosques. There were straightforward appeals for the Chechen struggle, and rather more opaque pleas for charitable donations which were then siphoned off to the militants.” ([O’Neill and](#)

[McGrory 2006, pp. 67-8](#)) Abu Qatada has a relationship with British counterintelligence (see [June 1996-February 1997](#) and [Early December 2001](#)).

February 2001: Al-Qaeda Is Expecting US to Invade Afghanistan, Wants War in Iraq and Somalia as Well



Ahmed Zaidan. *[Source: PBS]* Ahmed Zaidan, a journalist for Al Jazeera, is invited to a wedding also attended by al-Qaeda leaders Osama bin Laden and Mohammed Atef in Afghanistan (see [February 26, 2001](#)), and while there he talks to Atef about al-Qaeda's military strategy. He will later recall that Atef told him, "He was explaining to me what's going to happen in the coming five years.... There are two or three places in the world which [are] the most suitable places to fight Americans: Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia. We are expecting the United States to invade Afghanistan. And we are preparing for that. We want them to come to Afghanistan." Michael Scheuer, head of the CIA's bin Laden unit, will later comment, "Did they want us involve in the war on the ground in Islamic countries? Absolutely. Part of the goal was to make sure that Muslims perceived America as the infidel invader of Muslim lands." ([William Cran 4/15/2007](#)) It is not known if any Western intelligence agencies were aware of this strategy prior to 9/11. However, other al-Qaeda-linked figures will make similar comments to reporters before 9/11 (see [April 2001](#) and [August 2-3, 2001](#)).

February 2001: Former CIA Director Attempts to Link Iraqi Government to 1993 WTC Bombing

Former CIA director James Woolsey visits Britain to look for evidence tying Saddam Hussein to the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. He is looking to support the theory (see [Late July or Early August 2001](#)) that Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind behind the 1993 WTC bombing, was actually an Iraqi agent who had assumed the identity of a Pakistani student named Abdul Basit. This theory was proposed in a 2000 book praised by Woolsey (see [Late 2000](#)). He will also make a visit for the same purpose in the weeks after 9/11 (see [Mid-September 2001](#)). On at least one of the trips, Woolsey visits the Swansea Institute, where Basit studied, to see if Basit's fingerprints match those of Yousef, who is now serving a life sentence in a Colorado prison. Matching fingerprints would discredit the theory. According to Knight Ridder, "Several of those with knowledge of the trips said they failed to produce any new evidence that Iraq was behind

the attacks.” ([Strobel 10/11/2001](#)) But despite a lack of evidence, politicians in Washington interested in the theory will manage to reopen the files into Yousef around August 2001 anyway (see [Late July or Early August 2001](#)). An article by Woolsey pushing the theory about Yousef will be published just two days after 9/11 (see [September 13, 2001](#)).

February-July 2001: Trial Presents FBI with Information About Pilot Training Scheme

A trial is held in New York City for four defendants charged with involvement in the 1998 US African embassy bombings. All are ultimately convicted. Testimony reveals that two bin Laden operatives had received pilot training in Texas and Oklahoma and another had been asked to take lessons. One bin Laden aide becomes a government witness and gives the FBI detailed information about a pilot training scheme. This new information does not lead to any new FBI investigations into the matter. ([Fainaru and Grimaldi 9/23/2001](#))

February 2001-March 2001: Withdrawal of DIA Support Contributes to End of Able Danger Program



Maj. Gen. Rod Isler. [*Source: US Defense Department*] The new Director of Operations for the DIA, General Ron Isler, has Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer brief him on a series of operations. According to Shaffer, Isler strongly objects to Shaffer assisting Able Danger. “I said, ‘Well, sir, with all due respect, this is an important operation focused on the global al-Qaeda target,’ and he said, ‘You’re not hearing me, Tony. This is not your job.’” After further disagreement, Shaffer recalls the argument ending, “‘Tony, I’m the two star here. I’m the two star. I’m telling you I don’t want you doing anything with Able Danger.’ ‘Sir, if not us then who?’ ‘I don’t know, but it’s not your job.’ And that effectively ended my direct support and my unit’s [Stratus Ivy] support to Able Danger.” Recalling how this helped end Able Danger, Shaffer says, “I remember the last conversation I had with Captain Scott Phillpott on this was a desperate call from him asking me to try to help use one of my operational facilities to at least try to exploit the information [Able Danger had collected] before it got lost.” However, Isler says he cannot recall any discussion with Shaffer about Able Danger. ([Goodwin 9/2005](#))

February-March 2001: Politicians Warned about Terrorism Funding in US

In September 1999, FBI agent Robert Wright hired David Schippers as his lawyer to represent him in his troubles with the FBI (see [August 3, 1999](#)). Schippers was the House Judiciary Committee's chief investigator in the Clinton impeachment trial. Schippers later will claim that at this time he begins contacting congresspeople that he knows from the impeachment trial with concerns about terrorism. He later recalls, "I was talking primarily about the infiltration of Hamas [inside the US]—how they're moving the money. I have evidence on that. I have all kinds of material." In an obvious reference to the Vulgar Betrayal investigation, he also will assert that he knew US intelligence had "established the sources of the money flow of bin Laden" as early as 1996, but by 1999 had faced high-level obstructions into investigating these matters. But he will claim, "I couldn't get anybody to talk to me." ([Metcalf 10/21/2001](#); [Ahmed 2004, pp. 258-260](#)) Schippers later claims he will continue to warn politicians about terrorism funding in the US, while also warning them about a potential al-Qaeda attack on lower Manhattan based on information he will receive in May 2001 (see [May 2001](#); [July-Late August 2001](#)).

(February-March 2001): New Administration Shuts Down Surveillance of Saudi Arabians

The Defense Intelligence Agency began a project to monitor Saudi Arabian targets in the 1990s. The project, called Monarch Passage, was originally intended to track Saudi assistance to Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, but is expanded to become a comprehensive communications spying program against Saudi businessmen and members of the Royal Family. However, it is shut down in the early days of the Bush administration. ([Trento 1/7/2006](#))

Early February 2001: Clarke Urges Cheney to Take Action Against Al-Qaeda

Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke briefs Vice President Cheney about the al-Qaeda threat. He urges decisive and quick action against al-Qaeda. Cheney soon visits CIA headquarters for more information about al-Qaeda. However, at later high-level meetings Cheney fails to bring up al-Qaeda as a priority issue. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 227-30](#))

Early February 2001: Moussaoui Given US Visa despite Presence on French Watch List

The US Embassy in London grants a US student visa to Zacarias Moussaoui, a French citizen. The Los Angeles Times will later note this is granted "even though he was on a

special French immigration watch list of suspected Islamic extremists.” ([Braun et al. 10/14/2001](#))

February 1, 2001: Rumsfeld Wants to Get Rid of Hussein in Iraq; Envisions Iraq After Hussein Is Gone

The Bush White House holds its second National Security Council meeting. Like the first meeting (see [January 30, 2001](#)), the issue of regime change in Iraq is a central topic. ([CBS News 1/10/2004](#); [Stevenson 1/12/2004](#)) Officials discuss a memo titled “Plan for post-Saddam Iraq,” which talks about troop requirements, establishing war crimes tribunals, and divvying up Iraq’s oil wealth. ([*Sources*: [Paul O’Neill](#)]) Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld interrupts Colin Powell’s discussion of UN-based sanctions against Iraq, saying, “Sanctions are fine. But what we really want to discuss is going after Saddam.” He continues, “Imagine what the region would look like without Saddam and with a regime that’s aligned with US interests. It would change everything in the region and beyond it. It would demonstrate what US policy is all about.” ([Suskind 2004, pp. 85-86](#) *Sources*: [Paul O’Neill](#)) According to Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill, Rumsfeld talks at the meeting “in general terms about post-Saddam Iraq, dealing with the Kurds in the north, the oil fields, the reconstruction of the country’s economy, and the ‘freeing of the Iraqi people.’” ([Stevenson 1/12/2004](#) *Sources*: [Paul O’Neill](#)) Other people, in addition to O’Neill, Bush, and Rumsfeld, who are likely in attendance include Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard B. Myers. ([US President 2/13/2001](#))

February 1, 2001: Cole Investigators Interview Source over Identification of Al-Qaeda Leader, CIA Conceals Key Information Leading to Two 9/11 Hijackers

Lead FBI case agent Ali Soufan and another agent investigating the bombing of the USS *Cole* interview a source, referred to later as “Omar,” who previously identified a photo of one of the bombers as al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash (see [November 22-December 16, 2000](#)), but a CIA officer present at the interview fails to add a crucial detail. The interview, which apparently takes place in Pakistan, is held to document the previous identification by Omar of bin Attash, who led the attack on the *Cole*, based on a photograph provided by Yemeni authorities. The CIA officer present at the meeting is also aware that Omar has identified bin Attash in a surveillance photo taken of al-Qaeda’s Malaysia summit (see January 5-8, 2000 and [January 4, 2001](#)). The identification of bin Attash in the photo taken at the summit is important because it connects bin Attash to 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, who were also at the summit, and because it casts light on bin Attash’s interaction with the other *Cole* bombers. The Justice Department’s Office of Inspector General will later say it believes “that had the FBI known about the identification of [bin Attash] in the Kuala Lumpur photographs, they would likely have sought information about the other participants in the meeting,

including Almihdhar and Alhazmi, which could have increased the FBI's chances of locating them before the September 11 attacks." The same CIA agent had previously failed to notify the FBI of the identification of bin Attash in the Malaysia summit photo (see [January 5, 2001 and After](#)), as had the CIA's bin Laden unit (see [Shortly Before February 1, 2001](#)). (US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 275-8 ^A)

Early 2001: CIA Reduces FBI Access to NSA's Al-Qaeda Intercepts

The CIA's bin Laden unit, Alec Station, reduces the FBI's access to NSA material tracking al-Qaeda members. The FBI had previously used such intercepts to map al-Qaeda's global network (see [Late 1998-Early 2002](#)). The NSA intercepts at least one call from the 9/11 hijackers in the US to an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen after this (see [Mid-October 2000-Summer 2001](#) and [\(August 2001\)](#)), but does not tell the FBI. Authors Joe and Susan Trento will comment that by doing this and withholding the hijackers' identities from the FBI, "the CIA effectively ended any chance in the months leading up to 9/11 of discovering that [Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi] were actually al-Qaeda agents destined to play major roles in the 9/11 attacks." The CIA repeatedly fails to tell the FBI what it knows about Alhazmi and Almihdhar (see [January 4-6, 2000](#), [January 5, 2001 and After](#), and [June 11, 2001](#)). (Trento and Trento 2006, pp. 194) There is a long history of the NSA not wanting other US government agencies to have access to NSA material about al-Qaeda (see [December 1996](#), [Late August 1998](#), [Between 1996 and August 1998](#), and [Before September 11, 2001](#)).

February 2001 and After: Al-Qaeda Communications Hub in Yemen Is Disclosed in Global Media, but Hijacker Continues to Call It

During the trial of men accused of the 1998 East African embassy bombings, an FBI witness mentions that one of the defendants, Mohamed al-Owhali, told investigators that he had stayed in a Yemen-based al-Qaeda communications hub run by Ahmed al-Hada. He also revealed that he had called the hub before and after the Nairobi bombing. (Note: al-Hada's surname is transliterated as "al-Hazza" during the trial.) The existence of the communications hub in Yemen is then reported by the US State Department, CNN, the Guardian, and UPI over the next few months. ([Sale 2/13/2001](#); [Aita 3/7/2001](#); [United State of America v. Usama bin Laden, et al., Day 14 3/7/2001](#); [Hirschhorn 5/2/2001](#); [Burke 8/5/2001](#)) The hub was also previously mentioned at a big trial of Islamic Jihad operatives in Cairo (see [1999](#)). The 9/11 hijackers have been calling the communications hub by phone since early 1999, at least (see, e.g., [Early 1999](#)). The calls are being intercepted by the NSA and some of them have originated from within the US (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). Perhaps unaware that the hub's existence has been disclosed, they will make at least one more call to the hub (see [\(August 2001\)](#)).

February 6, 2001: White House Told of New Rise in Terrorist Threats

A Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB), entitled “Sunni Terrorist Threat Growing,” is sent to top White House officials. It indicates a heightened threat of Sunni extremist attacks, particularly in the Middle East and Europe, against US facilities and personnel. (Bin Laden is the most wanted Sunni extremist by this time.) The briefing states this is considered the most significant spike in threat reporting since the Millennium. The SEIB is usually released one day after the corresponding President Daily Briefing is given to the president and contains similar content (see [January 20-September 10, 2001](#)), so it is probable Bush is given this warning. Based on this warning, a terrorist threat advisory will be shared throughout the US intelligence community on March 30, and the FBI will send out a warning to its field offices in April (see [April 13, 2001](#)). ([US District Court of Eastern Virginia 5/4/2006, pp. 1](#))

February 7, 2001: DIA Director Predicts Major Terrorist Attack on US Interests in Next Two Years



Thomas Wilson. [*Source: Defense Intelligence Agency*] Navy Vice Adm. Thomas Wilson, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, testifies before Congress. He analyzes the current state of the world and lists some of the threats he sees facing the US. He says a terrorist attack is the most likely threat. He predicts that within the next two years there will be a “major terrorist attack against United States interests, either here or abroad, perhaps with a weapon designed to produce mass casualties.” He predicts higher-casualty attacks as terrorists gain “access to more destructive conventional weapons technologies and [weapons of mass destruction].” ([Garamone 2/22/2001](#); [Garamone 2/22/2001](#))

February 7, 2001: Tenet Warns Congress about Bin Laden

CIA Director Tenet warns Congress in open testimony that the “threat from terrorism is real, it is immediate, and it is evolving.” He says bin Laden and his global network remains “the most immediate and serious threat” to US interests. “Since 1998 bin Laden

has declared that all US citizens are legitimate targets,” he says, adding that bin Laden “is capable of planning multiple attacks with little or no warning.” ([Burns 2/7/2001](#); [McKeone 9/23/2001](#))

February 8-March 12, 2001: Hanjour Practices on Boeing 737 Simulator, but Has Problems

Hani Hanjour practices on a Boeing 737-200 simulator for a total of 21 hours at the JetTech International flight school in Phoenix, Arizona. Hanjour also attends ground school and pays just under \$7,500 for the training. Despite only completing 21 of his originally scheduled 34 hours of simulator training, according to the FBI this is the best-trained of the four hijacker pilots (see [Spring-Summer 2001](#)). However, an instructor comments: “Student made numerous errors during performance... including a lack of understanding of some basic concepts... Some of the concepts involved in large jet systems cannot be fully comprehended by someone with only small prop plane experience.” ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia: Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)).³¹ The school contacts the FAA to warn it of Hanjour’s poor English and flying skills (see [January-February 2001](#)).

February 9, 2001: Bin Laden’s Financial Network Supposedly Laid Bare

US officials claim significant progress in defeating bin Laden’s financial network, despite significant difficulties. It is claimed that “bin Laden’s financial and operational networks has been ‘completely mapped’ in secret documents shared by the State Department, CIA, and Treasury Department, with much of the mapping completed in detail by mid-1997.” ([United Press International 2/9/2001](#)) While it is unclear exactly how much the US knew about bin Laden’s finances before 9/11, it is known that the names and details of many organizations funding bin Laden were known as far back as 1996 (see [January 1996](#)). Shortly after 9/11, Richard Palmer, head of the CIA’s Moscow station in the 1990s, will say of al-Qaeda, “We could have starved the organization if we put our minds to it. The government has had the ability to track these accounts for some time.” ([Weiner and Johnston 9/20/2001](#)) The New York Times will later conclude that by 9/11, “The American government had developed a good deal of information about al-Qaeda’s finances, but it was not widely shared among agencies.” ([Eichenwald 12/10/2001](#))

February 9-21, 2001: NSA Supposedly Mapped, Disrupted, and Monitored Bin Laden’s Network

In a series of articles for UPI, journalist Richard Sale reveals many details about the NSA’s electronic surveillance of al-Qaeda. “The United States has scored notable successes in an information war against the organization of terrorist suspect Osama bin Laden. US hackers have gone into foreign bank accounts and deleted or transferred

money and jammed or blocked the group's cell or satellite phones." It is also mentioned that "Bin Laden is surrounded by US listening posts." The articles discuss the extent to which the NSA's Echelon satellite network is monitoring al-Qaeda, and even seems to make an oblique reference to monitoring the al-Qaeda safe house in Yemen that enabled the NSA to discover valuable information on hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar (see [December 29, 1999](#)). The articles also reveal that since 1995, bin Laden tried to protect his communications with a "full suite of tools," but "codes were broken." An expert adds that "you don't use your highest level of secure communications all the time. It's too burdensome, and it exposes it to other types of exploitation." The articles also imply that Echelon is used in illegal ways. An anonymous former senior US intelligence official says, "This isn't about legality. This is about trying to protect American lives." ([United Press International 2/9/2001](#); [Sale 2/13/2001](#); [Daly 2/21/2001](#)) While bin Laden's communications were certainly thoroughly monitored before 9/11 (see [November 1996-Late August 1998](#)), no evidence has come to light since 9/11 that the US was hacking into bank accounts or jamming signals.

February 13, 2001: Interagency Counterterrorism Communications Now Channeled Through Rice

President Bush issues a little-noticed directive that dramatically changes the way information flows among top Bush administration officials. It states that attendees of National Security Council (NSC) meetings shall continue to include the president, vice president, secretary of state, treasury secretary, defense secretary, CIA director, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, and assistant to the president for national security affairs. However, other officials, including the "heads of other executive departments and agencies, as well as other senior officials" are excluded from the automatic right to attend NSC meetings. Instead, they "shall be invited to attend meetings of the NSC when appropriate." National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice is given a pivotal position. In addition to attending all NSC meetings, she is responsible for determining the agenda of all the meetings. The directive also states, "The existing system of Interagency Working Groups is abolished." Instead, Rice will coordinate a series of eleven new interagency coordination committees within the NSC. She is designated the executive secretary of all eleven committees, meaning that she will schedule the meetings and determine agendas. She is made chairperson of six of the committees, including "Counter-Terrorism and National Preparedness," "Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence," and "Records Access and Information Security." Professor Margie Burns will later ask rhetorically, "How could the White House ever have thought that abolishing the interagency work groups was a good idea, if security was the objective? Why was so much responsibility placed on the shoulders of one person, Condoleezza Rice, whose [only] previous experience had been at Stanford University and Chevron?" ([US President 2/13/2001](#); [Burns 1/2004](#))

February 13, 2001: Bush Expands US Security to Mean 'Advancement of US Interests Around the Globe'

President Bush's first national security directive, NPSD-1, dramatically reorganizes the National Security Council. The directive redefines "security" as not only the defense of the US and its borders, but also explicitly defines it as "the advancement of United States interests around the globe. National security also depends on America's opportunity to prosper in the world economy." The directive removes many senior advisers and staff from the flow of information and centralizes almost all security information directly to Bush through National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice (see [February 13, 2001](#)). ([US President 2/13/2001](#))

February 15, 2001: Atta and Pakistani Fighter Pilot Associate Denied Airplane Security Job Because of Criminal Record

According to a book by Jurgen Roth, described by Newsday as "one of Germany's top investigative reporters," on this day Mohamed Atta applies for a job with Lufthansa Airlines at the Frankfurt, Germany, airport. The security post he applies for would give him access to secure areas of the busy international airport. However, when Lufthansa checks his criminal record they find that in 1995 he had been under investigation for petty drug crimes (see [1995](#)), so his application is turned down. Three days later, an Iranian citizen dropping Atta's name also applies for the same job, and is also turned down. On March 5, a third man applies, with Atta at his side. He tells Lufthansa that he has been a pilot in the Pakistani Air Force. Apparently both the Iranian and Pakistani are members of an Islamic study group with Atta at the Hamburg university they are all attending. While the name of the Pakistani pilot is not revealed in this account, a Pakistani Air Force pilot named Atif bin Mansour is known to have applied together with Atta for a room for a new Islamic study group in early 1999 (see [Late 1998-August 10, 1999](#)). After 9/11, Lufthansa Airlines will say they can neither confirm nor deny this account, because all such records for rejected applicants have been routinely deleted. ([Roth 2001, pp. 9f](#); [Moore 1/24/2002](#)) In 2007, it will be reported that French intelligence learned before 9/11 of a meeting in early 2000 in which al-Qaeda planned the hijacking of an airliner departing from Frankfurt, and one of the target airliners considered was Lufthansa (see [Early 2000](#)).

February 15, 2001: Atta and Alshehhi Offered Jobs as Co-Pilots with New Florida Airline

Rudi Dekkers, who owns the Venice, Florida flight school attended by Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi, sets up his own commuter airline called Florida Air (FLAIR), which flies out of Sarasota Bradenton International Airport. FLAIR, which also goes by the name Sunrise Airlines, will only be in service for a couple of months in 2001, and eventually has its operating authority revoked by the Department of Transportation. ([Venice Gondolier Sun 3/3/2001](#); [Transportation 2/14/2002, pp. 6963](#); [Mudge 1/25/2003](#); [Martin 7/25/2004](#)) Yet, at the same time as he is establishing FLAIR, Dekkers fails to pay his rent for Huffman Aviation flight school on time six months in a row, from

February to July 2001, blaming this partly on tight cash flow. ([Mudge 9/13/2001](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission, at some point in their flight training Rudi Dekkers offers Atta and Alshehhi jobs as co-pilots for FLAIR. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 38](#).) Yet they are supposed to have completed training at Huffman Aviation two months earlier, in December 2000, after which Dekkers claims he never saw them again. ([US Congress 3/19/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 227](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 17](#).) Considering he reportedly offers him a job with his airline, it seems odd that Dekkers later claims having much disliked Atta when he was at Huffman. He will say he thought Atta was “very arrogant,” and that “My personal feeling was Atta was an asshole first class... I just didn’t like the guy... Sometimes you have that impression from when you meet people in the field and that was my first impression.” ([Australian Broadcasting Corporation 10/21/2001](#); [BBC 12/12/2001](#))

February 19-February 20, 2001: Hijackers Make Unexplained Trip to Virginia

Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi make a brief trip to Virginia Beach, where they cash a check for \$4,000 and rent a mailbox. Newsweek later reports that federal investigators believe Mohamed Atta visits Norfolk, Virginia, site of a huge US Navy base, at this time: “The Feds believe that Atta was scoping out an aircraft carrier as a target.” However, the 9/11 Commission will comment, “We have found no explanation for these travels.” ([Thomas and Hosenball 9/24/2001](#); [Newsweek 10/29/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/16/2004, pp. 7](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 229, 523](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#).) Atta and Alshehhi will return to Virginia Beach a few weeks later (see [April 3-4, 2001 and around](#)).

February 22-25, 2001: Atta Spends Weekend in Key West on a ‘Continuous Party,’ then Bails Girlfriend out of Jail?

Some reports later suggest that around this time Mohamed Atta has an American girlfriend called Amanda Keller (see [February-April 2001](#)). According to Tony and Vonnice LaConca, a couple that meet Keller and her boyfriend (who they know only as “Mohamed”), the pair and another woman go on a short trip to Key West, Florida. Tony LaConca later recalls, “They were gone for three days. They didn’t sleep—it was a continuous party.” The three indulge in drugs and alcohol, all paid for by “Mohamed,” even though he does not have a job. After returning from the trip, on February 25 “Mohamed” has to bail Keller out of South County Jail, after police take her in because of an outstanding warrant over a “worthless check charge.” ([Allen-Emrich and Baty 9/14/2001](#); [Charlotte Sun 9/11/2003](#)) The Sarasota Herald-Tribune claims that Keller’s companion is not Mohamed Atta, but another man of Middle Eastern descent named Mohammed. ([Grier 9/23/2001](#)) In 2002, Keller will say that her boyfriend was indeed Mohamed Atta, but in 2006 she retracts this claim. ([Allen 9/10/2006](#)) Interestingly, other

witnesses later describe Atta as frequently drinking alcohol, smoking, and possibly doing drugs (see [\(Mid-July - December 2000\)](#)).

Between February 23, 2001 and June 2001: Germans Monitor Call Between Moussaoui and Bin Al-Shibh

While Zacarias Moussaoui is living in Norman, Oklahoma, and getting flight training there, he makes a phone call to Germany that is monitored by German intelligence. The call is to Ramzi bin al-Shibh, who is intimately involved in the 9/11 plot and has been a roommate of hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi. ([Tagliabue and Bonner 9/29/2001](#)) Bin al-Shibh stayed in London for a week in early December 2000 and met with Moussaoui there (see [October 2000-February 2001](#)). Phone records further indicate that there was at least one phone call between Moussaoui and the landlord of the Hamburg apartment where Mohamed Atta and other 9/11 hijackers lived. But the timing of the call has not been revealed, nor is it known if that call was monitored as well or not. ([Burrell, Gumbel, and Sengupta 12/11/2001](#))

February 23-June 2001: Moussaoui Takes Lessons at Flight School Previously Used by Al-Qaeda



Airman Flight School. [Source: FBI] Zacarias Moussaoui flies to the US. Three days later, he starts flight training at the Airman Flight School in Norman, Oklahoma. (Other Islamic extremists had previously trained at the same flight school or other schools in the area (see [September 1999](#))). He trains there until May, but does not do well and drops out before getting a pilot's license. His visa expires on May 22, but he does not attempt to renew it or get another one. He stays in Norman, arranging to change flight schools, and frequently exercising in a gym. ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#); [US Congress 10/17/2002](#)) According to US investigators, would-be hijacker Ramzi Bin al-Shibh later says he meets Moussaoui in Karachi (Pakistan) in June 2001. ([Schmidt 11/20/2002](#))

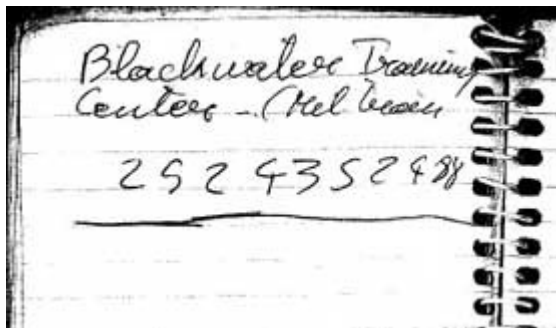
February 23-August 16, 2001: Moussaoui and 9/11 Hijackers Engage in Parallel Conduct

After entering the US, Zacarias Moussaoui engages in activities that appear to mirror those of the 9/11 hijackers. Both Moussaoui and the hijackers do the following:

- Take flight training (see [February 23-June 2001](#) and [July 6-December 19, 2000](#));
- Physically import large amounts of cash (see [October 2000-February 2001](#) and [January 15, 2000-August 2001](#));
- Purchase knives with short blades that can be carried onto airliners (see [August 16, 2001](#) and [July 8-August 30, 2001](#));
- Take fitness training (see [August 16, 2001](#) and [May 6-September 6, 2001](#));
- Obtain several identification documents (see [April 12-September 7, 2001](#) and [August 1-2, 2001](#)); and
- Purchase flight deck videos from the same shop (see [November 5, 2000-June 20, 2001](#)).

In addition, Moussaoui is supported by some of the same al-Qaeda operatives as the 9/11 hijackers: Ramzi bin al-Shibh (see [July 29, 2001-August 3, 2001](#) and [June 13-September 25, 2000](#)) and Yazid Sufaat (see [September-October 2000](#) and January 5-8, 2000). At Moussaoui's trial, the prosecution will cite these parallel activities in its argument that Moussaoui was connected to 9/11, rather than some follow-up plot. There is also one reported meeting between Moussaoui and two of the lead hijackers before 9/11 (see [August 1, 2001](#)), but this will not be mentioned at the trial (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#))

(Between February 24-August 16, 2001): Moussaoui Writes Blackwater Phone Number in Notebook



A page of Zacarias Moussaoui's notebook with a phone number for the security contractor Blackwater. [Source: *US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division*] Zacarias Moussaoui writes the phone number for the private security contractor Blackwater in his notebook. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria District 7/31/2006](#)) It is unclear why he writes the phone number down or whether he has any actual contact with Blackwater, but terrorism analyst J. M. Berger will later comment: "The discovery may best be taken with the proverbial grain of salt, and a large one at that. The phone number is publicly available and connects to a Blackwater training center in North Carolina. Moussaoui was researching physical and combat training options while he was in the United States. The simplest and most innocent explanation is quite possibly the correct one. Nevertheless, a glimpse of the controversial company's contact information nestled among Moussaoui's handwritten notes inspires the jaw to drop in a not-entirely unreasonable manner." ([Berger 8/1/2006](#))

February 26, 2001: Paul Bremer: Bush Administration Paying No Attention to Terrorism

Paul Bremer, who will be appointed the US administrator of Iraq in 2003, says in a speech that the Bush administration is “paying no attention” to terrorism. “What they will do is stagger along until there’s a major incident and then suddenly say, ‘Oh my God, shouldn’t we be organized to deal with this.’” Bremer speaks shortly after chairing the National Commission on Terrorism, a bipartisan body formed during the Clinton administration. ([Associated Press 4/29/2004](#))

February 26, 2001: Osama Attends Son’s Wedding with Other Bin Laden Family Members



Mohammed bin Laden (center), the son of Osama bin Laden (right), marries the daughter of Mohammed Atef (left). [*Source: Al Jazeera*] Bin Laden attends the wedding of his son Mohammed in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Although Osama bin Laden is supposedly long estranged from his family, bin Laden’s stepmother, two brothers, and sister are also said to attend, according to the only journalist who was invited. ([Reuters 3/1/2001](#); [MacKay 10/7/2001](#))

Late February 2001: Enron Influences Cheney’s Energy Task Force to Help Troubled Dabhol Plant

Vice President Cheney is holding a series of secret energy task force meetings to determine the Bush administration’s future energy policy. Starting at this time, Enron leader Ken Lay and other Enron officials take part in a least half a dozen of these secret meetings. After one such meeting, Cheney’s energy task force changes a draft energy proposal to include a provision boosting oil and natural gas production in India. The amendment is so narrow that it apparently is targeted to only help Enron’s troubled Dabhol power plant in India. ([Milbank and Blustein 1/19/2002](#))

Spring 2001: Ashcroft Doesn’t Want FBI Director to Talk About Terrorism



Attorney General John Ashcroft. [Source: US Department of Justice] Attorney General John Ashcroft talks with FBI Director Louis Freeh before an annual meeting of special agents. Ashcroft lays out his priorities, which according to one participant is “basically violent crime and drugs.” Freeh bluntly replies that those are not his priorities and he talks about counterterrorism. “Ashcroft does not want to hear about it,” says one witness. ([Hirsh and Isikoff 5/27/2002](#))

Spring 2001: US Customs Investigate Three Hijackers Before 9/11



Satam Al Suqami. [Source: FBI] In the wake of the foiled al-Qaeda plot to blow up hotels in Jordan during the millennium celebrations, Jordan gives tips to the US that launch a Customs investigation into one of the plotters, Raed Hijazi, and his US connections. “Customs agents for months traced money flowing from several Boston banks to banks overseas, where officials believe the funds were intended for bin Laden’s network.” In September and October 2000, Jordanian officials gave US investigators evidence of financial transactions connecting Raed Hijazi, Nabil al-Marabh, and future 9/11 hijacker Hamza Alghamdi (see [September 2000](#); [October 2000](#)). By spring 2001, Custom agents further connect al-Marabh and Hijazi to financial deals with future 9/11 hijackers Ahmed Alghamdi and Satam Al Suqami. The Washington Post will later note, “These various connections not only suggest that investigators are probing ties between bin Laden and the hijackers, but also that federal authorities knew about some of those associations long before the bombings.” ([Mintz and Lengel 9/21/2001](#)) It appears that the money flowed from al-Marabh to Alghamdi and Al Suqami. ([Colavecchio 10/16/2001](#); [ABC News 1/31/2002](#)) While accounts of these connections to Alghamdi

and Al Suqami will be widely reported in the media in the months after 9/11, a Customs Service spokesman will say he can neither confirm nor deny the existence of the inquiry. ([Golden and Miller 9/18/2001](#)) It appears that the two hijackers are not put on any kind of watch list and are not stopped when they arrive in the US on April 23, 2001, and May 2, 2001, respectively (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)). British newspapers will note that Alghamdi was one of several hijackers who should have been “instantly ‘red-flagged’ by British intelligence” but in fact is not when he passes through Britain sometime in early 2001 (see [January-June 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission Final Report will fail to mention the Customs investigation and will give no hint that these hijackers’ names were known in the US before 9/11.

Spring 2001: CIA Official’s Suggestion to ‘Rain Hell’ on Taliban Is Not Well Received by Other US Officials



John McLaughlin. [*Source: CIA*] According to a later account by CIA Director George Tenet, Deputy CIA Director John McLaughlin expresses frustration at the lack of action about bin Laden during a meeting of deputy cabinet officials. McLaughlin reportedly says, “I think we should deliver an ultimatum to the Taliban. They either hand bin Laden over or we rain hell on them.” According to Tenet, “An odd silence followed. No one seemed to like the idea. Richard Armitage, the deputy secretary of state, called John after the meeting and offered a friendly word of advice: ‘You are going to get your suspenders snapped if you keep making policy recommendations. That is not your role.’” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 145](#))

Spring 2001: Tenet Warns Congress an Attempted Terrorist Attack against US Interests Is Likely within a Year

CIA Director George Tenet testifies before Congress, saying, “I consider it likely that over the next year or so there will be an attempted terrorist attack against US interests.” He also says, “We will generally not have specific time and place warning of terrorist attacks.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 145](#)) Apparently this is in private Congressional session because a search of the Lexis Nexus article database turns up no media mentions of these quotes until they are mentioned in Tenet’s 2007 book.

(Spring 2001): Hijacker Jarrah Allegedly Obtains Commercial Pilot's License



Ziad Jarrah standing next to a Cessna in Florida. *[Source: National Geographic]* Ziad Jarrah is said to obtain a commercial pilot's license around this time by flight school owner Arne Kruithof, although neither the FBI nor any other official body will confirm this. Jarrah obtained a private pilot's license from Florida Flight Training Center (FFTC) (see [June 28-December 2000](#)) in 2000 and then spent a few hours on Boeing simulators later in 2000 (see [December 15, 2000-January 8, 2001](#)). FFTC owner Kruithof will later say that he was told Jarrah obtained a commercial license: "He was supposed to come back and finish his commercial pilot license, but he did not. Later, I found out that he did it somewhere else." However, there is no mention of where he may have obtained such additional training. ([Fouda and Fielding 2003, pp. 133](#))

Spring-Summer 2001: Bin Laden Tells Mother He Cannot Call Her Again Due to Upcoming 'Great Events'

Der Spiegel will later report that in a "very brief conversation Osama [tells] his mother that he [will] not be able to call again for a long time, a remark that seem[s] cryptic to the agents listening in at the time, especially when Osama add[s] that 'great events are about to take place.'" The NSA had been tracking Osama bin Laden's satellite phone number since 1996, and also tracking the number of his mother, Hamida al-Attas, living in Saudi Arabia, on the off chance he would call her and tell her something important. Bin Laden apparently had called her more than anyone else, but this is his last call to her. Around this time, President Bush is so convinced that the best way to catch bin Laden is through

his mother that he is reputed to tell the Emir of Qatar, “We know that he’ll call his mother one day - and then we’ll get him.” Hamida has remained loyal to her son in the wake of 9/11, saying in 2003, “I disapprove of the ambitions the press ascribe to him, but I am satisfied with Osama, and I pray to God that He will guide him along the right path.” ([Ensor 3/12/2002](#); [Follath and Mascolo 6/6/2005](#)) Note that this warning is similar to, but apparently different from, another warning phone call bin Laden makes in early September 2001. That call is to Al-Khalifa bin Laden, his stepmother and not his mother, who lives in Syria and not Saudi Arabia (see [September 9, 2001](#)).

Spring-Summer 2001: Hijackers Allegedly Receive Extra Training on Large Aircraft

According to an associate of the 9/11 hijackers, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and flight school owner Rudi Dekkers, the hijackers have more training on large jets than the FBI will disclose. The FBI will say that the four hijacker pilots never fly real large jets before 9/11 and have a total of approximately 17 sessions on large aircraft simulators, mostly on older models:

- Both Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi each take two sessions lasting 90 minutes on a Boeing 727 simulator and one session on a simulator for a Boeing 767, the type of aircraft they fly on 9/11 (see [December 29-31, 2000](#));
- Ziad Jarrah, who flies a Boeing 757 on 9/11, has five sessions on 727s and 737s (see [December 15, 2000-January 8, 2001](#));
- Hani Hanjour, who flies a Boeing 757 on 9/11, practices for a total of 21 hours on a Boeing 737-200 simulator (see [February 8-March 12, 2001](#)).

When he learns what the FBI believes is the extent of the hijackers’ training, bin al-Shibh will complain in a fax sent to a reporter after 9/11: “How do aviation experts evaluate the skill with which the aircraft were flown, especially the Pentagon attack—accurate and professional as it was? Is it credible that the executors had never before flown a Boeing? Is it credible they only had some lessons on small twin-engine aircrafts and some lessons on simulators?” Referring to the period in early 2001 after the pilots spend a few hours practicing on simulators, bin al-Shibh will say, “What they needed was more flying hours, more training on simulators of large commercial planes such as Boeing 747s and Boeing 767s, as well as studying security precautions in all airports.” However, apparently bin al-Shibh does not mention exactly when or where such additional training took place, if in fact it did. ([Fouda and Fielding 2003, pp. 24-6, 38, 134](#)) Interviewed two days after 9/11, Dekkers, at whose flight school Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi initially trained (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)), will comment, “After the training they had here they went to another flight school in Pompano Beach and they had jet training there, simulator or big planes, but there is where they conducted the training to do what they had to do.” Dekkers will say that he has heard this “from several directions.” However, the Pompano Beach school is not named. ([Dekkers 9/13/2001](#))

March 2001: Bin Laden Targets Passenger Planes at Chicago Airport

9/11 Commissioner Bob Kerrey will mention in a public hearing, “In March 2001, another CSG [Counterterrorism Security Group] item on the agenda mentions the possibility of alleged bin Laden interests in ‘targeting US passenger planes at the Chicago airport,’ end of quote.” ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) No newspaper has ever mentioned this warning, which presumably remained classified aside from this one accidental mention by Kerrey.

March 2001: Italians Advise US about Al-Qaeda Wiretaps

The Italian government gives the US information about possible attacks based on apartment wiretaps in the Italian city of Milan. ([Cameron 5/17/2002](#)) Presumably, the information includes a discussion between two al-Qaeda agents talking about a “very, very secret” plan to forge documents “for the brothers who are going to the United States” (see [August 12, 2000](#)). The warning may also have mentioned a wiretap the previous August involving one of the same people that discussed a massive strike against the enemies of Islam involving aircraft (see [January 24, 2001](#)). Two months later, wiretaps of the same Milan cell will also reveal a plot to attack a summit of world leaders.

March 2001: Al-Qaeda to Attack Inside the US in April

An intelligence source claims that a group of al-Qaeda operatives is planning to conduct an unspecified attack inside the US in April. One of the operatives allegedly resides in the US. There are also reports of planned attacks in California and New York State for the same month, though whether this is reference to the same plot is unclear. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ³¹)

March 2001: US and Taliban Discuss Handing over bin Laden

Taliban envoy Rahmatullah Hashimi meets with reporters, middle-ranking State Department bureaucrats, and private Afghanistan experts in Washington. He carries a gift carpet and a letter from Afghan leader Mullah Omar for President Bush. He discusses turning bin Laden over, but the US wants to be handed bin Laden and the Taliban want to turn him over to some third country. A CIA official later says, “We never heard what they were trying to say. We had no common language. Ours was, ‘Give up bin Laden.’ They were saying, ‘Do something to help us give him up.’ ... I have no doubts they wanted to get rid of him. He was a pain in the neck.” Others claim the Taliban were never sincere. About 20 more meetings on giving up bin Laden take place up until 9/11, all fruitless. ([Washington Post 10/29/2001](#)) Allegedly, Hashimi also proposes that the Taliban would hold bin Laden in one location long enough for the US to locate and kill him. However, this offer is refused. This report, however, comes from Laila Helms, daughter of former CIA director Richard Helms. While it’s interesting that this information came out before

9/11, one must be skeptical, since Helms' job was public relations for the Taliban. ([Fard and Ridgeway 6/6/2001](#))

March 2001: Hijackers Continue to Associate with Suspicious Imam



Dar al Hijrah mosque. [Source: *Public domain*] After living together in Phoenix since December 2000, hijackers Hani Hanjour and Nawaf Alhazmi move to Falls Church, Virginia. ([Fainaru and Ibrahim 9/10/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 1/26/2004](#)) They live only a few blocks from where two nephews of bin Laden with ties to terrorism go to work (see [February-September 11, 1996](#); [June 1, 2004](#)). They continue to live there off and on until around August. They begin attending the Dar al Hijrah mosque. ([Fainaru and Ibrahim 9/10/2002](#)) When they and Khalid Almihdhar lived in San Diego in early 2000, they attended a mosque there led by the imam Anwar Al Aulaqi. This imam moved to Falls Church in January 2001, and now the hijackers attend his sermons at the Dar al Hijrah mosque. Some later suspect that Aulaqi is part of the 9/11 plot because of their similar moves, and other reasons:

- The FBI says Aulaqi had closed door meetings with hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar in 2000 while all three of them were living in San Diego. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ²¹)
 - Police later find the phone number of Aulaqi's mosque when they search "would-be twentieth hijacker" Ramzi bin al-Shibh's apartment in Germany. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ²¹)
 - The FBI was investigating Aulaqi for ties to Islamic militant groups in early 2000 (see [June 1999-March 2000](#)).
 - A neighbor of Aulaqi later claims that, in the first week of August 2001, Aulaqi knocks on his door and tells him he is leaving for Kuwait: "He came over before he left and told me that something very big was going to happen, and that he had to be out of the country when it happened." ([Isikoff and Klaidman 7/28/2003](#))
 - Aulaqi is apparently in the country in late September 2001, and claims not to recognize any of the hijackers. ([Copley News 10/1/2001](#))
 - A week after 9/11, Aulaqi says the hijackers were framed, and suggests Israel was behind 9/11. ([Schmidt 7/23/2003](#))
 - Aulaqi leaves the US in early 2002. ([Calabresi, Burger, and Shannon 8/11/2003](#))
 - In December 2002, Aulaqi briefly returns and is temporarily detained as part of the Green Quest money laundering investigation. However, he is let go. ([Sperry 8/16/2003](#))
- By late 2003, the US is looking for him in Yemen. ([Schanzer 8/21/2003](#)) The FBI appears

to be divided about him, with some thinking he is part of the 9/11 plot and some disagreeing ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#); [Calabresi, Burger, and Shannon 8/11/2003](#)) The 9/11 Commission later reports that Aulaqi gave substantial help to the two hijackers, that his relationship with them is “suspicious,” and it cannot be discounted that he knew of the plot in advance. ([Anderson 6/27/2004](#))

March 2001: Some 9/11 Hijackers Record Videos in Afghanistan Pledging Martyrdom



Stills from martyr videos recorded in March 2001. From top to bottom: Ahmed Alhaznawi, Abdulaziz Alomari, Saeed Alghamdi, Wail Alshehri, and Hamza Alghamdi. The backgrounds were digitally inserted later. [Source: *Al-Jazeera*] Supposedly, all 13 of the “muscle” hijackers record a farewell video before leaving training in Kandahar, Afghanistan, around this time. ([CBS News 10/9/2002](#)) Several will be released after 9/11. A video of Ahmed Alhaznawi will be shown by the Al Jazeera television network in April 2002. In it, he pledges to give his life to “martyrdom” and swears to send a “bloodied message” to Americans by attacking them in their “heartland.” ([Borger 4/16/2002](#)) In September 2002, Al Jazeera will show a similar farewell video of Abdulaziz Alomari made around the same time. ([Nasrawi 9/9/2002](#)) Alomari states, “I am writing this with my full conscience and I am writing this in

expectation of the end, which is near... God praise everybody who trained and helped me, namely the leader Sheik Osama bin Laden.” ([Finn 9/11/2002](#)) Saeed Alghamdi’s video will be released in September 2003, and Wail Alshehri and Hamza Alghamdi’s videos will be released in September 2006 (see [September 7, 2006](#)). ([Associated Press 9/7/2006](#))

March 2001: Regional Expert Sees Continuing Close Ties Between the CIA and ISI



Selig Harrison. [*Source: Publicity photo*] Selig Harrison, a long-time regional expert working at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, says, “the CIA still has close links with the ISI.” Harrison is said to have “extensive contact with the CIA and political leaders in South Asia.” He also claims that the US worked with Pakistan to create the Taliban. ([Times of India 3/7/2001](#)) Similarly, in 2000, Ahmed Rashid, longtime regional correspondent for the Financial Times and the Daily Telegraph, called the US “Pakistan’s closest ally, with deep links to [Pakistan’s] military and the ISI.” Rashid agrees with Harrison that the US had a role in the creation of the Taliban. ([Rashid 9/13/2001](#))

March 2001: Cheney’s Energy Task Force Eyes Iraq’s Oil Reserves

Cheney’s Energy Task Force authors a variety of documents relating to the oil industries of Iraq, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. ([Judicial Watch 7/17/2003](#); [CBS News 1/10/2004](#); [Stevenson 1/12/2004](#))

Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield contracts - This document, dated March 5, 2001, includes a table listing 30 countries which have interests in Iraq’s oil industry. The document also includes the names of companies that have interests, the oil fields with which those interests are associated, as well as the statuses of those interests. ([Vice President 2001](#) ⁸; [Vice President 2001](#))

Map of Iraq’s oil fields - The map includes markings for “supergiant” oil fields of 5 billion barrels or more, other oilfields, fields “earmarked for production sharing,” oil pipelines, operational refineries, and tanker terminals. ([Vice President 2001](#) ⁸)

Other documents - Other documents include oil field maps and project tables for both

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates ([Vice President 2001](#); [Vice President 2001](#); [Vice President 2001](#); [Vice President 2001](#))

March 2001: Senior Military Officials Informed of Able Danger Program

During a briefing on another classified program called Dorkawak Galley, Able Danger is again brought up. This briefing, given by Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer, is attended by Vice Adm. Thomas Wilson, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency; Richard Schiffrin, an attorney at DOD; and Stephen Cambone, Special Assistant to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense. ([Goodwin 9/2005](#); [Office of Congressman Curt Weldon 9/17/2005](#)
Sources: [Curt Weldon](#)) In mid-September 2005, Weldon will say, "I knew that the Clinton administration clearly knew about this." Referring to this meeting and another meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (see [Early 2001](#)), he will add, "Now I know of at least two briefings in the Bush administration." He calls these two briefings "very troubling." He wants to know what became of the information presented in these briefings, suggesting it shouldn't have been destroyed as part of the other Able Danger data purges. ([Bender 9/16/2005](#); [Office of Congressman Curt Weldon 9/17/2005](#))

March 2001: Justice Department Investigation Finds FISA Applications Are Misleading

United States Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court
3053 Building • Room 6725
1000 14th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20530
March 9, 2001

SECRET

Honorable Roger C. Lamberth, Presiding Judge
Honorable John E. Bates
Honorable William H. Bates, Jr.
Honorable Stanley B. Burton
Honorable Harold A. Felt
Honorable Michael E. Miller
Honorable Claude R. Smith
Hon. E. Bates, Clerk
John Bates, Legal Advisor

MEMORANDUM FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL ASHCROFT

IN RE: OPR, (b)(7)(C)
A United States Person - Docket Number OPR, (b)(7)(C)

I was disturbed to learn this week that we now have another series of cases in which the FBI affidavits contain information that is not true. It appears that the corrective action taken as a result of the other cases has proven ineffective in these cases.

Effective immediately, and until further order of the Court, the Court will not accept any affidavit from FBI Supervisory Special Agent OPR, (b)(7)(C)

The Office of Intelligence Policy and Review must immediately conduct an inquiry and verify the accuracy of the pleadings in these cases, and explain how such inaccurate information came to be presented to the Court.

We will need to discuss further what additional corrective actions need to be taken.


Royce C. Lamberth
Presiding Judge

Classified by: Derivative
Exemption: 1.5(c)
Declassify on: XI

Royce Lamberth's letter to John Ashcroft, obtained by the 9/11 Timeline by Freedom of Information Act request. [Source: *Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court*] The Justice Department's Office of Intelligence Policy and Review (OIPR) discovers that an application for a warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) is misleading. The application is for surveillance of the Palestinian militant group Hamas and the supporting affidavit was signed by FBI agent Michael Resnick. The Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) is already investigating dozens of similar errors in FISA warrants for surveillance of al-Qaeda targets in the US (see [Summer 2000-September 11, 2001](#)). The application is misleading because it does not accurately describe the "wall" procedures being followed by several FBI field offices. Wall procedures regulate the passage of information from FBI intelligence agents to FBI criminal agents and local US attorneys' offices. The misleading description is also found in another 14 warrant applications for surveillance of Hamas. The impact of the misleading statements in the Hamas investigations has not been disclosed, but in the al-Qaeda cases the wall was breached because criminal agents had unrestricted access to intelligence information (see [Summer-October 2000](#)). Royce Lamberth, Presiding Judge on the FISA Court, writes to Attorney General John Ashcroft saying it will no longer accept any applications where the supporting affidavit is signed by Resnick and asking for an immediate inquiry. ([Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court 3/9/2001](#); [Johnston and Risen 9/19/2001](#); [Lewis 5/27/2002](#); [Eggen and Schmidt 8/23/2002](#); [Saba 3/3/2004](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004](#), pp. 39) The Department of Justice's investigation into the misleading applications finds that "none of [them]... were the result of professional misconduct or poor judgement," but that "a majority of the

errors were the result of systemic flaws.” ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 40](#)) Following the discovery of the errors in the FISA applications, surveillance of al-Qaeda and Hamas targets in the US is curtailed (see [April 2001](#)). Resnick remains with the bureau and will become head of the Joint Terrorism Task Force in North Carolina and then chief of the Terrorist Identities Group at the FBI’s National Counter Terrorism Center. ([US Congress 3/30/2006](#); [Romero 6/20/2006](#))

Between March 2001 and May 2001: Richard Clarke: Bush Officials Discuss Creating *Casus Belli* for War with Iraq

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke later says that sometime between March and May, Bush administration officials discussed creating a *casus belli* for war with Iraq. In a 2007 interview with radio show host Jon Elliot, Clarke says: “Prior to 9/11 a number of people in the White House were saying to me you know this—this administration, particularly Cheney, but also Bush [and] people like Wolfowitz in the Pentagon, are really intent on going to war with Iraq. And this was the whispered conversations in the National Security Council staff.... Early, early on in the administration people I knew and trusted in the administration were saying to me, ‘You know. They’re really going to do it. They are going to go to war with Iraq.’ And I was flabbergasted. Why would you want to do that of all the things in the world that one could choose to do?... And how are we going to do it? How are we going to cause that provocation? And there was some discussion of ‘Well maybe [we’ll] keep flying aircraft over Iraq and maybe one day one of them will be shot down.’... And some of the talk I was hearing—in the March, April, May timeframe—‘Maybe we’ll do something that is so provocative and do it in such a way that our aircraft will be shot down.’ And then we’ll have an excuse to go to war with Iraq.” ([Clarke 1/11/2007](#) Sources: [Richard A. Clarke](#))

March-May 2001: FAA Briefs Airports on Security; They Cite, Then Dismiss Possibility of Planes as Weapons

A series of top-secret security briefings are given to airport officials at the top 19 airports in the US. The airports warned include those at Boston, Washington, and Newark, which are eventually used by the hijackers. A 9/11 Commission Report on this later notes, “The briefings highlight the threat posed by terrorists in general and bin Laden in particular, including his threats against aviation. The renewed interest in hijacking by terrorist groups [is] also covered.” The briefings note that if “the intent of the hijacker is not to exchange hostages for prisoners, but to commit suicide in a spectacular explosion, a domestic hijacking would probably be preferable.” But they also note that such a hijacking would be harder to carry out. Around the same time, the FAA distributes an unclassified CD-ROM presentation to airlines and airports. “The presentation cite[s] the possibility that terrorists might conduct suicide hijackings but state[s]: ‘Fortunately, we

have no indication that any group is currently thinking in that direction.” This briefing and presentation doesn’t lead to any upgrade in security or improved passenger screening at the airports. Apparently, the information isn’t widely shared with pilots, flight attendants, passenger screeners, and the like, and it doesn’t lead to any specific FAA advisories or actions. ([Lichtblau 2/10/2005](#); [Adcock and Berry 2/11/2005](#); [Cohen 2/11/2005](#)) For instance, Dave Machett, a pilot who is president of the grassroots organization Airline Pilots Security Alliance, says that “Not one word” reached the pilots. “The flight crews were kept completely in the dark about this growing threat.” ([Adcock and Berry 2/11/2005](#)) 9/11 Commissioner Tim Roemer comments, “The FAA deserves to be raked over the coals for ignoring the warnings and being more concerned about reducing air traffic congestion than dealing with possible terrorist attacks.” ([Cohen 2/11/2005](#))

March-August 2001: Hijacker Atta Familiarizes Himself with Flying Crop-Duster Planes



A crop duster at South Florida Crop Care. [Source: Colin Braley / Reuters] In March and August, Mohamed Atta visits a small airport in South Florida and asks detailed questions about how to start and fly a crop-duster plane. People there easily recall him because he was so persistent. After explaining his abilities, Atta is told he is not skilled enough to fly a crop-duster. ([Rosenberg 9/24/2001](#)) Employees at South Florida Crop Care in Belle Glade, Florida, later tell the FBI that Atta was among the men who in groups of two or three visited the crop dusting firm nearly every weekend for six or eight weeks before the attacks. Employee James Lester says, “I recognized him because he stayed on my feet all the time. I just about had to push him away from me.” ([Associated Press 9/15/2001](#)) Yet, according to US investigators, Atta and the other hijackers gave up on the crop-duster idea back around May 2000.

March-April 2001: Mohamed Atta Visits Tennessee Airport; Asks About Nearby Chemical Plant and About Buying Plane

Two Middle Eastern men believed to be Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi land a small plane at Martin Campbell Air Field, near the small town of Copperhill, Tennessee. Danny Whitener, a salvage-car dealer, is tending his plane at the time. The pilot, who calls himself “Mo,” speaks to Whitener for about 15 minutes, aggressively questioning him about a nearby chemical plant and what chemicals are kept there, about a nearby dam, and about two nearby nuclear power plants. According to Whitener, the pilot, who after 9/11 he is convinced was Mohamed Atta, tells him their plane is rented, and that they have flown from Lawrenceville, Georgia, which is about 60 miles south of Copperhill. This would concur with reports of Atta and Alshehhi twice renting a Piper Warrior plane from a Lawrenceville flight school around this time (see [January 25-Early March, 2001](#)). However, Whitener says their plane on this occasion is a Cessna, which has a very different design to a Warrior. About a month later, according to the airport’s manager John Rutkosky, a man resembling Atta again arrives, this time in an expensive-looking sports car, and inquires about buying a plane. ([Associated Press 10/19/2001](#); [WBIR \(Knoxville\) 10/19/2001](#); [Dawn \(Karachi\) 11/25/2001](#); [Grimaldi and Gugliotta 12/16/2001](#))

March-April 2001: Al-Qaeda Defector Describes Plot to Hijack US Airplane



Chris Isham. [*Source: Viewimages.com*] In March 2001, the ISI learns that one of bin Laden’s operatives, who is working on a sensitive al-Qaeda job in Afghanistan, has been providing information to the CIA at the US consulate in Peshawar, Pakistan. The operative, whose CIA codename is “Max,” becomes worried that the ISI will disclose to al-Qaeda his dealings with the CIA. The next month, ABC News reporters Chris Isham and John Miller meet with Max and help him defect to the US and talk to the FBI. Max tells the reporters that in 1999 and 2000 he was trained as part of a small group by Saif al-Adel, one of al-Qaeda’s top leaders. Asked by Isham and Miller whether al-Qaeda is planning any operations targeting the US, he describes a plan to hijack an airplane carrying a US senator or ambassador and then use the dignitary to bargain for the release of the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. US intelligence learned of the same basic plot idea in 1998 (see [1998](#)). Max does defect and will be extensively debriefed by the FBI. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 282](#)) In May 2001, a Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB) will be sent to top White House officials warning that “terrorist groups [are] cooperating on [a] US hostage plot”(see [May 23, 2001](#)). It is not known for how long Max was talking to the CIA or what he told them

before he was exposed, but his account contradicts assertions that US intelligence did not have any well placed informants in al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. An Afghan named “Ahmed” defects around the same time and there are similarities between his case and that of Max, but it is unknown if they are in fact the same person or not (see [April 2001](#)).

Early March 2001: Bush Administration Not Ready to Give CIA Expanded Authority to Assassinate Bin Laden



Mary McCarthy. [Source: Associated Press] CIA Director George Tenet will claim in his 2007 book that he attempts to get new covert action authorities to fight bin Laden at this time. He says he wants to move from a defensive to offensive posture, but needs policy backing at a higher level to do it. He meets with Deputy National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley and gives him a list of expanded authorities the CIA is seeking to go after bin Laden. The authorities would permit the CIA or its partners to kill bin Laden without trying to capture him first. Tenet claims that he tells Hadley, “I’m giving you this draft now, but first, you guys need to figure out what your policy is.” The next day, Mary McCarthy, a CIA officer serving as National Security Council (NSC) senior director, calls Tenet’s chief of staff and asks the CIA to take the draft back. She says something to the effect, “If you formally transmit these to the NSC, the clock will be ticking (to take action), and we don’t want the clock to tick just now.” Tenet withdraws the draft. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 143-144](#)) A deputy cabinet level meeting in July 2001 discusses the idea, but no action results (see [July 13, 2001](#)). The authorities will be granted a few days after 9/11. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 154](#))

March 1, 2001: Taliban Disregard International Opinion and Destroy Giant Buddha Statues



Destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan. [Source:

CNN/The Taliban begins blowing up two giant stone Buddhas of Bamiyan (ancient statues carved into an Afghan mountainside, which are considered priceless treasures). They face great international condemnation in response, but no longer seem to be courting international recognition. Apparently, even ISI efforts to dissuade them fail. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#); [Elliott 8/4/2002](#)) Top Taliban leader Mullah Omar had previously announced the statues would not be harmed and even opened the National Museum in 2000. The change in policy appears to be due to bin Laden's growing influence. Journalist Kathy Gannon will later write, "bin Laden's hardliner rhetoric set the policy, and he campaigned vigorously for the destruction of the statues." The destruction of the statues further isolates the Taliban internationally, leaving them more dependent on bin Laden's generosity. ([Gannon 2005, pp. 79-81](#))

March 2001-September 1, 2001: Hani Hanjour and Other Hijackers Live in Paterson, New Jersey



The apartment building in Paterson, New Jersey, where some of the hijackers lived. [Source: *Associated Press*] Hani Hanjour and Salem Alhazmi rent a one-room apartment in Paterson, New Jersey. Hanjour signs the lease. Nawaf Alhazmi, Saeed Alghamdi, and Mohamed Atta are also seen coming and going by neighbors. One unnamed hijacker has to be told by a neighbor how to screw in a light bulb. ([Weiner and Weiser 9/27/2001](#); [Goldstein 9/30/2001](#); [Associated Press 10/7/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission's account of this differs from previous press accounts, and has Hanjour and Nawaf Alhazmi (instead of his brother Salem) first moving to Paterson in mid-May. Salem Alhazmi, Majed Moqed, Abdulaziz Alomari, Khalid Almihdhar, and probably Ahmed Alghamdi are all seen living there as well during the summer. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 230](#)) Other reports have Hani Hanjour and Nawaf Alhazmi

living periodically in Falls Church, Virginia, over nearly the exact same time period, from March through August 2001 (see [March 2001](#)). During this time, Mohamed Atta and other hijackers live in Wayne, New Jersey, a town only one mile from Paterson (see [\(Before September 2000-12 Months Later\)](#)), and Atta purchases a plane ticket to Spain from Apollo Travel in Paterson in early July (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)).” ([Maddux 9/27/2001](#); [Chadwick 9/27/2001](#); [CNN 10/29/2001](#); [Berry 9/19/2002](#))

March 4, 2001: Television Show Eerily Envisions 9/11 Attacks



An advertisement for the Lone Gunmen show.

[Source: Fox] Contradicting the later claim that no one could have envisioned the 9/11 attacks, a short-lived Fox television program called The Lone Gunmen airs a pilot episode in which militants try to fly an airplane into the WTC. The heroes save the day and the airplane narrowly misses the building. There are no hijackers on board the aircraft; they use remote control technology to steer the plane. Ratings are good for the show, yet the eerie coincidence is barely mentioned after 9/11. One media columnist will say, “This seems to be collective amnesia of the highest order.” ([TV Guide 6/21/2002](#)) In the show, the heroes also determine: “The terrorist group responsible was actually a faction of our own government. These malefactors were seeking to stimulate arms manufacturing in the lean years following the end of the Cold War by bringing down a plane in New York City and fomenting fears of terrorism.” ([Martin 6/20/2002](#))

March 7, 2001: Plan to Fight Al-Qaeda Considered, but with Little Urgency

Deputy National Security Adviser Steve Hadley chairs an informal meeting of some counterparts from other agencies to discuss al-Qaeda. They begin a broad review of the government's approach to al-Qaeda and Afghanistan. According to the New York Times, the approach is "two-pronged and included a crisis warning effort to deal with immediate threats and longer-range planning by senior officials to put into place a comprehensive strategy to eradicate al-Qaeda." Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke again pushes for immediate decisions on assisting Ahmed Shah Massoud and his Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Hadley suggests dealing with this as part of the broad review. Clarke supports a larger program, but he warns that delay risks the Alliance's defeat. Clarke also advocates using the armed Predator drone. However, despite an increasing number of alarming warnings following this meeting, there is little follow-up. "By June, a draft of a presidential directive authorizing an ambitious covert action plan is circulating through the upper echelons of the administration, but there seem[s] little urgency about putting the plan into effect." ([Marquis and Strolberg 3/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [Semple 4/4/2004](#))

March 7, 2001: Russia Submits Report on Bin Laden to UN Security Council, US Fails to Act on It

The Russian Permanent Mission at the United Nations secretly submits "an unprecedentedly detailed report" to the UN Security Council about bin Laden, his whereabouts, details of his al-Qaeda network, Afghan drug running, and Taliban connections to Pakistan and the ISI. The report provides "a listing of all bin Laden's bases, his government contacts and foreign advisers," and enough information to potentially locate and kill him. It is said to contain an "astonishing degree of information." The US fails to use the information in any noticable manner. Alex Standish, the editor of the highly respected Jane's Intelligence Review, concludes that the attacks of 9/11 were less of an American intelligence failure than the result of "a political decision not to act against bin Laden." ([Jane's Intelligence Review 10/5/2001](#); [Times of India 10/8/2001](#)) In May 2002, Jane's will further comment, "it is becoming clear that this was only the most high profile of a number of attempts by the Russians to alert the US and other members of the Security Council to the extent of the inter-dependence between the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and the ISI. According to [our] Russian sources, there was a regular flow of information from Moscow to the US dating back to the last years of the Clinton presidency. It seems apparent, however, that although this intelligence was being received by the CIA and other US agencies, there was a distinct lack of enthusiasm within political - as opposed to military - circles for the launch of pre-emptive strikes against either the Taliban or al-Qaeda. However, given the detailed intelligence being provided by the Russians - and the fact that bin Laden was making very clear threats to launch further strikes against US targets - it seems bizarre, to say the least, that no high-level political decision was taken to focus US intelligence efforts on al-Qaeda and its international network..." ([Jane's Intelligence Digest 5/28/2002](#))

March 8, 2001: US Declines to Freeze Al-Qaeda's Assets Despite Call from UN and European Union

In December 2000, the US and Russia cosponsored a United Nations Security Council resolution requiring member states to “freeze without delay” the funds of those on a list of designated terrorists. The resolution passed, and the UN and European Union (EU) release the list on this day. It contains the names of five alleged al-Qaeda leaders, including bin Laden’s security coordinator, brother-in-law, and financial handler. Yet strangely, the US itself does not freeze the assets of these five leaders, and will only so one month after 9/11 (see [October 12, 2001](#)). ([United Nations 3/8/2001](#); [Levin and Meyer 10/15/2001](#)) The Guardian will report after 9/11, “Members of Congress want to know why treasury officials charged with disrupting the finances of terrorists did not follow” the UN and EU. ([Gillan 10/13/2001](#))

Mid-March 2001: Hijackers Meet with ID Forger



Majed Moqed. [*Source: FBI*] Hijackers Ahmed Alghamdi, Majed Moqed, Hani Hanjour, and Nawaf Alhazmi stay for four days in the Fairfield Motor Inn, Fairfield, Connecticut. They meet with Eyad M. Alrababah, a Jordanian living in Bridgeport, who has been charged with providing false identification to at least 50 illegal aliens. This meeting takes place about six weeks before the FBI says Moqed and Alghamdi enter the US. ([Associated Press 3/6/2002](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#))

March 15, 2001: India, Iran, Russia, and US Work in Concert to Remove Taliban

Jane’s Intelligence Review reports that the US is working with India, Iran, and Russia “in a concerted front against Afghanistan’s Taliban regime.” India is supplying the Northern Alliance with military equipment, advisers, and helicopter technicians and both India and Russia are using bases in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for their operation. ([Bedi 3/15/2001](#))

March 23, 2001: DEA Issues Alert to Look Out for Israeli Spies



The cover of the DEA report, as depicted on television.

[Source: Fox News]The Office of National Drug Control Policy issues a National Security Alert describing “apparent attempts by Israeli nationals to learn about government personnel and office layouts.” This later becomes known through a leaked DEA document called “Suspicious Activities Involving Israeli Art Students at DEA Facilities.” A crackdown ensues and by June, around 120 Israelis are apprehended. More are apprehended later. ([Drug Enforcement Agency 6/2001](#))

March 23, 2001: Rice Warned about Al-Qaeda Cells in US

The US government is considering reopening Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House, which had been closed because of security concerns. But counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke warns National Security Adviser Rice that terrorists could easily drive a truck bomb, which he calls their “weapon of choice,” right into the White House. While discussing this, Clarke tells Rice that he thinks there are terrorist cells within the US, including al-Qaeda cells. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 255](#))

March 23, 2001: Alhazmi Buys Aeronautical Chart

Nawaf Alhazmi purchases a World aeronautical chart covering the northeastern United States from a store in Phoenix, Arizona. In addition, he purchases a National Geographic road atlas, a Unique Media map of the United States, and a Unique Media map of New York City. He also purchases flight deck videos around this time (see [November 5, 2000-June 20, 2001](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 31](#)) Alhazmi is living with Hani Hanjour, who is in pilot training (see [January-February 2001](#) and [February 8-March 12, 2001](#)). Alhazmi also says he is learning to be a pilot at this time (see [December 2000-January 2001](#)).

March 26, 2001: CIA Benefits from Major Software Improvements

The Washington Post reports on major improvements of the CIA’s intelligence gathering capability “in recent years.” A new program called Oasis uses “automated speech recognition” technology to turn audio feeds into formatted, searchable text. It can

distinguish one voice from another and differentiates “speaker 1” from “speaker 2” in transcripts. Software called Fluent performs “cross lingual” searches, translates difficult languages like Chinese and Japanese (apparently such software is much better than similar publicly available software), and even automatically assesses the contextual importance. Other new software can turn a suspect’s “life story into a three-dimensional diagram of linked phone calls, bank deposits and plane trips,” while still other software can efficiently and quickly process vast amounts of video, audio, and written data. ([Loeb 3/26/2001](#)) However, the government will later report that a number of messages about the 9/11 attacks, such as one stating “tomorrow is the zero hour,” are not translated until after 9/11 because analysts were “too swamped.” ([ABC News 6/7/2002](#))

March 30-April 13, 2001: Jarrah Visits Family, Tells Girlfriend He Wants Children Soon



Ziad Jarrah and Aisel Senguen holidaying in Paris in the fall of 2000. [Source: *McDermott*] Ziad Jarrah flies from Atlanta to Dusseldorf via Amsterdam. He then returns to Lebanon to see his father, who is ill. On his way back to the US, he stops in Bochum, Germany, to see his girlfriend and tells her he wants to have children soon. He is re-admitted to the US as a business visitor for three and a half months. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 21](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 213](#))

Late March-Early April 2001: CIA Warns Al-Qaeda Leader Zubaida Planning an Attack

The CIA issues repeated warnings that al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida may be planning an attack for the near future. One report cites a source indicating an attack on Israel, Saudi Arabia, or India. At this time, the CIA believes Zubaida was a major figure in the Millennium plots (see [May 30, 2001](#)). Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke relays these reports to National Security Adviser Rice. She is also briefed on Zubaida’s activities and the CIA’s efforts to locate him. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 255](#); [US District Court of Eastern Virginia 5/4/2006, pp. 1](#) )

April 2001: Speculation That Commercial Pilots Could Be Al-Qaeda Operatives

A source with al-Qaeda connections speculates to US intelligence that “bin Laden would be interested in commercial pilots as potential terrorists.” The source warns that the US should not focus only on embassy bombings, because al-Qaeda is seeking “spectacular and traumatic” attacks along the lines of the WTC bombing in 1993. Because the source is offering personal speculation and not hard information, the information is not disseminated widely. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [Risen 9/18/2002](#))

April 2001: FBI Translators Learn Al-Qaeda Suicide Pilots Plan to Hit Skyscrapers in US and Europe

FBI translators Sibel Edmonds and Behrooz Sarshar will later claim to know of an important warning given to the FBI at this time. In their accounts, a reliable informant on the FBI’s payroll for at least ten years tells two FBI agents that sources in Afghanistan have heard of an al-Qaeda plot to attack the US and Europe in a suicide mission involving airplanes. Al-Qaeda agents, already in place inside the US, are being trained as pilots. By some accounts, the names of prominent US cities are mentioned. A report on the matter is filed with squad supervisor Thomas Frields, but it’s unclear if this warning reaches FBI headquarters or beyond. The two translators will later privately testify to the 9/11 Commission. ([Sperry 3/24/2004](#); [Boehlert 3/26/2004](#); [Sperry 4/6/2004](#); [Ridgeway 4/14/2004](#)) Sarshar’s notes of the interview indicate that the informant claimed his information came from Iran, Afghanistan, and Hamburg, Germany (the location of the primary 9/11 al-Qaeda cell). However, anonymous FBI officials will claim the warning was very vague and doubtful. ([Crewdson 7/21/2004](#)) In reference to this warning and apparently others, Edmonds will say, “President Bush said they had no specific information about September 11, and that’s accurate. However, there was specific information about use of airplanes, that an attack was on the way two or three months beforehand, and that several people were already in the country by May of 2001. They should’ve alerted the people to the threat we were facing.” ([Boehlert 3/26/2004](#)) She will add, “There was general information about the time-frame, about methods to be used but not specifically about how they would be used and about people being in place and who was ordering these sorts of terror attacks. There were other cities that were mentioned. Major cities with skyscrapers.” ([Buncombe 4/2/2004](#))

April 2001: Northern Alliance Warns US that Al-Qaeda Plans a New Attack Vastly Greater than Their Previous Attacks

Declassified Defense Intelligence Agency documents from November 2001 will suggest that Northern Alliance leader General Ahmed Shah Massoud had gained “limited knowledge... regarding the intentions of [al-Qaeda] to perform a terrorist act against the

US on a scale larger than the 1998 bombing of the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.” It will further point out he may have been assassinated two days before 9/11 (see [September 9, 2001](#)) because he “began to warn the West.” The documents will be heavily censored and lack specifics, but Massoud did make an oblique public warning before European Parliament in April 2001 (see [April 6, 2001](#)). ([PakTribune \(Islamabad\) 9/13/2003](#); [Agence France-Presse 9/14/2003](#)) He also speaks to CIA officials while in Europe. According to author Lawrence Wright, he “told American officials that his own intelligence had learned of al-Qaeda’s intention to perform a terrorist act against the United States that would be vastly greater than the bombings of the American embassies in East Africa.” ([Wright 2006, pp. 244](#))

April 2001: Wolfowitz Claims that Iraq is Involved in Terrorism

During a National Security Council deputy principals meeting, Paul Wolfowitz is challenged by White House counterterrorism advisor Richard Clarke after asserting that Iraq is involved in terrorism. Recalling the meeting, Clarke tells The Guardian in a March 2004 interview: “April was an initial discussion of terrorism policy writ large and at that meeting I said we had to talk about al-Qaeda. And because it was terrorism policy writ large [Paul] Wolfowitz said we have to talk about Iraqi terrorism and I said that’s interesting because there hasn’t been any Iraqi terrorism against the United States. There hasn’t been any for 8 years. And he said something derisive about how I shouldn’t believe the CIA and FBI, that they’ve been wrong. And I said if you know more than I know tell me what it is, because I’ve been doing this for 8 years and I don’t know about any Iraqi-sponsored terrorism against the US since 1993. When I said let’s start talking about bin Laden, he said bin Laden couldn’t possibly have attacked the World Trade Center in ‘93. One little terrorist group like that couldn’t possibly have staged that operation. It must have been Iraq.” ([Clarke 3/23/2004](#))

April 2001: Surveillance of Al-Qaeda and Hamas in US Curtailed

A surveillance program known as Catcher’s Mitt is curtailed, and ten to twenty al-Qaeda wiretaps, as well as some Hamas wiretaps, are not renewed. This follows the discovery of errors in applications for warrants under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) related to both al-Qaeda and Hamas and the introduction of new procedures (see [Summer 2000-September 11, 2001](#), [Summer-October 2000](#), [October 2000](#), and [March 2001](#)). ([Johnston and Risen 9/19/2001](#); [Hirsh and Isikoff 5/27/2002](#); [Isikoff and Thomas 3/29/2004](#)) In addition, other similar programs such as Able Danger and Monarch Passage are shut down at the same time (see [February-March 2001](#)) and [January-March 2001](#)).

April 2001: Hekmatyar Predicts US Will Soon Attack Afghanistan and Overthrow Taliban

Journalist Hamid Mir talks to Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who is living in exile in Iran at the time. Hekmatyar predicts that the Taliban will fall by the end of the year. Mir will later recall, “he was telling me that the Americans will attack Afghanistan, Taliban government will fall, and then we’ll continue our jihad against the Americans.” Hekmatyar is opposed to the Taliban but openly supports bin Laden. He tells Mir, “Osama bin Laden is a great man and I support his ideology and I support his objectives.... He is a good friend of mine and he is a real mujahid.” ([Bergen 2006, pp. 287](#)) A senior Taliban official will make a similar prediction to Mir before 9/11 and hint the justification for the US attack would be a major attack against US interests (see [August 2-3, 2001](#)).

April 2001: Cole Investigator Again Asks for Malaysia Information, CIA Again Reveals Nothing



Ali Soufan in Afghanistan after 9/11. [*Source: FBI*] Ali Soufan, a lead investigator into the bombing of the USS *Cole*, again requests information from the CIA about leads turned up by the investigation. He made a similar request in late 2000, but got no reply (see [Late November 2000](#)). After learning that some of the bombers made calls between one of their houses in Yemen, the Washington Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand, where some of them stayed, and a payphone in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (see [January 5-8, 2000](#)) and [Early December 2000](#)), Soufan sends an official teletype with the request for information and also a photo of al-Qaeda manager Khallad bin Attash. The CIA is well aware that there was an al-Qaeda summit at an apartment near the payphone in Kuala Lumpur (see January 5-8, 2000), and in fact considered it so important that CIA Director George Tenet and other CIA leaders were repeatedly briefed about it (see [January 6-9, 2000](#)). ([Johnston and Risen 4/11/2004](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 330-331](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#)) The CIA even has photos from the Malaysia summit of al-Quso standing next to hijacker

Khalid Almihdhar, and other photos of bin Attash standing next to Almihdhar. ([Klaidman, Isikoff, and Hosenball 9/20/2001](#)) However, the CIA does not share any of what they know with Soufan, and Soufan continues to remain unaware the Malaysia summit even took place. Author Lawrence Wright will later comment, “If the CIA had responded to Soufan by supplying him with the intelligence he requested, the FBI would have learned of the Malaysia summit and of the connection to Almihdhar and Alhazmi. The bureau would have learned—as the [CIA] already knew—that the al-Qaeda operatives were in America and had been there for more than a year. Because there was a preexisting indictment for bin Laden in New York, and Almihdhar and Alhazmi were his associates, the bureau already had the authority to follow the suspects, wiretap their apartment, intercept their communications, clone their computer, investigate their contacts—all the essential steps that might have prevented 9/11.” ([Wright 2006, pp. 330-331](#))

April 2001: Courier Working for Bin Laden and CIA Flees Afghanistan, Warns Al-Qaeda Planning to Hijack Airplane in US



Peter Jouvenal. [*Source: Dominc Medley*] British cameraman Peter Jouvenal is reporting on Afghanistan at this time and using a young Afghan known only as “Ahmed” to run errands. Ahmed also has a job running errands for Osama bin Laden at the same time. Jouvenal will later recount that Ahmed was helping bin Laden by “meeting people in Pakistan and taking them across the border, taking messages around for Osama, buying his food, taking messages to the Internet and logging on and receiving, printing, sending.” Ahmed buys bin Laden’s meals most every day. But Jouvenal says that “somewhere on the line Ahmed tied up with the CIA” and decided that working for bin Laden was too dangerous. Ahmed asks Jouvenal for help to get a visa for himself and his family to defect to the US, which Ahmed eventually gets. He also tells Jouvenal that al-Qaeda is planning to hijack an airplane in the US in an attempt to get Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman released from prison. ([Bergen 2006, pp. 287-289](#)) There are some similarities between Ahmed’s case and the case of “Max” who leaves Afghanistan around the same time and warns of a hijacking, but there are differences as well (see [March-April 2001](#)). It is not known if they are the same person. Regardless, Ahmed’s case contradicts CIA assertions that they never had any asserts close to bin Laden. It is not known why the CIA did not use Ahmed to track bin Laden’s location or poison his food. One month later the White House will be warned of the hijacking plot, but it is unknown if this came from Ahmed or other sources (see [May 23, 2001](#)).

April 2001: Informer Shares Some Information on Moussaoui with CIA

A CIA informer who is aware of Zacarias Moussaoui's connection to terrorism and met him in Azerbaijan in 1997 (see [1997](#)) shares some information on him with the CIA. However, the informer is not aware of Moussaoui's real name and knows him under an alias, "Abu Khalid al-Francia." An intelligence official will indicate in 2002 that the source reports on Moussaoui under this name. However, CIA director George Tenet, writing in 2007, will say that the informer only reports on Moussaoui as "al Francia." One of Moussaoui's known aliases in 2001 is Abu Khalid al-Sahrawi, similar to the name the source knows him under, but when Moussaoui is arrested in the US (see [August 16, 2001](#)) the CIA apparently does not realize that Abu Khalid al-Francia is Moussaoui. ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#); [Solomon 6/4/2002](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 201](#))

April 2001: Intelligence Intercepts Lead to Closure of Al Taqwa's Bahamas Branch

The charters of the Bahamas branch of the Al Taqwa Bank and the related Akida Bank are revoked. Al Taqwa's headquarters in Switzerland will be shut down after 9/11 following accusations that it helped fund al-Qaeda and other Islamist militant groups (see [November 7, 2001](#)). ([Randal 2005, pp. 225](#)) The US Treasury Department will later state that the Bahamas branch of "Al Taqwa and Akida Bank are not functional banking institutions in the conventional sense. They are shell companies lacking a physical presence and sharing the same address in the Bahamas where they were licensed." ([US Department of the Treasury 8/29/2002](#)) Journalist Jonathan Randal will later note that US intelligence on Al Taqwa was solid enough before 9/11 to lead to this closure. "Egyptian, US, and other Western specialists had long suspected this well-known Muslim Brotherhood bank had ties to al-Qaeda as well as to radical Algerian, Egyptian, and Palestinian Islamist groups. One persistent rumor suggested Osama had been bugged telephoning the bank in Nassau, [Bahamas,] in 1996 to discuss rearranging his finances at the time of his departure from Khartoum, [Sudan.]" ([Randal 2005, pp. 225](#))

April-May 2001: Bush, Cheney Receive Numerous Al-Qaeda Warnings

President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, and national security aides are given briefing papers which include those headlined, "Bin Laden Planning Multiple Operations" (see [April 19-20, 2001](#)), "Bin Laden Public Profile May Presage Attack" (see [May 2-3, 2001](#)), and "Bin Laden Network's Plans Advancing" (see [May 25-26, 2001](#)). The exact contents of these briefings remain classified, but apparently, none specifically mentions a domestic US attack. ([Johnston and Dwyer 4/18/2004](#))

April-May 2001: Florida FBI Investigate Atta Associate

While monitoring a plot to blow up Mount Rushmore and carry out other attacks (see [November 2000-Spring 2002](#)), the Florida FBI investigates Adnan Shukrijumah, an apparent associate of Mohamed Atta (see [May 2, 2001](#)). Imran Mandhai is a leader of the Mount Rushmore plot, and he attends the same mosque in the greater Miami area that Shukrijumah does. Mandhai tries to recruit him for the plot. However, Shukrijumah declines and never says anything incriminating within earshot of undercover surveillance teams or an FBI informer using the alias Mohamed who has gotten close to Mandhai. The FBI investigates Shukrijumah anyway, but only finds that he lied on his green card application regarding a prior arrest. The Florida FBI is apparently not aware of his connection to the 9/11 hijackers. An investigator on the case tells USA Today, “Shukrijumah sensed what Mandhai did not: that ‘Mohamed’ was an FBI informant.” After 9/11 the FBI will give Mandhai a lie detector test and ask him if he knew any of the terrorists involved in the 9/11 attacks. He says he did not, but his answer is judged to be false, and he confesses he was thinking of Shukrijumah. The FBI is also investigating Shukrijumah over another plot at this time (see [Spring 2001](#)). Shukrijumah apparently disappears from the Miami area around the time Mandhai and Jokhan are first interviewed by the FBI. He then travels around North America (see [July-September 2001](#)). ([Kidwell and Lebowitz 3/31/2003](#); [Ragavan 4/7/2003](#); [Willing 6/15/2003](#)) The FBI will later find that Shukrijumah is a top al-Qaeda operative and offer a reward of \$5 million for information leading to his capture (see [Late March 2003 and After](#)). ([Rewards for Justice 3/2003](#))

April-May 2001: Hambali Identified as Top Al-Qaeda Planner, But Connection Not Made

In April 2001, the Malaysian government connects al-Qaeda leader Hambali with a gun-smuggling syndicate, and as a result police place an all points bulletin for him. A month later, Hambali is connected to a botched bank robbery also in Malaysia. Twenty-six members of the Malaysian militant group Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM) are arrested and questioned about the robbery. Authorities discover the group has been responsible for a number of attacks, including the bombing of a Hindu temple, and that Hambali is a top leader. ([Pereira 2/10/2002](#); [New Straits Times 8/16/2003](#)) A photograph of Hambali is found in a raid at this time, and is matched with a photo of him discovered in 1995 on Ramzi Yousef’s computer that contained files detailing the Bojinka plot (see [January 6, 1995](#)). ([Pereira 2/2/2002](#)) His picture appears in the media no later than mid-August. ([Emmanuel 8/18/2001](#); [Ahmad 9/9/2001](#)) The US is already aware of Hambali’s involvement in the Bojinka plot (see [May 23, 1999](#)). However, this new evidence of Hambali’s importance does not lead to any renewed focus on the January 2000 al-Qaeda summit attended by Hambali and two of the 9/11 hijackers that was monitored by Malaysian intelligence (see January 5-8, 2000).

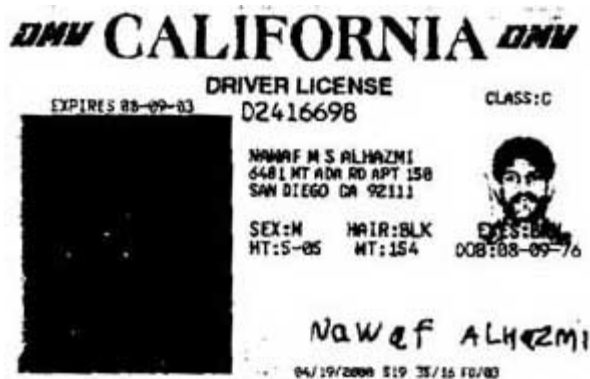
(April-July 2001): Hani Hanjour Receives More Flight Training; Rents Small Aircraft

According to the 9/11 Commission, soon after settling in the area (see [March 2001-September 1, 2001](#)) hijacker Hani Hanjour starts receiving “ground instruction” at Air Fleet Training Systems, a flight school in Teterboro, New Jersey. While there, he flies the Hudson Corridor: “a low-altitude ‘hallway’ along the Hudson River that passes New York landmarks like the World Trade Center.” His instructor refuses a second request to fly the Corridor, “because of what he considered Hanjour’s poor piloting skills.” Soon after, Hanjour switches to Caldwell Flight Academy in Fairfield, New Jersey, about 25 miles from lower Manhattan, from where he rents small aircraft several times during June and July. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 242](#)) In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Caldwell’s owner will confirm that several suspects sought by the FBI, reportedly including Mohamed Atta, had rented planes from him, though when they did so is unstated. A search of the Lexis Nexus database indicates there are no media accounts of any witnesses recalling Hanjour or any of the other hijackers attending these schools. ([Rudolph, Coscarelli, and Sherman 9/24/2001](#); [Langton and Holliday 9/25/2001](#))

Early April-Early May, 2001: Associate of Suspicious Imam Helps 9/11 Hijackers Rent Flat

Nawaf Alhazmi and Hani Hanjour rent an apartment in Alexandria, Virginia, for about a month, with the help of Eyad Alrababah, a man whom they met at a local mosque. The mosque is run by Anwar Aulaqi, an associate of Alhazmi’s from San Diego who was investigated by the FBI over terrorism suspicions (see [March 2001](#)). Alhazmi and Hanjour had previously lived in Phoenix, Arizona (see [December 12, 2000-March 2001](#)) and will later move to Paterson, New Jersey (see [March 2001-September 1, 2001](#)). Alrababah will later say that he just happened to meet them after a service in the mosque, when they mentioned they were looking for an apartment and he had a friend who had one to rent. However, given Al Aulaqi’s previous association with Alhazmi, some FBI agents will later doubt this and suspect that Aulaqi told Alrababah to help the hijackers. The 9/11 Commission will comment, “We share that suspicion, given the remarkable coincidence of Aulaqi’s prior relationship with Alhazmi.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 230](#))

April 1, 2001: Hijacker Gets Speeding Ticket, but His Illegal Status Is Not Noticed



A poor photocopy of Nawaf Alhazmi's US driver's license. [Source: FBI] Hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi is stopped by an Oklahoma police officer for speeding. His license information is run through a computer to determine whether there are any warrants for his arrest. There are none, so he is issued a ticket and sent on his way. The CIA has known that Alhazmi is an al-Qaeda operative possibly living in the US since March 2000, but has failed to share this knowledge with other agencies. ([Clay and Ellis 1/20/2002](#); [Isikoff and Klaidman 6/2/2002](#)) He also has been in the country illegally since January 2001, but this also does not raise any flags. ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#))

(Spring 2001): FBI Investigates Atta Associate over Second Plot

The FBI investigates Adnan Shukrijumah, an apparent associate of Mohamed Atta (see [2000-2001](#) and [May 2, 2001](#)), in connection with a South Florida -based Islamic militant group that is plotting to recruit operatives and finance attacks and assassinations in the Middle East (see [October 1993-November 2001](#)). The group includes Jose Padilla associates Adham Amin Hassoun and Mohammed Hesham Youssef, and is connected to Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman and the suspect charity Benevolence International Foundation (see [1988-1989](#)). Shukrijumah keeps his distance from the core plotters and despite FBI wiretaps on the group's phones, the FBI is unable to establish a firm connection between him and the plans. Shukrijumah is also being investigated over a plot to attack various businesses in Florida and blow up Mount Rushmore around this time (see [April-May 2001](#)). The FBI later determines that Shukrijumah is a top al-Qaeda operative and will issue a \$5 million reward for his capture (see [Late March 2003 and After](#)). ([Ragavan 4/7/2003](#); [Adams 11/23/2003](#); [Meyer 9/3/2006](#))

April 1, 2001-September 10, 2001: Nearly Half of FAA's Daily Intelligence Summaries Mention Bin Laden or Al-Qaeda; No Action is Taken

In 2005 (see [February 10, 2005](#)), it will be revealed that of the FAA's 105 daily intelligence summaries between these dates, 52 mention bin Laden, al-Qaeda, or both. Most of the mentions are "in regard to overseas threats." None of the warnings

specifically predict something similar to the 9/11 attacks, but five of them mention al-Qaeda's training for hijackings and two reports concern suicide operations unconnected to aviation. ([Associated Press 2/11/2005](#)) One of the warnings mentions air defense measures being taken in Genoa, Italy, for the July 2001 G-8 summit to protect from a possible air attack by terrorists (see [July 20-22, 2001](#)). However, the New Jersey Star-Ledger is virtually the only newspaper in the US to report this fact. ([Cohen 2/11/2005](#)) Despite all these warnings, the FAA fails to take any extra security measures. They do not expand the use of in-flight air marshals or tighten airport screening for weapons. A proposed rule to improve passenger screening and other security measures ordered by Congress in 1996 has held up and is still not in effect by 9/11. The 9/11 Commission's report on these FAA warnings released in 2005 (see [February 10, 2005](#)) will conclude that FAA officials were more concerned with reducing airline congestion, lessening delays, and easing air carriers' financial problems than preventing a hijacking. ([Associated Press 2/11/2005](#)) The FAA also makes no effort to expand its list of terror suspects, which includes only a dozen names by 9/11 (see [April 24, 2000](#)). The former head of the FAA's civil aviation security branch later says he wasn't even aware of TIPOFF, the government's main watch list, which included the names of two 9/11 hijackers before 9/11. Nor is there any evidence that a senior FAA working group responsible for security ever meets in 2001 to discuss "the high threat period that summer." ([Lichtblau 2/10/2005](#))

[April 1-May 27, 2001: Additional 9/11 Hijackers Spend Time in Malaysia](#)



Satam al Suqami. [*Source: FBI*] Two of the 9/11 hijackers travel to Malaysia and spend some time there. Satam al Suqami arrives on April 1 and stays there for just under two weeks, before traveling to the United Arab Emirates. Abdulaziz Alomari arrives on May 7 and spends three weeks there, before departing for the same destination. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 42, 50](#)) There are no reports about what Alomari and al Suqami do in Malaysia or who they meet. Lead hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar visit Malaysia before 9/11 and meet other extremists there (see January 5-8, 2000), as does Zacarias Moussaoui (see [September-October 2000](#)). Almihdhar again visits Malaysia in the summer of 2001 (see [June 2001](#)), and Ramzi bin al-Shibh, an associate of the plot leaders, travels there in June 2001. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 243-4](#))

April 3-4, 2001 and around: Hijackers Atta and Alshehhi Make Second Unexplained Trip to Virginia

Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi make a second visit to Virginia Beach (see [February 19-February 20, 2001](#)). They close their recently rented mailbox there and, after checking out of the Diplomat Inn, cash a check for \$8,000 at a nearby SunTrust Bank branch. ([Murdock 9/27/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/16/2004, pp. 8](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 228, 523](#); [Epstein 11/22/2005](#)) They also cash another check for \$10,000 in the same place at around the same time. ([Stone 9/27/2001](#); [Geroux 12/10/2005](#)) Bank surveillance footage of Atta on April 4 will be found after 9/11. ([Kean and Hamilton 2006, pp. 238](#))

April 4, 2001: Bugging Techniques Reach New Heights



One of the approximately 30 radomes at the Echelon station in Menwith Hill, England. A radome covers an antenna to protect it from the weather and disguise the direction it is pointing. [*Source: Matt Crypto / Public domain*]The BBC reports on advances in electronic surveillance. The US's global surveillance program, Echelon, has become particularly effective in monitoring mobile phones, recording millions of calls simultaneously and checking them against a powerful search engine designed to pick out key words that might represent a security threat. Laser microphones can pick up conversations from up to a kilometer away by monitoring window vibrations. If a bug is attached to a computer keyboard, it is possible to monitor exactly what is being keyed in, because every key on a computer has a unique sound when depressed. ([BBC 4/4/2001](#)) Furthermore, a BBC report on a European Union committee investigation into Echelon one month later notes that the surveillance network can sift through up to 90 percent of all Internet traffic, as well as monitor phone conversations, mobile phone calls, fax transmissions, net browsing history, satellite transmissions and so on. Even encryption may not help much. The BBC suggests that "it is likely that the intelligence agencies can crack open most commercially available encryption software." ([BBC 5/29/2001](#))

April 6, 2001: Rebel Leader Warns Europe and US About Large-Scale Imminent Al-Qaeda Attacks



Ahmed Shah Massoud speaking before European Parliament. [Source: Robert Sanchez/ Black Star] Ahmed Shah Massoud, leader of the Northern Alliance fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, has been trying to get aid from the US but his people are only allowed to meet with low level US officials. In an attempt to get his message across, he addresses the European Parliament: “If President Bush doesn’t help us, these terrorists will damage the US and Europe very soon.” ([Islam 4/7/2001](#); [Elliott 8/4/2002](#)) A classified US intelligence document states, “Massoud’s intelligence staff is aware that the attack against the US will be on a scale larger than the 1998 embassy bombings, which killed over two hundred people and injured thousands (see [August 7, 1998](#)).” ([Defense Intelligence Agency 11/21/2001](#))³¹ Massoud also meets privately with some CIA officials while in Europe. He tells them that his guerrilla war against the Taliban is faltering and unless the US gives a significant amount of aid, the Taliban will conquer all of Afghanistan. No more aid is forthcoming. ([Coll 2/23/2004](#))

April 8, 2001: Czech Intelligence Informant Claims Iraqi Agent Met Arab Man in Prague; He Later Claims Man was Mohamed Atta

An informant for the BIS, the Czech intelligence agency, reportedly sees Iraqi diplomat Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim Samir al-Ani meeting in a restaurant outside Prague with an Arab man in his 20s. This draws concern from the intelligence community because the informant suggests the person is “a visiting ‘student’ from Hamburg—and... potentially dangerous.” ([Safire 11/19/2003](#) Sources: [Jan Kavan](#)) The young man is never positively identified or seen again. Fearing that al-Ani may have been attempting to recruit the young man for a mission to blow-up Radio Free Europe headquarters, the diplomat is told to leave the country on April 18. ([Tyler and Tagliabue 10/27/2001](#); [Walker 10/20/2002](#); [Safire 11/19/2003](#) Sources: Unnamed US officials, [Jan Kavan](#)) Information about the incident is passed on to US intelligence. After the 9/11 attacks and after it is reported on the news that Atta had likely visited Prague, the BIS informant will say the young man at the restaurant was Atta. (see [September 14, 2001](#)) This information leads hawks to come up with the so-called “Prague Connection” theory, which will hold that 9/11 plotter Mohamed Atta flew to Prague on April 8, met with al-Ani to discuss the planning and financing of the 9/11 attacks, and returned to the US on either April 9 or 10. ([Tyler and Tagliabue 10/27/2001](#); [Walker 10/20/2002](#); [Safire 11/19/2003](#) Sources: Unnamed US

officials, Unnamed BIS informant, [Jan Kavan](#)) The theory will be widely discounted by October 2002. ([Risen 10/21/2002](#) Sources: Unnamed US officials, Unnamed BIS informant)

April 11, 2001: Hijacker Atta and Alshehhi Move to Coral Springs



The Tara Gardens Condominiums complex.

[Source: [Coralsprings.com](#)] Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi move into Apartment 122 in the Tara Gardens Condominiums complex in Coral Springs, a suburb of Fort Lauderdale in southeast Florida. Atta rents the apartment using his own name and they pay \$840 per month in rent. Atta will list the apartment as his address when he applies for a driver's license in May. According to the London Times, while in Coral Springs, Alshehhi spends his days "washing piles of laundry for the gang in the development's washing machines," and Atta is "often in the parking lot, chain smoking." ([McMahon et al. 9/13/2001](#); [Hedges and Zeleny 9/16/2001](#); [Zuckoff and Rezendes 9/23/2001](#); [Sunday Times \(London\) 2/3/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 228, 230](#)) Diana Padilla, who lives upstairs from them, later recalls, "You would say hello to [Atta] and nothing—no reaction." ([Infield, Rubin, and Fazlollah 9/22/2001](#))

April 11-June 28, 2001: 9/11 'Muscle' Hijackers Arrive in Dubai on Way to US

The muscle hijackers arrive in Dubai on their way to the US (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)):

- April 11: It is not known when Ahmed Alghamdi first arrives in Dubai, but he leaves on April 8, traveling to an unknown destination, and returns on April 11;
- April 12: Satam al Suqami arrives in the United Arab Emirates from Malaysia (see [April 1-May 27, 2001](#));
- May 7, 2001: Ahmed Alhaznawi arrives in Abu Dhabi from Karachi by plane;
- May 13: Ahmed Alnami arrives in the United Arab Emirates by plane from Saudi Arabia;
- May 26: Hamza Alghamdi enters the United Arab Emirates;
- May 27: Abdulaziz Alomari arrives in Dubai from Malaysia (see [April 1-May 27, 2001](#));

- June 1: It is not known when Wail Alshehri first arrives in Dubai, but he leaves on May 29, traveling to an unknown destination, and returns on June 1 with Ahmed Alhaznawi, who previously arrived on May 7, but must have left in the meantime;
 - June 12: Saeed Alghamdi arrives in the United Arab Emirates from Saudi Arabia;
 - June 28: Salem Alhazmi arrives in the United Arab Emirates from Saudi Arabia. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 42-50](#).)
- The hijackers typically remain in Dubai for a few weeks before moving on to the US (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)). While in Dubai the hijackers purchase traveler's checks:
- April 28: Majed Moqed purchases \$2,980 in MasterCard travelers' checks from the Thomas Cook Exchange in the nearby emirate of Sharjah;
 - May 27, 2001: Ahmed Alnami purchases \$10,000 of American Express travelers' checks and Hamza Alghamdi purchases the same amount of Visa travelers' checks in Dubai;
 - June 6, 2001: Ahmed Alhaznawi purchases \$3,000 of American Express travelers' checks in Dubai;
 - June 7, 2001: Wail Alshehri purchases \$14,000 of American Express travelers' checks in Sharjah;
 - June 24: Fayeze Ahmed Banihammad purchases \$4,000 of Thomas Cook travelers' checks in Sharjah. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 44-48](#).)

In addition, Wail Alshehri obtains an international driving permit in Sharjah on June 5. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 47](#).) Some of these hijackers are assisted by plot facilitator Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi (see [Early-Late June, 2001](#)). It is not clear who helps the others, although Dubai-based Ali Abdul Aziz Ali previously assisted some of the hijackers (see [June 29, 2000-September 18, 2000](#)), and Saeed Sheikh, who has Dubai connections, may also assist some of them (see [Early August 2001](#)). In addition, Victor Bout, an arms dealer who flies shipments for al-Qaeda and the Taliban through the UAE, is based in Sharjah (see [Mid-1996-October 2001](#)).

[April 12, 2001: Report on Energy Security Argues US Needs to Review Policy on Iraq](#)

A report commissioned by former US Secretary of State James Baker and the Council on Foreign Relations, titled "Strategic Energy Policy Challenges For The 21st Century," is completed and submitted to Vice President Dick Cheney. The report was drafted by the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy. Edward L. Morse, an energy industry analyst, chaired the project, and Amy Myers Jaffe was the project's director. The paper urges the US to formulate a comprehensive, integrated strategic energy policy to address the current energy crisis, which it attributes to infrastructural restraints, rapid global economic expansion, and the presence of obstacles to foreign investment in the oil-rich Middle East. The report says the world's supply of oil is not a factor in the crisis. "The reasons for the energy challenge have nothing to do with the global hydrocarbon resource base.... The world will not run short of hydrocarbons in the foreseeable future," the paper says. One of the report's recommendations is to "[r]eview policies toward Iraq" with the

ultimate goal of stemming the tide of anti-Americanism in the Middle-East and “eas[ing] Iraqi oil-field investment restrictions.” Iraq, under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, remains a “destabilizing influence... to the flow of oil to international markets from the Middle East.” It also notes, “Saddam Hussein has also demonstrated a willingness to threaten to use the oil weapon and to use his own export program to manipulate oil markets.” Therefore, the report says, the “United States should conduct an immediate policy review toward Iraq, including military, energy, economic, and political/diplomatic assessments” and work with key allies to develop a new integrated strategy toward Iraq. Key elements of the new policy should include narrowing the focus of sanctions and using diplomatic means to enforce existing UN resolutions. ([University 4/2/2001](#); [Mackay 10/5/2002](#); [Goldstein 12/26/2002](#))

([Show related quotes](#))

Before April 13, 2001: FBI Reports Extremists Linked to Chechnya Leader and Bin Laden Are Planning Attack

Dale Watson, head of the FBI’s counterterrorism program, sends a memo to FBI Director Louis Freeh warning that Islamic radicals are planning a “terrorist operation.” The memo states that “Sunni extremists with links to Ibn al Kahhatb, an extremist leader in Chechnya, and to Osama bin Laden [have been involved in] serious operational planning... since late 2000, with an intended culmination in late spring 2001.” Watson says the planning was sparked by the renewal of the Palestinian Intifada in September 2000. “[A]ll the players are heavily intertwined,” the memo notes. Additionally, the memo says that “[m]ultiple sources also suggest that [bin Laden’s] organization is planning a terrorist attack against US interests.” The memo is also sent to other FBI officials, such as International Terrorism Operations Section (ITOS) chief Michael Rolince, who will later be involved in the case of Zacarias Moussaoui (see [Late August 2001](#) and [August 30-September 10, 2001](#)) ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 4/2001](#)). Based on this report, ITOS sends an e-mail (see [April 13, 2001](#)) to all field offices, asking agents to help identify information pertaining to the “current operational activities relating to Sunni extremism.” The e-mail does not mention Ibn Khattab. ([Sniffen 3/21/2006](#)) These plans may be for the 9/11 attacks—at least some of the alleged hijackers are linked to bin Laden (see January 5-8, 2000), and Zacarias Moussaoui is linked to Ibn Khattab (see [Late 1999-Late 2000](#)). Some of the hijackers fought in Chechnya and therefore might also be linked to Ibn Khattab (see [1996-December 2000](#)). Officials at FBI headquarters will later refuse a search warrant for Zacarias Moussaoui’s belongings saying they believe Ibn Khattab is not closely connected to Osama bin Laden and is not hostile to the US (see [August 22, 2001](#) and [August 23-27, 2001](#)).

April 12-September 7, 2001: Hijackers Collect Multiple Drivers’ License Copies



The most famous image of Mohamed Atta came

- same name. ([Riley and Perlman 9/21/2001](#); [Lipka 9/28/2001](#); [Lipka 9/28/2001](#); [Clay and Ellis 1/20/2002](#))

on Muslim Extremist Threat

extremist threat in the US. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 264](#))

Mention Jihad to Roommates

While staying in a flat in Alexandria, Virginia (see [Early April-Early May, 2001](#)), Nawaf Alhazmi and Hani Hanjour tell two roommates that they had thought of going to Afghanistan for jihad. According to the 9/11 Commission, “The al-Qaeda operatives spent little time with their roommates, but did mention at one point that they had considered going to Afghanistan for jihad.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 523](#)) In fact, Alhazmi, an al-Qaeda veteran, has already spent time in Afghanistan (see [1993-1999](#)). Hanjour may also have traveled to Afghanistan already (see [Early 2000-November 2000](#)). Alhazmi made similar comments when he lived in San Diego (see [Spring 2000](#)).

April 17-26, 2001: Joint Chiefs of Staff Holds Exercise for Continuity of Government if US is Attacked; Proposal to Simulate Airliner Crash into Pentagon Rejected

The Joint Chiefs of Staff holds a large, worldwide exercise called Positive Force, which focuses on the Defense Department’s ability to conduct large-scale military operations and coordinate these operations. ([Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 8/14/2000_a](#)) The 2001 Positive Force exercise is a “continuity of operations exercise,” meaning it deals with government contingency plans to keep working in the event of an attack on the US. ([Borger 4/15/2004](#)) Over a dozen government agencies, including NORAD, are invited to participate. The exercise prepares them for various scenarios, including non-combatant evacuation operations, cyber attacks, rail disruption, and power outages. It includes “a series of simulated attacks against the maritime, surface and aviation sectors” of America’s national security transportation infrastructure. ([US Congress 5/8/2001](#); [Wahl 10/2001](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 6/9/2002](#)) Apparently, one of the scenarios that was considered for this exercise involved “a terrorist group hijack[ing] a commercial airliner and fly[ing] it into the Pentagon.” But the proposed scenario, thought up by a group of Special Operations personnel trained to think like terrorists, was rejected. Joint Staff action officers and White House officials said the additional scenario is either “too unrealistic” or too disconnected to the original intent of the exercise. ([Gaudiano 4/13/2004](#); [Wedge 4/14/2004](#); [Graham 4/14/2004](#); [Schmitt 4/14/2004](#); [Borger 4/15/2004](#))

April 18, 2001: FAA Warns Airlines About Middle Eastern Hijackers

The FAA sends a warning to US airlines that Middle Eastern militants could try to hijack or blow up a US plane and that carriers should “demonstrate a high degree of alertness.” The warning stems from the April 6, 2001, conviction of Ahmed Ressam over a failed plot to blow up Los Angeles International Airport during the millennium celebrations. This warning expires on July 31, 2001. ([Salant 5/18/2002](#)) This is one of 15 general warnings issued to airlines in 2001 before 9/11 (see [January-August 2001](#)), but it is more specific than usual. ([CNN 3/2002](#); [Lewandowski and Davis 5/17/2002](#))

April 18, 2001: Hijacker Flies Between Miami and Amsterdam

Hijacker Marwan Alshehhi flies from Miami, Florida, to Amsterdam, Netherlands. He returns on May 2. Investigators have not divulged where he went or what he did while in Europe. Hamburg, Germany, is less than 250 miles from Amsterdam. ([US Department of Justice 5/20/2002](#))

April 19-20, 2001: Bush Warned ‘Bin Laden Planning Multiple Operations’

On April 19, 2001, the interagency Counterterrorism Security Group (CSG) chaired by counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke discusses recent reports that al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida is planning an attack. The next day, a Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB) with the title “Bin Laden Planning Multiple Operations” is sent to top White House officials. The New York Times will later report that President Bush and Vice President Cheney were among those who received this warning. Since SEIBs are usually based on previous days’ President Daily Briefings, President Bush probably learned about this report on April 19 (see [January 20-September 10, 2001](#)). ([Johnston and Dwyer 4/18/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 255](#); [US District Court of Eastern Virginia 5/4/2006, pp. 2-3](#))

April 22-June 27, 2001: Some Hijackers Transit London on Way to US, One or More Apparently on British Watch List

Some of the muscle hijackers transit London when traveling between Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and the US (see [April 11-June 28, 2001](#) and [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)):

- Satam al Suqami and Waleed Alshehri leave Dubai on April 22, change planes in London, and arrive in Orlando the next day;
- Majed Moqed and Ahmed Alghamdi fly from Dubai via London to Washington on May 2;
- Hamza Alghamdi, Ahmed Alnami, and Mohand Alshehri pass through London on their way from Dubai to Miami on May 28;
- Ahmed Alhaznawi and Wail Alshehri travel from Dubai to Miami via London on June 8; and
- Fayed Ahmed Banihammad and Saeed Alghamdi transit London en route from Dubai to Orlando on June 27. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 42-50](#))

There are also some reports that some of the hijackers spend more time in Britain (see [January-June 2001](#) and [June 2001](#)). Ahmed Alghamdi is later said to have been on a British watch list and the Sunday Herald will say that he should have been “instantly ‘red-flagged’ by British intelligence” as he passed through Britain. Alghamdi was linked

by the FBI to Raed Hijazi, an associate of Osama bin Laden in prison in Jordan for plotting a bombing campaign there, so the British may have watchlisted him based on information from the US. Two other hijackers that may have been on the British watch list are Satam al Suqami and Hamza Alghamdi, who were investigated by US customs together with Ahmed Alghamdi. If Ahmed Alghamdi was watchlisted based on US information, the names of the other two hijackers may have been passed to the British along with his name. Al Suqami and Ahmed Alghamdi are connected to both Hijazi and one of his associates, Nabil al-Marabh, and are reported to be under investigation, starting between autumn 2000 and spring 2001, by US customs and the FBI (see [September 2000](#), [Spring 2001](#) and [September 11, 2001](#)). A British intelligence source will say, "There is no way that MI5 and MI6 should have missed these guys. Britain has a history of having Islamic extremists in the country. We should have been watching them." ([MacKay 9/30/2001](#)) According to the Times, the identities of some of the men are in question, "Officials hope that the inquiries in Britain will disclose the true identities of the suicide team. Some are known to have arrived in Britain using false passports and fake identities that they kept for the hijack. There are serious question marks over the identities of at least four of the visitors to Britain." ([McGrory and Kennedy 9/26/2001](#))

April 23-June 29, 2001: Al-Qaeda Muscle Team Arrives in US at This Time or Earlier

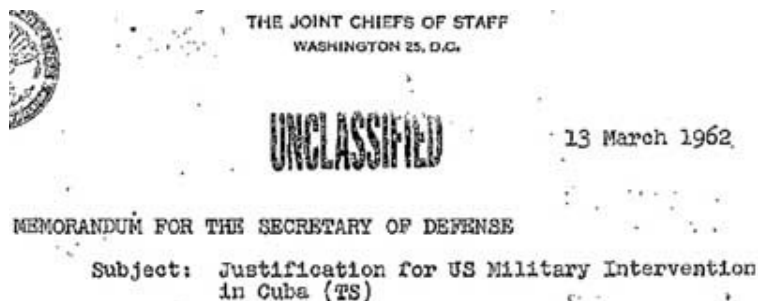


This Ahmed Al-Haznawi picture is a photocopy of his 2001 US visa application. [*Source: 9/11 Commission*] The 13 hijackers commonly known as the "muscle" allegedly first arrive in the US. The muscle provides the brute force meant to control the hijacked passengers and protect the pilots. ([Goldstein 9/30/2001](#)) Yet, according to the 9/11 Commission, these men "were not physically imposing," with the majority of them between 5 feet 5 and 5 feet 7 tall, "and slender in build." ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004, pp. 8](#)) According to FBI Director Mueller, they all pass through Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and their travel was probably coordinated from abroad by Khalid Almihdhar. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) However, some information contradicts

their official arrival dates:

- April 23: Waleed Alshehri and Satam Al Suqami arrive in Orlando, Florida. Suqami in fact arrived before February 2001. A man named Waleed Alshehri lived with a man named Ahmed Alghamdi in Virginia and Florida between 1997 and 2000. However, it is not clear whether they were the hijackers or just people with the same name (see [1999](#)). ([Telegraph 9/20/2001](#)) Alshehri appears quite Americanized in the summer of 2001, frequently talking with an apartment mate about football and baseball, even identifying himself a fan of the Florida Marlins baseball team. ([Associated Press 9/21/2001](#))
- May 2: Majed Moqed and Ahmed Alghamdi arrive in Washington. Both actually arrived by mid-March 2001. A man named Ahmed Alghamdi lived with a man named Waleed Alshehri in Florida and Virginia between 1997 and 2000. However, it is not clear whether they were the hijackers or just people with the same name (see [1999](#)). ([Telegraph 9/20/2001](#))
- May 28: Mohand Alshehri, Hamza Alghamdi, and Ahmed Alnami allegedly arrive in Miami, Florida. According to other reports, however, both Mohand Alshehri and Hamza Alghamdi may have arrived by January 2001 (see [January or July 28, 2001](#)).
- June 8: Ahmed Alhaznawi and Wail Alshehri arrive in Miami, Florida.
- June 27: Fayez Banihammad and Saeed Alghamdi arrive in Orlando, Florida.
- June 29: Salem Alhazmi and Abdulaziz Alomari allegedly arrive in New York. According to other reports, however, Alhazmi arrived before February 2001. After entering the US (or, perhaps, reentering), the hijackers arriving at Miami and Orlando airports settle in the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, area along with Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, and Ziad Jarrah. The hijackers, arriving in New York and Virginia, settle in the Paterson, New Jersey, area along with Nawaf Alhazmi and Hani Hanjour. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) Note the FBI's early conclusion that 11 of these muscle men "did not know they were on a suicide mission." ([Rose 10/14/2001](#)) CIA Director Tenet's later claim that they "probably were told little more than that they were headed for a suicide mission inside the United States" ([US Congress 6/18/2002](#)) and reports that they did not know the exact details of the 9/11 plot until shortly before the attack ([CBS News 10/9/2002](#)) are contradicted by video confessions made by all of them in March 2001 (see [March 2001](#)).

[April 24, 2001: US Military Planned for Attacks Against Americans in 1960s To Use as Justification for Attacking Cuba](#)



The first lines of the declassified Northwoods document. [*Source: Public domain*] (click image to enlarge) James Bamford's book, *Body of Secrets*, reveals a secret US government plan

named Operation Northwoods. All details of the plan come from declassified military documents. ([Associated Press 4/24/2001](#); [Shane and Bowman 4/24/2001](#); [Hartung 4/26/2001](#); [Ruppe 5/1/2001](#)) The heads of the US military, all five Joint Chiefs of Staff, proposed in a 1962 memo to stage attacks against Americans and blame Cuba to create a pretext for invasion. Says one document, “We could develop a Communist Cuban terror campaign in the Miami area, in other Florida cities and even in Washington.... We could blow up a US ship in Guantanamo Bay and blame Cuba. Casualty lists in US newspapers would cause a helpful wave of indignation.” In March 1962, Lyman L. Lemnitzer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, presented the Operation Northwoods plan to President John Kennedy and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. The plan was rejected. Lemnitzer then sought to destroy all evidence of the plan. ([Shane and Bowman 4/24/2001](#); [Ruppe 5/1/2001](#)) Lemnitzer was replaced a few months later, but the Joint Chiefs continued to plan “pretext” operations at least through 1963. ([Ruppe 5/1/2001](#)) One suggestion in the plan was to create a remote-controlled drone duplicate of a real civilian aircraft. The real aircraft would be loaded with “selected passengers, all boarded under carefully prepared aliases,” and then take off with the drone duplicate simultaneously taking off near by. The aircraft with passengers would secretly land at a US military base while the drone continues along the other plane’s flight path. The drone would then be destroyed over Cuba in a way that places the blame on Cuban fighter aircraft. ([Harper's 7/1/2001](#)) Bamford says, “Here we are, 40 years afterward, and it’s only now coming out. You just wonder what is going to be exposed 40 years from now.” ([Insight 7/30/2001](#)) Some 9/11 skeptics will claim that the 9/11 attacks could have been orchestrated by elements of the US government, and see Northwoods as an example of how top US officials could hatch such a plot. ([Richman 3/27/2004](#))

[April 26, 2001: Arrest Warrant Issued for Hijacker](#)

Mohamed Atta is stopped at a random inspection near Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and given a citation for having no driver’s license. He fails to show up for his May 28 court hearing, and a warrant is issued for his arrest on June 4. After this, he flies all over the US using his real name, and even flies to Spain and back in July (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)), but is never stopped or questioned. The police apparently never try to find him. ([Wall Street Journal 10/16/2001](#); [Australian Broadcasting Corporation 11/12/2001](#)) Atta is stopped again in July, this time for speeding (see [July 5, 2001](#)). Three other hijackers are also stopped for speeding in the US (see [April 1, 2001](#), [August 1, 2001](#), and [September 9, 2001](#)).

[April 30, 2001: Wolfowitz in Deputy Secretary Meeting: Who Cares About \[Bin Laden\]?](#)

The Bush administration finally has its first Deputy Secretary-level meeting on terrorism. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#)) According to counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke, he advocates that the Northern Alliance needs to be supported in the war against the Taliban, and the Predator drone flights need to resume over Afghanistan so bin Laden can be targeted. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 231](#)) Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz says the focus on al-

Qaeda is wrong. He states, “I just don’t understand why we are beginning by talking about this one man bin Laden,” and “Who cares about a little terrorist in Afghanistan?” Wolfowitz insists the focus should be Iraqi-sponsored terrorism instead. He claims the 1993 attack on the WTC must have been done with help from Iraq, and rejects the CIA’s assertion that there has been no Iraqi-sponsored terrorism against the US since 1993. (A spokesperson for Wolfowitz later calls Clarke’s account a “fabrication.”) ([Clarke 2004, pp. 30, 231](#); [Isikoff and Thomas 3/22/2004](#)) Wolfowitz repeats these sentiments immediately after 9/11 and tries to argue that the US should attack Iraq. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage agrees with Clarke that al-Qaeda is an important threat. Deputy National Security Adviser Steve Hadley, chairing the meeting, brokers a compromise between Wolfowitz and the others. The group agrees to hold additional meetings focusing on al-Qaeda first (in June and July), but then later look at other terrorism, including any Iraqi terrorism. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 30, 231-32](#)) Vice President Cheney’s Chief of Staff I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby and Deputy CIA Director John McLaughlin also attend the hour-long meeting. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#))

April 30, 2001: Annual Terrorism Report Says Focusing on Bin Laden Is Mistake; Pakistan and Taliban Are Criticized But Not Punished

The US State Department issues its annual report on terrorism. The report cites the role of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and notes the Taliban “continued to provide safe haven for international terrorists, particularly Saudi exile Osama bin Laden and his network.” However, as CNN describes it, “Unlike last year’s report, bin Laden’s al-Qaeda organization is mentioned, but the 2001 report does not contain a photograph of bin Laden or a lengthy description of him and the group. A senior State Department official told CNN that the US government made a mistake last year by focusing too tightly on bin Laden and ‘personalizing terrorism... describing parts of the elephant and not the whole beast.’” ([CNN 4/30/2001](#)) The report is unusually critical of Pakistan, noting, “Pakistan increased its support to the Taliban and continued its support to militant groups active in Indian-held Kashmir, such as the Harkat ul-Mujahedeen (HUM), some of which engaged in terrorism.... Credible reporting indicates that Pakistan is providing the Taliban with materiel, fuel, funding, technical assistance, and military advisers. Pakistan has not prevented large numbers of Pakistani nationals from moving into Afghanistan to fight for the Taliban. [Pakistan] also failed to take effective steps to curb the activities of certain madrassas, or religious schools, that serve as recruiting grounds for terrorism.” However, despite this criticism and a further critique that Afghanistan has been the “primary hub” for militants “involved in most major terrorist plots or attacks against the United States in the past 15 years and now engaged in international militant and terrorist acts around the world,” neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan is placed on the official list of countries sponsoring terrorism. The report merely hints that both of them could be added to the list in the next year unless their behavior improves. ([US Department of State 4/30/2001](#); [CNN 4/30/2001](#)) In 1999, an unnamed Western diplomat explained to Human Rights Watch that if Pakistan were designated a terrorist state, it would mean the termination of international financial assistance. This would result in the near-collapse of the Pakistani

economy, since two-thirds of Pakistan's budget is funded by international loans and credits. ([Human Rights Watch 7/1/2001](#))

May 2001: CIA Learns Bin Laden Associates are Heading to US, Preparing for Martyrdom

The Washington Post will later report, "In May 2001, the CIA learned supporters of bin Laden were planning to infiltrate the United States; that seven were on their way to the United States, Canada and Britain; that his key operatives 'were disappearing while others were preparing for martyrdom,' and that bin Laden associates 'were planning attacks in the United States with explosives.'" ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [Priest and Eggen 9/19/2002](#)) It is not known if the seven traveling to the US, Canada, and Britain refer to any of the 9/11 hijackers, but 11 of the hijackers travel to the US in May and June (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)), stopping in Britain along the way (see [January-June 2001](#)).

May 2001: Iranian Tells of Plot to Attack WTC

An Iranian in custody in New York City tells local police of a plot to attack the WTC. No more details are known. ([Cameron 5/17/2002](#)) Interestingly, an Iranian in prison in Germany will also warn of an attack on the WTC (see [Early September 2001](#)), but it is not known if the two cases are related.

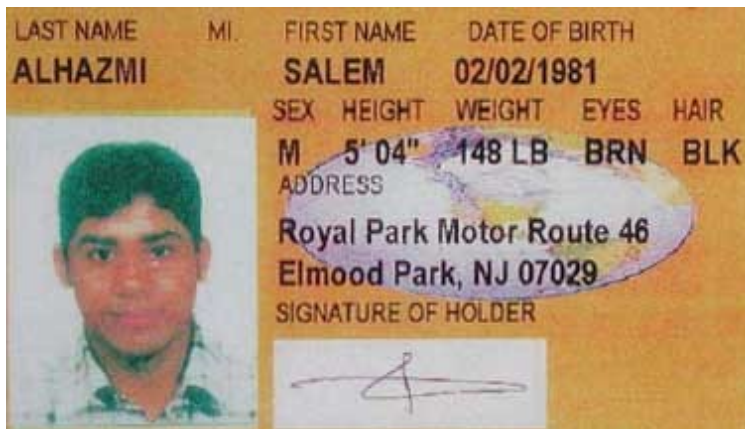
May 2001: Bush, Who Has Yet to Take Any Action Against Al-Qaeda, Is Tired of 'Swatting at Flies'

It is claimed that after a routine briefing by CIA Director Tenet to President Bush regarding the hunt for al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida, Bush complains to National Security Adviser Rice that he is tired of "swatting at flies" and wants a comprehensive plan for attacking terrorism. Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke already has such a plan, but it has been mired in bureaucratic deadlock since January. After this, progress remains slow. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))

May 2001: US Military Drafts Scenario for Afghan Operation

General William Kernan, commander in chief of the Joint Forces Command, later mentions: "The details of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan which fought the Taliban and al-Qaeda after the September 11 attacks, were largely taken from a scenario examined by Central Command in May 2001." ([Agence France-Presse 7/23/2002](#)) This seems to contradict other accounts suggesting the military made no Afghanistan invasion plans or preparations after Bush took office (see [December 2000](#)).

May 2001: Hijackers Take Advantage of New, Anonymous Visa Express Procedure



A portion of Salem Alhazmi's New Jersey identification card. *[Source: 9/11 Commission]* (click image to enlarge) The US introduces the "Visa Express" program in Saudi Arabia, which allows any Saudi Arabian to obtain a visa through his or her travel agent instead of appearing at a consulate in person. An official later states, "The issuing officer has no idea whether the person applying for the visa is actually the person in the documents and application." ([Pound 12/12/2001](#); [US Congress 9/20/2002](#)) At the time, warnings of an attack against the US led by the Saudi Osama bin Laden are higher than they had ever been before—"off the charts" as one senator later puts it. ([Drogin 5/18/2002](#); [US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) A terrorism conference had recently concluded that Saudi Arabia was one of four top nationalities in al-Qaeda. ([Gordon 5/19/2002](#)) Five hijackers—Khalid Almihdhar, Abdulaziz Alomari, Salem Alhazmi, Saeed Alghamdi, and Fayeze Ahmed Banihammad—use Visa Express over the next month to enter the US. ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#)) Even 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed will successfully get a US Visa through this program in July (using a false name but real photograph), despite a posted \$2 million reward for his capture. ([Miller and Meyer 1/27/2004](#)) Only three percent of Saudi visa applicants are turned down by US consular officers in fiscal 2000 and 2001. In contrast, about 25 percent of US visa seekers worldwide are rejected. Acceptance is even more difficult for applicants from countries alleged to have ties to terrorism such as Iraq or Iran. ([Sheridan 10/31/2001](#)) The widely criticized program is finally canceled in July 2002.

May 2001: Tenet Visits Pakistan; Armitage Calls on India



Richard Armitage. *[Source: NATO]* Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, a former covert operative and Navy Seal, travels to India on a publicized tour while CIA Director Tenet makes a quiet visit to Pakistan to meet with President Pervez Musharraf. Armitage has long and deep Pakistani intelligence connections (as well as a role in the Iran-Contra affair). It would be reasonable to assume that while in Islamabad, Tenet, in what was described as “an unusually long meeting,” also meets with his Pakistani counterpart, ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed. ([Raman 5/22/2001](#))

May 2001: Medics Train for Airplane Hitting Pentagon

The Tri-Service DiLorenzo Health Care Clinic and the Air Force Flight Medicine Clinic, both housed within the Pentagon, train for a scenario involving a hijacked 757 airliner being crashed into the Pentagon. It is reported that the purpose of the training is “to fine-tune their emergency preparedness.” ([Mientka 10/2001](#))

May 2001: Clinton Impeachment Lawyer Learns About Al-Qaeda Manhattan Attack Warning

David Schippers, the House Judiciary Committee’s chief investigator in the Clinton impeachment trial, was hired to represent FBI agent Robert Wright in September 1999 (see [August 3, 1999](#)). After 9/11, Schippers will claim that he began privately informing congresspeople about Wright’s investigation into terrorism financing in the US in early 2001, but found little interest (see [February-March 2001](#)). Schippers appears to have had different sources than Wright who began telling him about attack warnings. Supposedly, the first warning was based on a secret February 1995 report which stated that bin Laden was planning three attacks on the US: the bombing of a federal building in the heartland of the US, shooting down or blowing up an airplane, and a massive attack in lower Manhattan. Schippers believes the first warning was a prediction of the April 1995 Oklahoma City bombing (see [April 19, 1995](#)) and the second was a prediction of the 1996 explosion of TWA Flight 800 (see [July 17, 1996-September 1996](#)). In some versions of this warning, the Manhattan attack was meant to be caused by a “dirty bomb” -

explosives mixed with radioactive materials - but other accounts described the use of planes as weapons instead. He says one of his sources for this early warning was Yossef Bodansky, director of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare. Schippers will claim that his sources continued to uncover further information. The Manhattan warning “had started out just a general threat, but they narrowed it and narrowed it, more and more with time,” until the “same people who came out with the first warning” tell him in May 2001 that “an attack on lower Manhattan is imminent.” Schippers speaks to several FBI agents directly, and hears that “there are [other agents] all over the country who are frustrated and just waiting to come out.” They are frustrated by “a bureaucratic elite in Washington short-stopping information,” which gives “terrorism a free reign in the United States.” Schippers later claims that some FBI agents later told him that before 9/11, “they had [Mohamed] Atta in their sights.” They also had attempted to “check out” the names and activities of “very strange characters training at flight schools.” He will claim that “FBI agents in Chicago and Minnesota” tell him “there [is] going to be an attack on lower Manhattan.” Schippers will later claim that he will attempt to contact Attorney General John Ashcroft and other politicians about this warning in coming months, but that they will show little interest (see [July-Late August 2001](#)). ([Metcalf 10/21/2001](#); [Patterson 5/18/2002](#); [Ahmed 2004, pp. 258-260](#))

May 2001: Effort to Keep Able Danger Alive Is Unsuccessful

According to a later account by Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer, Capt. Scott Phillpott calls him “in desperation” around this time. Able Danger has been effectively shut down, but Phillpott wants to know if he can bring the Able Danger options that had been presented to higher officials in early 2001 (see [Early 2001](#), [January-March 2001](#) and [March 2001](#)) and use one of Shaffer’s Stratus Ivy facilities to continue to work. Shaffer claims that he replies, “I tell him with all candor that I would love nothing better than to loan him my facility and work the options with him (to exploit them for both [intelligence] potential and for actual offensive operations) but tell him that my DIA chain of command has directed me to stop all support to him and the project. In good faith, I ask my boss, Col. Mary Moffitt if I can help Scott and exploit the options—and that there would be a DIA quid pro quo of obtaining new ‘lead’ information from the project. She takes offense at me even mentioning Able Danger in this conversation, tells me that I am being insubordinate, and begins the process of removing me from my position as chief of Stratus Ivy. As a direct result of this conversation, she directs that I be ‘moved’ to a desk officer position to oversee Defense [human intelligence] operations in Latin America.” ([US Congress 2/15/2006](#))

May 2001: Associate Sends Atta \$1,000 from Germany



Kay Nehm [Source: *Generalbundesanwalt*] An associate of the hijackers named Mounir El Motassadeq sends \$1,000 to an account of Mohamed Atta in Florida. The money is sent from an account of Marwan Alshehhi in Germany for which El Motassadeq has a power of attorney. This transaction is not mentioned by US authorities, but is disclosed by Kay Nehm, a prosecutor in the case against Motassadeq in Germany. Motassadeq will later be convicted for membership of al-Qaeda (see [August 19, 2005](#)). ([Gill 9/1/2002](#); [CNN 2/19/2003](#) Sources: [Kay Nehm](#))

May 2001: US and Jordan Let Suspected Al-Qaeda Figure Go Free

Khalil Deek, member of an al-Qaeda cell in Anaheim, California, is mysteriously released in Jordan and allowed to go free. Deek had been arrested on suspicions that he masterminded a series of planned millennium attacks in Jordan (see [December 11, 1999](#)). Investigators believe he may have masterminded an attempted bombing of the Los Angeles airport as well (see [December 15-31, 1999](#)), and in fact US intelligence had been interested in him since the late 1980s (see [Late 1980s](#), [December 14-25, 1999](#), and [May 2000](#)). But despite the seemingly strong evidence against him, he is released this month after mounting a hunger strike. Relatives tell a US newspaper that US government officials pressured Jordan to let him go. ([Campbell and Brown 9/12/2005](#)) Despite the fact that US officials had previously labeled him a terrorist mastermind, they do not protest his release. ([Schou 6/15/2006](#)) The Jordanian government claims they lacked evidence Deek was aware of terrorist activities. ([Schou 6/17/2004](#)) The Los Angeles Times reports that he had cooperated with US investigators in deciphering al-Qaeda computer documents. ([Drogin and Wilkinson 3/29/2000](#)) He is deported to the United Arab Emirates. He is rearrested there and held for several days, and then let go again. ([Schou 5/31/2001](#)) A few days later, Deek emerges at the US embassy in Pakistan with his wife and family. He approaches the embassy gates, asking staffers there help to bring his family back to the US. However, he is only able to speak to someone through an intercom and is not allowed in the building. He is told to come back in two weeks. A newspaper will later comment, "Given that the US government already considered him a dangerous man, it's not surprising that embassy officials weren't eager to provide him with travel visas. But it is weird that they didn't let him inside the building and simply arrest him." ([Schou 6/15/2006](#)) It will later be alleged that Deek was actually a mole for the Jordanian government (see [Shortly After December 11, 1999](#)).

May 2001: NSA Analyst Warns of Terrorist Planes into Buildings Plot; But Described as ‘Obsessed’ By Superiors

A National Security (NSA) linguist who only allows himself to be identified to the media as “J” warns his superiors at the agency that terrorists may be planning to hijack passenger planes to ram into buildings, and that security measures need to be implemented to prevent this. Instead, J is ordered to undergo psychiatric evaluation. (J was given similar treatment in another instance eight years before; see [September 11, 1993](#)). J will later claim that NSA officials dismissed his warnings, and instead labeled him as “obsessed” with the idea of a “kamikaze” threat because of time he had spent in Japan. In 2006, J will say that any time his analysis countered conventional wisdom, he was ordered to undergo psychiatric evaluations. He will eventually develop an irregular heartbeat due to the stress of anticipating further retaliatory, potentially career-damaging psychological evaluations. “I believe it was retaliation, but how do you prove that?” he will ask. J will spend his last decade at NSA with no promotion or raise, and will say that another linguist left the agency during that time out of disgust with what was happening. “Who was going to listen to us? Who could do anything anyway?” he asks in 2006. 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](#)) It is not clear whether J’s warnings are related to the 33 other warnings picked up by NSA analysts during this same time period (see [May-July 2001](#).)

May 2001: CIA Official Connected to Cases of Moussaoui and 9/11 Hijackers Starts Helping FBI

Tom Wilshire, a former deputy chief of Alec Station, the CIA’s bin Laden unit, is detailed to the FBI to help with its counterterrorism work. Wilshire was involved in the failure to watchlist Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar during the al-Qaeda Malaysia summit (see [January 4-6, 2000](#)), and will also be involved in the failed search for them in the summer of 2001 (see [May 15, 2001](#), [Late May, 2001](#), and [July 13, 2001](#)), as well as the failure to obtain a search warrant for Zacarias Moussaoui’s belongings (see [August 24, 2001](#)). He acts as the CIA’s chief intelligence representative to Michael Rolince, head of the Bureau’s International Terrorism Operations Section. His primary role is apparently to help the FBI exploit information for intelligence purposes. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 282-348](#) ⁸)

May 2001: Report Warns of al-Qaeda Infiltration from Canada

US intelligence obtains information that al-Qaeda is planning to infiltrate the US from Canada and carry out an operation using high explosives. The report does not say exactly

where, when, or how an attack might occur. Two months later, the information is shared with the FBI, the INS, the US Customs Service, and the State Department, and it will be shared with President Bush in August. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [Priest and Eggen 9/19/2002](#))

May 2001: US Army Sees ‘Military Implications’ for Caspian Sea Oil Pipelines

An article published in *Military Review*, which bills itself as “the professional journal for the US Army,” states, “the Caspian Sea appears to be sitting on yet another sea—a sea of hydrocarbons.... The presence of these oil reserves and the possibility of their export raises new strategic concerns for the United States and other Western industrial powers. As oil companies build oil pipelines from the Caucasus and Central Asia to supply Japan and the West, these strategic concerns gain military implications.” ([Scott 2007, pp. 20, 281](#))

May-July 2001: NSA Picks Up Word of ‘Imminent Terrorist Attacks’

Over a two-month period, the NSA reports that “at least 33 communications indicating a possible, imminent terrorist attack.” None of these reports provide any specific information on where, when, or how an attack might occur. These reports are widely disseminated to other intelligence agencies. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [Miklaszewski 9/18/2002](#)) National Security Adviser Rice later will read what she calls “chatter that was picked up in [2001s] spring and summer. ‘Unbelievable news coming in weeks,’ said one. ‘A big event... there will be a very, very, very, very big uproar.’ ‘There will be attacks in the near future.’” ([Washington Post 4/8/2004](#)) The NSA director will claim in 2002 that all of the warnings were red herrings not related to the 9/11 attacks. ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#)) However, in 2004 it will be revealed that the 9/11 attacks were originally planned to take place between May and July, but were delayed to September (see [May-July 2001](#)).

May-July 2001: 9/11 Attacks Originally Planned for Early Date

In 2001, bin Laden apparently pressures Khalid Shaikh Mohammed for an attack date earlier than 9/11. According to information obtained from the 9/11 Commission (apparently based on a prison interrogation of Mohammed), bin Laden first requests an attack date of May 12, 2001, the seven-month anniversary of the USS *Cole* bombing. Then, when bin Laden learns from the media that Israel’s Prime Minister Ariel Sharon would be visiting the White House in June or July 2001, he attempts once more to accelerate the operation to coincide with his visit. ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#)) The

surge of warnings around this time could be related to these original preparations. By mid-July, US intelligence will learn of this delay (see [July 13, 2001](#)).

May-July 2001: No Cabinet Level Meetings on Terrorism Despite New Warnings

Around this time, intercepts from Afghanistan warn that al-Qaeda could attack an American target in late June or on the July 4 holiday. However, the White House's Cabinet-level principals group does not meet to discuss this prospect. This group also fails to meet after intelligence analysts overhear conversations from an al-Qaeda cell in Milan suggesting that bin Laden's agents might be plotting to kill Bush at the European summit in Genoa, Italy, in late July (see [July 20-22, 2001](#)). In fact, the group will only hold one meeting on terrorism before 9/11 (see [September 4, 2001](#)). ([Miller, Gerth, and van Natta 12/30/2001](#)) According to 9/11 Commissioner Tim Roemer, before 9/11 the principals group met 32 times on other issues, such as Iraq, Russia, China, the Middle East, and missile defense. ([Mitchell 10/1/2006](#)) By comparison, the principals group met to discuss terrorism around once a week between 1998 and 2000 under Clinton (see [Late August 1998-November 2000](#)). ([Miller, Gerth, and van Natta 12/30/2001](#))

May-June 2001: Muslim Convert Inadvertently Learns of 9/11 Plot



John Walker Lindh. [*Source: Alexandria, Virginia, Sheriff's Department*] John Walker Lindh, a young Caucasian man from California who has converted to Islam, travels to Peshawar, Pakistan, in an attempt to fight for Islamic causes. He had been studying the Koran for about six months elsewhere in Pakistan, but otherwise had no particularly special training, qualifications, or connections. Within days, he is accepted into al-Qaeda and sent to the al Faruq training camp in Afghanistan. Seven other US citizens are already training there. He inadvertently learns details of the 9/11

attacks. In June, he is told by an instructor that “bin Laden had sent forth some fifty people to carry out twenty suicide terrorist operations against the United States and Israel.” He learns that the 9/11 plot is to consist of five attacks, not the four that actually occur. The other fifteen operations are to take place later. He is asked if he wants to participate in a suicide mission, but declines. ([Mahoney 2003, pp. 162, 216](#); [Bamford 2004, pp. 234-36](#)) Author James Bamford comments, “The decision to keep CIA employees at arm’s length from [al-Qaeda] was a serious mistake. At the same moment the CIA was convinced al-Qaeda was impenetrable, a number of American citizens were secretly joining al-Qaeda in Afghanistan—and being welcomed with open arms.” ([Bamford 2004, pp. 161](#))

May-August 2001: Nurse Witnesses Hijackers at Rehab Clinic Owned by Convicted Felon; Fired After 9/11 for Speaking to FBI



Eileen Luongo. [*Source: CNN*] A nurse at a drug rehabilitation clinic in a suburb of Miami allegedly witnesses several 9/11 hijackers using one of the clinic’s computers. Eileen Luongo, the director of nursing at the Seawinds Healthcare Services in Miami Shores, sees Mohamed Atta at the center in May. She says, “His features were so striking I stared at him for like two minutes and he stared back at me.” In August, she claims, she sees three other alleged 9/11 hijackers there: Marwan Alshehhi, Satam Al Suqami, and Waleed Alshehri. She spends 45 minutes with them after they come into her office to write a letter on a computer. She says, “They just came in like they knew where they were going and they had been there before.” Luongo later says she wondered if the men were acquaintances of the center’s Egyptian owner, Mohammed Ibrahim, or his relatives. ([Elliott 11/29/2001](#); [CNN 11/30/2001](#); [FOX News 12/7/2001](#)) Ibrahim, according to the Miami New Times, is a “convicted felon and charming con man,” who, despite a dubious past, “remains remarkably unhindered by legal considerations and is constantly acquiring properties and embarking on new business ventures.” Since autumn 2000, unknown armed men have occasionally been witnessed showing up at Seawinds, such as a Cuban man who drove up and said to a member of staff, “Tell your boss I’m gonna kill him if he doesn’t pay me.” Furthermore, according to its former medical director Dr. Evan Zimmer, the clinic does not have the necessary licenses for the treatments it administers. ([Glasgow 2/22/2001](#)) Ibrahim is deported from the US in June 2001 and Seawinds will close three months later. After seeing photos of

the suspected hijackers in a newspaper in late September 2001, Eileen Luongo will contact the FBI and report her encounters with four of them. Agents will meet her at Fort Lauderdale Hospital, where she works part-time. FBI spokeswoman Judy Orihuela says Luongo's information provides "credible leads we needed to follow up on." Yet immediately after she meets the agents, Luongo will be fired for doing so. At the time, the hospital will be under investigation by the FBI itself for possible health care fraud. ([Elliott 11/29/2001](#); [CNN 11/30/2001](#); [CNN 11/30/2001](#))

Early May 2001: FBI Told of Plan to Attack Boston, New York, and London

A walk-in to an FBI office claims that there is a radical fundamentalist plot to launch attacks on Boston, New York, and London. The 9/11 Commission will later claim that the walk-in's report was discredited, but it is unknown if this happened before or after 9/11. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 255, 533)

May 1, 2001: FBI Director Louis Freeh Announces Resignation

Louis Freeh, FBI Director since September 1993 (see [September 1993](#)), unexpectedly announces his resignation. He will continue to serve until June 25. Assistant Director Thomas Pickard will serve as acting director until Robert Mueller will take over in early September 2001 (see [September 4, 2001](#)). ([BBC 5/1/2001](#)) The BBC reports, "Mr. Freeh did not give specific reasons for his decision to leave, but he had been the target of criticism following the arrest in February [2001] of Robert Hanssen, an FBI agent accused of working for Moscow for more than 15 years." ([BBC 7/5/2001](#))

May 1, 2001-September 11, 2001: FAA Briefs Airlines on Security, But Only About Overseas Threats

The FAA conducts 27 briefings for airline companies in this time period. However, each briefing only addresses hijacking threats overseas. This is despite the fact that from March to May, the FAA conducted briefings for US airports that raised concerns about hijackings in the domestic US, and even told airports that if hijackers wanted to end a hijacking with a suicidal "spectacular explosion" it would make more sense to do it in the domestic US (see [March-May 2001](#)). Also during roughly the same May to September time period, about half of the FAA's daily intelligence briefings mention bin Laden or al-Qaeda, and one of those specifically referred to an al-Qaeda plot using planes as weapons. Even though some of these mentions are connected to domestic threats, airlines are only briefed about the overseas threats (see [April 1, 2001-September 10, 2001](#)). ([Cohen 2/11/2005](#); [Adcock and Berry 2/11/2005](#))

May 1-July 18, 2001: 9/11 Hijackers Open More Florida Bank Accounts



Waleed Alshehri. [Source: FBI]The 9/11 hijackers open nine new SunTrust bank accounts in Florida. One is opened by hijacker pilot Ziad Jarrah, the others by the newly arrived hijackers:

- Satam Al Suqami and Waleed Alshehri open a joint account on May 1 with a \$9,000 deposit; ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 136](#).)
- Ziad Jarrah opens an account on May 15;
- Ahmed Alnami, Hamza Alghamdi, and Mohand Alshehri open accounts on June 1;
- Wail Alshehri opens an account on June 18;
- Saeed Alghamdi and Ahmed Alhaznawi open accounts on July 12;
- Fayez Ahmed Banihammad opens an account on July 18. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 3, 19](#).) Many of the hijackers also obtain Florida driver's licenses and ID cards at the same time (see [April 12-September 7, 2001](#)).

May 2, 2001: Hijacker Atta Seen with Al-Qaeda Operative in Miami



Adnan Shukrijumah. [Source: FBI]Mohamed Atta, Adnan Shukrijumah, and another man go to the Miami District Immigration Office to request a visa extension for the third man, whose identity is not known but who is believed to be Ziad Jarrah. The man received only a six-month visa, while Atta received one for eight

months after returning from Europe in January 2001 (see [January 10, 2001](#)). The inspector rejects the request, and instead decides that Atta was given an incorrect length of stay and rolls back his visa's expiry date to July 9, 2001. Atta is quiet and polite throughout and even thanks her at the end, despite his visa having been shortened by two months. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 22-3](#)) After 9/11, both Mohamed Atta and Adnan Shukrijumah are identified by the immigration officer as two of the men who visited her office. Upon seeing Shukrijumah's photo, she will say that she is "75 percent sure" it is him, and will provide a description that matches his profile. At this time, Shukrijumah is being investigated by the FBI and is thought to be a well-connected al-Qaeda operative (see [November 2000-Spring 2002](#), [\(Spring 2001\)](#), [April-May 2001](#), and [Late March 2003 and After](#)). Atta and Marwan Alshehhi may also attend a Florida mosque run by Shukrijumah's father (see [2000-2001](#)). But the immigration officer will not be able to identify the third man. The 9/11 Commission will believe that he was Ziad Jarrah. Jarrah entered the US in January 2001 with a six-month tourist visa, left the States in February, and then returned as a business visitor with a visa for three and a half months (see [March 30-April 13, 2001](#)). Another reason to believe that this third man may have been Jarrah is that Atta and Jarrah are known to have been together on this date, for DMV records show that the two obtained drivers' licenses later in the day. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 40-1](#))

May 2-3, 2001: Bush Told Bin Laden's Public Comments Suggest New Attack

A Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB) about bin Laden sent to top White House officials on May 3, 2001, is entitled, "Bin Laden Public Profile May Presage Attack." Apparently it suggests that recent public comments by bin Laden could be hinting at future attacks, but details of what exactly he said or did to cause this warning have not been made public. The New York Times will later report that President Bush and Vice President Cheney were among those who received this warning. Since SEIBs are typically based on the previous day's President Daily Briefings (see [January 20-September 10, 2001](#)), President Bush was probably informed about this warning on May 2. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 255](#); [US District Court of Eastern Virginia 5/4/2006, pp. 2](#))

May 6-September 6, 2001: Some Hijackers Work Out at Gyms, Some Merely Hang Out



Ziad Jarrah's computer record at the US1 Fitness gym. [Source: Patrick Durand/ Corbis] The hijackers work out at various gyms, presumably getting in shape for the hijacking. Ziad Jarrah appears to train intensively from May to August, and Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi also take exercising very seriously. ([Serrano and Dahlburg 9/20/2001](#); [Golden, Mos, and Yardley 9/23/2001](#)) However, these three are presumably pilots who would need the training the least. For instance, Jarrah's trainer says, "If he wasn't one of the pilots, he would have done quite well in thwarting the passengers from attacking." ([Serrano and Dahlburg 9/20/2001](#)) From September 2-6, Flight 77 hijackers Hani Hanjour, Majed Moqed, Khalid Almihdhar, Nawaf Alhazmi, and Salem Alhazmi show up several times at a Gold's Gym in Greenbelt, Maryland, signing the register with their real names and paying in cash. According to a Gold's regional manager, they "seemed not to really know what they were doing" when using the weight machines. ([Masters, Smith, and Shear 9/19/2001](#); [Serrano and Dahlburg 9/20/2001](#); [Crary 9/21/2001](#); [Frank 9/23/2001](#)) Three others—Waleed Alshehri, Wail Alshehri and Satam al-Suqami— "simply clustered around a small circuit of machines, never asking for help and, according to a trainer, never pushing any weights. 'You know, I don't actually remember them ever doing anything... They would just stand around and watch people.' " ([Golden, Mos, and Yardley 9/23/2001](#)) Those three also had a one month membership in Florida—whether they ever actually worked out there is unknown. ([Serrano and Dahlburg 9/20/2001](#))

May 7-July 24, 2001: Risk Management Specialist Warns Sen. John Kerry of Possible 'Coordinated Attack'



Brian Sullivan [*Source: PBS*] Brian Sullivan, a retired Federal Aviation Administration risk management specialist, writes a letter to Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.), concerned about an alarming lack of security at Boston's Logan Airport. Flights 11 and 175 take off from Logan on 9/11. ([Maguire 9/14/2001](#); [Ridgeway 9/15/2004](#)) The previous night a local TV station aired a report of an undercover investigation, which found that, nine times out of ten, a crew was able to get knives and other weapons through Logan's security checkpoints, including the ones later used by the 9/11 hijackers. Sullivan writes, "With the concept of jihad, do you think it would be difficult for a determined terrorist to get on a plane and destroy himself and all other passengers? Think what the result would be of a coordinated attack which took down several domestic flights on the same day. With our current screening, this is more than possible. It is almost likely." Following his letter, Sullivan has a videotape of the TV investigation hand-delivered to Kerry's office. ([Sullivan 6/17/2002](#); [Sperry 3/15/2004](#)) After 9/11, Kerry will say that his response was to pass the letter and videotape to the General Accounting Office, and consequently they began an undercover investigation into the matter. ([Maguire 9/14/2001](#); [Mooney and Brelis 9/15/2001](#)) Sullivan will confirm Kerry having responded to his letter, and having asked the Department of Transportation's Office of Inspector General to look into the matter. He comments, "I think Sen. Kerry did get it to the right people and they were about to take action." ([Hansen 9/16/2001](#)) However, in the run-up to the 2004 presidential election where Kerry is the Democratic candidate, Sullivan will accuse him of having done "the Pontius Pilate thing and passed the buck." An article in the right wing New York Post will claim that Kerry's only response to Sullivan was a brief letter towards the end of July 2001, and says Sullivan's letter to him had made clear that the Department of Transportation was ineffective in responding to complaints about security problems. ([Sperry 3/15/2004](#))

May 7-24, 2001: Military Exercise Predicts War on Terror

The Joint Experimentation Directorate of the US Joint Forces Command, in partnership with US Central Command and US Special Operations Command, conducts a three-week exercise called Unified Vision 2001 (UV 01). Over 40 organizations and 350 personnel from all branches of the armed services and other federal agencies participate. ([US Joint Forces Command 6/25/2001](#); [Aerospace America 12/2001](#); [US Congress 4/9/2002](#); [Arkin 2005, pp. 540](#)) UV 01 tests the ability of the military's provisional Homeland Security Joint Force to respond, following "chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high yield explosives for the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia." It is based

around the scenario of a major regional threat coming from the Middle East, requiring a “global deployment into a landlocked country with hostile terrain and a lack of basing and agreements with neighboring countries for US access.” Dave Ozolek, assistant director of the exercise, says, “The threat we portrayed was an unstable and hostile state, but the primary enemy was not the state itself but a transnational actor based out of that area, globally connected, capable and willing to conduct terrorist attacks in the US as part of that campaign.” As the American Forces Press Service will later report, “real events similar to the Unified Vision scenario unfolded in the attacks of Sept. 11. The al-Qaeda is a global terrorist network hosted by an unstable, landlocked Central Asian regime.” Many of the participants in UV 01 will, following 9/11, become war planners and utilize their experiences from the exercise in the resulting military operations. Ozolek will later remark, “Nostradamus couldn’t have nailed the first battle of the next war any closer than we did.... [T]his time we got it right.” He will say, however, that UV 01 did not foresee the severity of terrorist attacks that occurred on 9/11, and involved terrorists attacking US military targets, rather than civilian ones. The Joint Forces Command will refuse to say whether the Pentagon was among these imagined targets. ([Garamone 7/30/2002](#); [Murray 9/11/2002](#))

May 8, 2001: Cheney to Oversee National Effort for Responding to Domestic Attacks, But No Action Is Taken Before 9/11



Vice President Dick Cheney on television, May 8, 2001. [Source: CNN] President Bush entrusts Vice President Cheney to “oversee the development of a coordinated national effort,” to address the threat posed to the United States by chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. Bush states that he has also asked Joe Allbaugh, the director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to create an Office of National Preparedness. This office is supposed to implement “the results of those parts of the national effort overseen by Vice President Cheney that deal with consequence management,” and it “will work closely with state

and local governments to ensure their planning, training, and equipment needs are addressed.” Bush says he “will periodically chair a meeting of the National Security Council to review these efforts.” Cheney informs CNN, “[O]ne of our biggest threats as a nation” could be “domestic terrorism, but it may also be a terrorist organization overseas or even another state using weapons of mass destruction against the US.... [W]e need to look at this whole area, oftentimes referred to as homeland defense.” He makes no mention of either bin Laden or al-Qaeda. ([CNN 5/8/2001](#); [White House 5/8/2001](#); [Rich 7/8/2002](#)) Cheney is meant to head a group that will draft a national terrorism response plan by October 1. ([Chicago Sun-Times 5/5/2001](#); [Waller 6/18/2001](#)) But, as Barton Gellman later comments in the Washington Post, “Neither Cheney’s review nor Bush’s took place.” ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#)) Former Senator Gary Hart (D) later implies that the president assigned this specific role to Cheney in order to prevent Congress from enacting counterterrorism legislation proposed by a bipartisan commission he had co-chaired in January (see [January 31, 2001](#)). ([Talbot 4/2/2004](#); [Hart 4/6/2004](#)) In July, two senators will send draft counterterrorism legislation to Cheney’s office, but a day before 9/11, they are told it might be another six months before he gets to it (see [September 10, 2001](#)). ([Hirsh and Isikoff 5/27/2002](#)) Cheney’s “National Preparedness Review” is just beginning to hire staff a few days before 9/11 (see [September 10, 2001](#)). ([Rood 4/15/2004](#))

May 8-10, 2001: Senate Hearings Discuss Possibility of Terrorist Attack in the US



Senator Pat Roberts. [*Source: Publicity photo*]Based on concerns that the US is unprepared for a terrorist attack on its soil, the Republican chairmen of three Senate committees—appropriations, armed services and intelligence—arrange three days of hearings to explore how to better coordinate efforts at preventing and responding to terrorist attacks within the United States. Eighteen government officials testify, including CIA Director George Tenet, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill, Attorney General John Ashcroft, and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. Before the hearings commence, Senator Pat Roberts (R-Kan) tells reporters, “The United States is very likely to suffer, on our soil, an attack by a weapon of mass destruction, by a terrorist group or cell. It should come as no surprise this nation is not prepared for such an attack.” ([Loeb 5/9/2001](#); [Kriner 5/10/2001](#)) In his testimony at the hearings, John Ashcroft warns, “It is clear that American citizens are the target of choice of international terrorists. Americans comprise only about 5 percent of the world’s

population. However, according to State Department statistics, during the decade of the 1990s, 36 percent of all worldwide terrorist acts were directed against US interests. Although most of these attacks occurred overseas, international terrorists have shown themselves willing to reach within our borders to carry out their cowardly acts.” ([US Congress. Senate. Appropriations Committee 5/9/2001](#)) Yet in a letter describing the agenda of the new administration that he sends to department heads the day after giving this testimony, Ashcroft does not mention terrorism (see [May 10, 2001](#)). ([Clymer 2/28/2002](#)) Also testifying at the hearings, FEMA Director Joe Allbaugh announces he will soon be establishing an Office of National Preparedness to coordinate efforts at responding to terrorist attacks. ([Loeb 5/9/2001](#)) On the day the hearings start, President Bush announces that he is putting Vice President Dick Cheney in charge of overseeing a coordinated effort to address the threat posed to the United States by chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons (see [May 8, 2001](#)). ([White House 5/8/2001](#))

May 10, 2001: Ashcroft Omits Counterterrorism from List of Goals

Attorney General Ashcroft sends a letter to department heads telling them the Justice Department’s new agenda. He cites seven goals, but counterterrorism is not one of them. Yet just one day earlier, he testified before Congress and said of counterterrorism, “The Department of Justice has no higher priority.” ([Clymer 2/28/2002](#)) Dale Watson, head of the FBI’s Counterterrorism Division, recalls nearly falling out of his chair when he sees counterterrorism not mentioned as a goal. ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#)) In August, a strategic plan is distributed, listing the same seven goals and 36 objectives. Thirteen objectives are highlighted, but the single objective relating to counterterrorism is not highlighted. ([Clymer 2/28/2002](#))

Mid-May-September 10, 2001: CIA Officer Obtains More Information about USS *Cole* Bombing

CIA officer Tom Wilshire, currently assigned to the FBI, discusses al-Qaeda’s Malaysia summit with another CIA officer called Clark Shannon, who is assigned to the CIA’s Counterterrorism Center and wrote a report on the USS *Cole* bombing (see [January 2001](#)). Shannon gives Wilshire a timeline of events related to the *Cole* attack and they discuss Fahad al-Quso, a member of the bombing team in custody at this point (see [Early December 2000](#)), and Khallad bin Attash. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 282](#) ³⁵) Around this time Wilshire also accesses a March 2000 cable about Nawaf Alhazmi’s travel to the US following the summit (see [May 15, 2001](#)). According to Margaret Gillespie, an FBI agent on loan to the CIA, Wilshire “had always been interested in the Malaysia summit and he was especially concerned about any potential ties between the USS *Cole* investigation and the Malaysia summit.” ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ³⁶)

May 11, 2001: New York City Practices for Biological Terrorist Attack

New York City's Office of Emergency Management (OEM), which is located in World Trade Center Building 7, organizes a bio-terrorism drill where militant extremists attack the city with bubonic plague and Manhattan is quarantined. The "tabletop exercise" is called RED Ex—meaning "Recognition, Evaluation, and Decision-Making Exercise"—and involves about seventy different entities, agencies, and locales from the New York area. Federal legislation adopted in 1997 requires federal, state, and local authorities to conduct regular exercises as part of the Domestic Preparedness Program (DPP). The US Defense Department chose New York City as the venue for RED Ex due to its size, prominence, and level of emergency preparedness. Various high-level officials take part, including Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, OEM Director Richard Sheirer, Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen, and Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik. Agencies and organizations that participate include New York City Fire Department, New York City Police Department, the FBI, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The exercise is supposedly so intense that, according to one participant, "five minutes into that drill, everybody forgot it was a drill." ([Mindel and Higgins 5/11/2001](#); [New York City Government 9/5/2001, pp. 74](#); [Miner 12/20/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#)) According to OEM Director Richard Sheirer, "Operation RED Ex provided a proving ground and a great readiness training exercise for the many challenges the city routinely faces, such as weather events, heat emergencies, building collapses, fires, and public safety and health issues." ([Mindel and Higgins 5/11/2001](#)) In his prepared testimony before the 9/11 Commission, Bernard Kerik later states: "The City, through its OEM, had coordinated plans for many types of emergencies; and those plans were tested frequently." The types of emergencies they prepared for, he states, included "building collapses" and "plane crashes." ([9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#)) Considering Richard Sheirer's comments, RED Ex appears to be one example where the city tests for building collapses. Details about training for airplanes crashing into New York City remain unknown. The second part of this exercise, called Tripod, is scheduled to take place in New York on September 12, 2001, but is cancelled due to the 9/11 attacks.

May 11-June 1, 2001: Deposits Made on Hijackers' Accounts, Source of Money Unknown

Several large deposits are made on the hijacker pilots' accounts. The joint SunTrust account of Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi receives \$8,600 on May 11, \$3,400 on May 22, and \$8,000 on June 1, when \$3,000 is also deposited in Ziad Jarrah's SunTrust account. The 9/11 Commission will not identify the source of these funds, but will speculate that they may be from physically imported cash or traveler's checks the investigation did not identify, or funds that were previously withdrawn, but not spent. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 136-7](#)) Alternatively, they may be related to the way in which Mohamed Atta distributes cash transferred to his US bank accounts (see [Mid-July - Mid-August 2001](#)).

May 15, 2001: CIA Hides Al-Qaeda Malaysia Summit Information from FBI

Tom Wilshire, a former deputy chief of the CIA's bin Laden unit on attachment to the FBI, sends a request to CIA headquarters for the surveillance photos of the January 2000 al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000). Three days later, Wilshire explains the reason for his interest in an e-mail to a CIA analyst: "I'm interested because Khalid Almihdhar's two companions also were couriers of a sort, who traveled between [the Far East] and Los Angeles at the same time ([H]azmi and [S]alah)." Hazmi refers to hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi, and Salah Said is the alias al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash traveled under during the summit. Apparently, Wilshire receives the photos. Toward the end of May, a CIA analyst contacts a specialist working at FBI headquarters about the photographs. The CIA wants the FBI analyst to review the photographs and determine if a person who had carried money to Southeast Asia for bin Attash in January 2000 could be identified. The CIA fails to tell the FBI analyst anything about Almihdhar or Alhazmi. Around the same time, the CIA analyst receives an e-mail mentioning Alhazmi's travel to the US. These two analysts travel to New York the next month and again the CIA analyst fails to divulge what he knows. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#), [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 283](#))

May 15, 2001: CIA Officer Again Accesses Cables about Hijackers' Travel in Asia and to US, Fails to Alert FBI or Check If They Are Still in US

Tom Wilshire, a former deputy chief of the CIA's bin Laden unit currently detailed to the FBI, accesses a number of cables about travel by 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi in 2000 (see [March 5, 2000](#)), but fails to draw the FBI's attention to this or ask the INS whether they are still in the US. The cables report on Khalid Almihdhar's travel to Malaysia in January 2000, his US visa, al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit, and Alhazmi's travel from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Bangkok, Thailand, with another person, and then to Los Angeles. Wilshire had previously blocked a notification to the FBI that Almihdhar had a US visa (see [January 4-6, 2000](#)). He writes to another CIA analyst about the travel (see [May 15, 2001](#)), but does not alert the FBI to the fact Alhazmi came to the US. Neither does he check with the INS to see whether Alhazmi and Almihdhar are in the country. When one of his colleagues finds these cables in late August, she will immediately check with the INS and become alarmed when she is told they are in the US (see [August 21-22, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 266-8, 537](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 283](#)) The 9/11 Commission will explain his failure to alert the FBI by saying he was focused on a possible terrorist attack in Malaysia: "Despite the US links evident in this traffic, [Wilshire] made no effort to determine whether any of these individuals was in the United States. He did not raise the possibility with his FBI counterpart. He was focused on Malaysia." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 268](#))

Mid-May 2001: CIA Assigns Officer to Examine Malaysia Summit in Her Free Time

CIA manager Tom Wilshire recommends that an officer be assigned to review information about al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit, to see if there are any connections between it and the attack against the USS *Cole*. The task is assigned to Margaret Gillespie, an agent on loan from the FBI. Author Lawrence Wright will comment: "... but [Wilshire] did not reveal that some of the participants might be in the United States. More important, he conveyed none of the urgency reflected in [an e-mail he sent his superiors around this time]; he told [Gillespie] that she should examine the material in her free time. She didn't get around to it until the end of July." Due to the request's lack of urgency, it takes Gillespie three months to work out what Wilshire already knows—that some of the 9/11 hijackers have entered the US—at which point she immediately alerts the FBI to their presence (see [August 21-22, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 297-8](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#))

May 16, 2001: Cheney's Energy Plan Foresees Government Helping US Companies Expand Into New Markets

Vice President Dick Cheney's Energy Task Force releases its energy plan. The plan, titled *Reliable, Affordable, and Environmentally Sound Energy for America's Future*, warns that the quantity of oil imported per day will need to rise more than fifty percent to 16.7 million barrels by 2020. "A significant disruption in world oil supplies could adversely affect our economy and our ability to promote key foreign and economic policy objectives, regardless of the level of US dependence on oil imports," the report explains. To meet the United States' rising demand for oil, the plan calls for expanded oil and gas drilling on public land and the easing of regulatory barriers to building nuclear power plants. ([US President 5/16/2001, pp. 8.5](#); [Associated Press 12/9/2002](#); [Macalister et al. 1/23/2003](#)) The report places substantial emphasis on oil from the Gulf region. Its chapter on "strengthening global alliances" states, "By any estimation, Middle East oil producers will remain central to world oil security. The Gulf will be a primary focus of US international energy policy." ([US President 5/16/2001, pp. 8.5](#)) But it also suggests that the US cannot depend exclusively on traditional sources of supply to provide the growing amount of oil that it needs and will have to obtain substantial supplies from new sources, such as the Caspian states, Russia, Africa, and the Atlantic Basin. Additionally, it notes that the US cannot rely on market forces alone to gain access to these added supplies, but will also require a significant effort on the part of government officials to overcome foreign resistance to the outward reach of American energy companies. ([Klare 4/30/2002](#)) The plan also calls for a clarification of the New Source Review section of the Clean Air Act, which requires energy companies to install state-of-the-art emission control technology whenever it makes major modifications to its plants. The administration's energy plan gives the Environmental Protection Agency 90 days to review NSR and determine whether it is discouraging companies from constructing or expanding power

plants and refineries. It also instructs the Attorney General to review current NSR litigation efforts against utility companies to determine whether those efforts are contributing to the country's energy problems. "The outcome could determine whether the government drops some cases, approaches others more leniently, or even renegotiates settlements already reached," the New York Times reports. ([US President 5/16/2001](#), pp. 8.5; [Jehl 5/18/2001](#)) Both prior to and after the publication of this report, Cheney and other Task Force officials meet with Enron executives (including one meeting a month and a half before Enron declares bankruptcy in December 2001). Two separate lawsuits are later filed to reveal details of how the government's energy policy was formed and whether Enron or other players may have influenced it, but as of early 2007 the Bush administration has successfully resisted all efforts to release these documents. ([Associated Press 12/9/2002](#))

May 16, 2001: US Strengthens Military Relations with Central Asian Republics

US General Tommy Franks, later to head the US occupation of Afghanistan, visits the capital of Tajikistan. He says the Bush administration considers Tajikistan "a strategically significant country" and offers military aid. This follows a visit by a Department of Defense official earlier in the year. The Guardian later asserts that by this time, "US Rangers were also training special troops in Kyrgyzstan. There were unconfirmed reports that Tajik and Uzbek special troops were training in Alaska and Montana." ([Leigh 9/26/2001](#))

Mid-May 2001: CIA Withholds Photo of Al-Qaeda Leader from FBI

Although three surveillance photographs of al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit are passed to the FBI at this time (see [Late May, 2001](#) and [June 11, 2001](#)), another key photograph the CIA has of the meeting is withheld by CIA officers Clark Shannon and Tom Wilshire. The key photograph shows al-Qaeda logistics manager Khallad bin Attash, who commanded the attack on the USS *Cole* (see [October 12, 2000](#)). Author Lawrence Wright will later comment: "Thanks to [FBI agent Ali] Soufan's interrogation of [USS *Cole* bomber Fahad al-Quso], the *Cole* investigators had an active file on Khallad and were preparing to indict him. Knowledge of that fourth photo would likely have prompted [FBI manager John] O'Neill to demand that the CIA turn over all information relating to Khallad and his associates. By withholding the picture of Khallad attending the meeting with the future hijackers [Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi], the CIA may in effect have allowed the September 11th plot to proceed." ([Wright 7/10/2006](#)) The CIA also has video and even more photos of the meeting (see January 5, 2000 and [January 6-9, 2000](#)), but these are not shared either, and it is unclear how aware Wilshire and Shannon are of this additional material.

May 16-17, 2001: US Warned Bin Laden Supporters inside US and Planning an Attack

On May 16, an anonymous person calls the US embassy in the United Arab Emirates and warns that bin Laden supporters have been in the US and are planning an attack in the US using “high explosives.” The caller mentions that operatives are infiltrating the US from Canada, but there is no mention of when or where the attack might occur. The next day, based on this warning, the first item on the agenda for counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke’s interagency Counterterrorism Security Group (CSG) is entitled: “[Osama bin Laden]: Operation Planned in US.” The anonymous caller’s tip cannot be later corroborated. In July, the CIA will share the warning with the FBI, the INS, the US Customs Service, and the State Department. It will also be mentioned in the August 6, 2001 Presidential Daily Briefing given to President Bush (see [August 6, 2001](#)) and Bush will be told that the CIA and FBI are investigating it. But eventually, neither the CIA nor FBI is able to corroborate the information in the call. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [Priest and Eggen 9/19/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 255, 262, 535](#))

May 17, 2001: US Gives Taliban Millions for Poppy Ban

Secretary of State Powell announces that the US is granting \$43 million in aid to the Taliban government, purportedly to assist hungry farmers who are starving since the destruction of their opium crop occurred in January on orders of the Taliban. ([Scheer 5/22/2001](#)) Powell promises that the US will “continue to look for ways to provide more assistance to the Afghans.” ([Scheer 4/13/2004](#)) And in fact, in the same month Powell asks Congress to give Afghanistan \$7 million more, to be used for regional energy cooperation and to fight child prostitution. ([Coll 2004, pp. 559](#)) This follows \$113 million given by the US in 2000 for humanitarian aid. ([US Department of State 12/11/2001](#)) A Newsday editorial notes that the Taliban “are a decidedly odd choice for an outright gift... Why are we sending these people money—so much that Washington is, in effect, the biggest donor of aid to the Taliban regime?” ([Newsday 5/29/2001](#)) However, there were allegations that the drug ban was merely a means for the Taliban to drive up prices (see [July 2000](#)). In fact, according to a March 2001 State Department report, “Prospects for progress on drug-control efforts in Afghanistan remain dim as long as the country remains at war. Nothing indicates that either the Taliban or the Northern Alliance intend to take serious action to destroy heroin or morphine base laboratories, or stop drug trafficking.” ([Leinwand, Locy, and Walt 10/16/2001](#))

Mid-May 2001: CIA Officer Misrepresents Hijacker Alhazmi’s Travel to US in Email Copied to FBI Agent

In an email sent to a fellow CIA officer Clark Shannon and copied to FBI agent Margaret Gillespie, who is working on the USS *Cole* bombing and the Malaysia summit, Tom Wilshire, a CIA officer assigned to the FBI, misrepresents the travel of hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi and an associate to the US. According to the Justice Department’s Office of

Inspector General, the e-mail says that Alhazmi and an associate traveled from Bangkok to Los Angeles to Hong Kong, indicating they did not remain in the US and left for Hong Kong. However, Alhazmi and hijacker Khalid Almihdhar traveled from Bangkok to Hong Kong and then to Los Angeles. Gillespie and Shannon will subsequently attend a meeting at which this information should be shared, but is not (see [June 11, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 282-3, 288, 300](#) ^a)

(Late May-Early June): FBI Agent at CIA Searches Only One of Two Databases with Information about 9/11 Hijackers

Margaret Gillespie, an FBI agent detailed to the CIA who has been asked to research the connection between al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit and the bombing of the USS *Cole*, checks a CIA database and finds some NSA information about 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi and their travel to an al-Qaeda summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, that was monitored by the US. The database she uses is Intelink, which only has information the CIA makes available to other intelligence agencies. However, she does not also examine the CIA's Hercules database. It is unclear why she does not do so and whether, as an FBI agent, she has access to it. If she did access it, she would have a complete picture of the CIA's knowledge of Almihdhar and Alhazmi and would know Almihdhar had a US visa and Alhazmi had traveled to the US (see [January 2-5, 2000](#) and [March 5, 2000](#)). As Gillespie is only working this line of inquiry in her free time, she does not put together the information contained in the Hercules system until late August (see [August 21-22, 2001](#)). ([Wright 2006, pp. 340, 425](#))

May 23, 2001: Former Unocal Employee Becomes Bush's Special Assistant to Middle East and Central Asia



Zalmay Khalilzad. [Source: US Embassy, Iraq] Zalmay Khalilzad is appointed Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Gulf,

Southwest Asia and Other Regional Issues on the National Security Council. Khalilzad was an official in the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations. During the Clinton years, he worked for Unocal. ([US Department of State 2001](#); [Sengupta and Gumbel 1/10/2002](#)) He previously worked under Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and helped him write a controversial 1992 plan for US world domination.(see [March 8, 1992](#)) ([Weisman 3/23/2003](#)) He was a member of the neoconservative think tank Project for the New American Century. The Asia Times notes, “It was Khalilzad—when he was a huge Taliban fan—who conducted the risk analysis for Unocal (Union Oil Company of California) for the infamous proposed \$2 billion, 1,500 kilometer-long Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan [TAP] gas pipeline.” ([Escobar 12/25/2003](#)) After 9/11, he will be appointed as special envoy to Afghanistan (see [January 1, 2002](#)) and then US ambassador to Afghanistan (see [November 2003](#)).

May 23, 2001: White House Told Al-Qaeda May Stage Hijacking or Storm Embassy

A Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB) sent to top White House officials is entitled, “Terrorist Groups Said Cooperating on US Hostage Plot.” It warns of a possible hostage plot against the US abroad to force to release of prisoners being held in the US, including Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman (see [July 1990](#)). The report notes operatives might hijack an aircraft or storm a US embassy overseas. SEIBs are typically based on the previous day’s President Daily Briefing (see [January 20-September 10, 2001](#)), so it is probable President Bush is given this information. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 255-256, 533](#); [US District Court of Eastern Virginia 5/4/2006, pp. 2](#)) This report leads to an FAA warning to airlines noting the potential for “an airline hijacking to free terrorists incarcerated in the United States.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 255-256](#))

May 23-24, 2001: Rumsfeld Warns of Inevitability of Strategic Surprise; Refers to Pearl Harbor



Thomas Schelling. [*Source: University of Maryland*] During a meeting with the House Armed Services Committee, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld says that the inevitability of surprise is a guiding principle of the Bush administration’s national security strategy. To emphasize his point about the need to prepare for the unexpected, he gives panel members copies of the foreword to Roberta

Wohlstetter's 1962 book, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*. This foreword, written by Thomas Schelling, argues that in order to prepare for the next crisis, the US military needs to avoid thinking that the most familiar threat is also the most likely one. Rumsfeld says that, in line with this reasoning, a key element of the administration's strategy will be preparing for the unexpected. ([US Department of Defense 5/23/2001](#); [Burns 5/24/2001](#)) The following day, he has a similar closed-door meeting with the Senate Armed Services Committee. He hands out to senators a four-page paper dealing with the inevitability of strategic surprise, and summarizing various defense surprises and incorrect predictions made during the 20th century. The paper states that the Department of Defense should "give some thought to the flexibility of a capability-based strategy, as opposed to simply a threat-based strategy." What this means, according to the Washington Post, is that the "US military needs to move away from a Cold War structure designed to counter one large, clear threat—from the Soviet Union—and to develop capabilities to respond to everything from ballistic missiles to terrorist attacks." ([NPR 5/25/2001](#); [Ricks 5/25/2001](#)) Rumsfeld had previously warned of the danger of a surprise attack, like Pearl Harbor, during his confirmation hearing in January (see [January 11, 2001](#)). Journalist Bob Woodward will later report that one of the main themes Rumsfeld referred to in the eight months prior to 9/11 was surprise, and he had "routinely handed out or recommended" Wohlstetter's book on Pearl Harbor. ([Woodward 2002, pp. 22-23](#)) Yet when, in July, he receives a CIA briefing about the imminent danger of an al-Qaeda attack on an American target, Rumsfeld reportedly responds with "vehement dismissal," and criticizes the CIA for its "gullibility" (see [July 11-17, 2001](#)). ([Cockburn 2007, pp. 9](#))

May 24, 2001: Canadian Cell Said to Be Planning Attack against US

An anonymous caller tells US intelligence about a terrorist cell in Canada that might be planning an attack against the US. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 256](#))

May 24-August 14, 2001: 9/11 Hijackers Make Several Unexplained Trips to Vegas

Several of the 9/11 hijackers make trips to Las Vegas and the west coast over the summer:

- May 24-27: Marwan Alshehhi flies to Vegas (see [May 24-27, 2001](#));
- June 7-10: Ziad Jarrah takes a trip to Vegas (see [June 7-10, 2001](#));
- June 28-July 1: Mohamed Atta takes his first trip to Vegas, flying from Fort Lauderdale to Boston and then, the next day, to Las Vegas via San Francisco with United Airlines. He stays there three nights, then returns to Boston via Denver, and flies to New York the next day;
- July 31-August 1: Waleed Alshehri flies from Fort Lauderdale to Boston and then takes American Airlines flight 195 to San Francisco the next day. After spending a night at the La Quinta Inn, he returns to Miami via Las Vegas; ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 1-2, 16, 18](#)); [US District Court](#)

[for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 55-7](#).)

- August 1: Actor James Woods sees four people he will later suspect are hijackers, including individuals he believes to be Khalid Almihdhar and Hamza Alghamdi, on a transcontinental flight (see [August 1, 2001](#)). Abdulaziz Alomari is reported to try to get into the cockpit on a different flight from Vegas on the same day (see [August 1, 2001](#));
- August 13-14: Atta, Hani Hanjour, and Nawaf Alhazmi all fly to Vegas, possibly meeting some other hijackers there (see [August 13-14, 2001](#)).

Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar also made frequent car trips to Las Vegas from San Diego, where they lived in 2000. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 192](#)) The reason for these trips is never definitively determined, although there will be speculation the hijackers are casing aircraft similar to those they will hijack on 9/11. The 9/11 Commission will comment, “Beyond Las Vegas’s reputation for welcoming tourists, we have seen no credible evidence explaining why... the operatives flew to or met in Law Vegas.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 242, 248](#)) After 9/11, it will be reported that the hijackers may use these cross-country flights to take pictures of airline cockpits and check out security at boarding gates. During the flights, the hijackers apparently take notes, watch the crews, and even videotape them. There are some reports that two, or perhaps more, of the hijackers sit in “jumpseats” in the pilot’s cabin, a courtesy extended by airlines to other pilots, during the surveillance flights (see [Summer 2001](#)) and on the day of 9/11 itself (see [November 23, 2001](#)). ([Johnson 11/23/2001](#); [Associated Press 5/29/2002](#)) There are reports that the hijackers drink alcohol, gamble, and frequent strip clubs while they are in Las Vegas. For example, according to a dancer named “Samantha,” Marwan Alshehhi stares up at her blankly while she “undulate[s] her hips inches from his face” and only gives her \$20, although he is a “light drinker.” ([Fagan 10/4/2001](#); [Thomas 10/15/2001](#))

May 24-27, 2001: Hijacker Alshehhi Goes to Vegas, Believes He Is Followed

Marwan Alshehhi takes a three-day trip to Las Vegas, and will later say he was followed on the trip. One of the hijackers’ associates, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, will later say in a 2002 interview that Alshehhi felt he was followed on a flight from New York to California by “security officers.” Bin al-Shibh will also say that fellow hijacker Ziad Jarrah felt he was followed on a similar flight (see [June 7-10, 2001](#)). Hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar have also been concerned about possibly having been followed on a flight to the US (see [January 15, 2000](#) and [Mid-July 2000](#)). ([Fouda and Fielding 2003, pp. 135](#)) After arriving in New York from Florida and spending the night there, Alshehhi flies from New York to Las Vegas via San Francisco. He spends all but one night in Las Vegas at the St. Louis Manor hotel. He is clearly remembered by staff, who recall his face, manners, and that he was once visited by another man of Middle Eastern descent. He returns via the same route. ([Smith 10/31/2001](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 53-4](#).) ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 3, 19](#).) Several other hijackers also travel to Vegas (see [May 24-August 14, 2001](#)).

Late May, 2001: CIA Officer Passes Three Malaysia Summit Photographs to FBI, but Fails to Mention Some Important Details

Tom Wilshire, a CIA officer on loan to the FBI, obtains three photographs from the surveillance of al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit (see January 5-8, 2000), and passes them to Dina Corsi, an agent with the FBI's bin Laden unit. Corsi learned of the photographs' existence following a discussion with CIA officer Clark Shannon. Although Wilshire does not have a "substantive conversation" with Corsi about the photos, he does identify hijacker Khalid Almihdhar in one of them, and says Almihdhar traveled from Sana'a, Yemen, to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and then Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in early January 2000. However, Wilshire omits to mention that Almihdhar has a US visa, his associate hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi has traveled to the US, or another associate, Khallad bin Attash, has been identified in the photos. He also does not say why the photos were taken. Author Lawrence Wright will later say the photos are passed because Wilshire wants to know what the FBI knows. The CIA says it thinks the photos may show Fahad al-Quso, an al-Qaeda operative involved in the USS *Cole* bombing. Corsi understands that the photos are "not formally passed" to the FBI, but are only for limited use at a forthcoming meeting. Therefore, only limited information about them is provided at the meeting, causing a disagreement (see [June 11, 2001](#)). However, Wilshire will later say that Corsi could give the photos to the FBI, but the FBI could not then give them to a foreign government (note: the photos had been provided to a foreign government five months previously, so this restriction is meaningless). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 286-7, 293-4](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#)) Other pictures of the summit are available to the CIA, and there is even video footage (see [February 2000](#) and [Mid-May 2001](#)), but these are not shared with the FBI or widely discussed.

May 25-26, 2001: Bush Told Bin Laden May Be Hinting about New Attack

A Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB) sent to top White House officials on May 26, 2001, is entitled, "Bin Laden Network's Plans Advancing." Further details are unknown. The New York Times will later report that President Bush and Vice President Cheney were among those who received this warning. SEIBs are typically summaries of the previous days' President Daily Briefings (see [January 20-September 10, 2001](#)), so it is probable Bush is given this warning on May 25. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 255](#); [US District Court of Eastern Virginia 5/4/2006, pp. 2](#))

May 29, 2001: US Citizens Overseas Cautioned

The State Department issues an overseas caution connected to the conviction of defendants in the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. That warning says, "Americans citizens abroad may be the target of a terrorist threat from extremist

groups” with links to bin Laden. The warning will be reissued on June 22. ([CNN 6/23/2001](#))

May 29, 2001: Clarke Asks for More to Be Done to Stop Expected Al-Qaeda Attacks

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke suggests to National Security Adviser Rice that she ask CIA Director George Tenet what more the US can do to stop al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida from launching “a series of major terrorist attacks.” It is believed these attacks will probably be directed at Israeli targets, but possibly on US facilities. Clarke writes to Rice and her deputy, Stephen Hadley, “When these attacks occur, as they likely will, we will wonder what more we could have done to stop them.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 256](#))

May 29, 2001: CIA and FBI Possibly Have Meeting about *Cole* and Malaysia Summit, but Nobody Will Later Remember Anything about It

There is some evidence CIA and FBI representatives meet on this day to compare notes about the investigation into the USS *Cole* bombing and al-Qaeda’s Malaysia summit, but an investigation by the Justice Department’s Office of Inspector General (OIG) will not be able to confirm the meeting takes place, as all the participants say they are unable to recall whether they attended the meeting or not. If the meeting actually occurs, it is probably attended by CIA officer Clark Shannon, FBI agent Dina Corsi, an FBI agent known as “Kathy”, and FBI agent Margaret Gillespie. The topics of discussion may include the state of the *Cole* investigation and the identification of Khallad bin Attash in photographs of al-Qaeda’s Malaysia summit. Despite the poor memories of the potential attendees, the OIG will later find an email from Shannon to Gillespie saying that they met on this date, and Kathy will say that Shannon’s name sounds familiar. However, the OIG will conclude, “We were unable to determine with certainty whether a meeting... took place on May 29.” ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 285, 296](#))

May 30, 2001: FBI Is Warned of Major Al-Qaeda Operation in the US Involving Hijackings, Explosives, and/or New York City



Ahmed Ressam as pictured in his Canadian passport. *[Source:*

FBI] Ahmed Ressam is convicted in the spring of 2001 for attempting to bomb the Los Angeles International Airport (see [December 14, 1999](#)). Facing the likelihood of life in prison, he starts cooperating with authorities in an attempt to reduce his sentence. On this day, he details his experiences in al-Qaeda training camps and his many dealings with top al-Qaeda deputy Abu Zubaida. According to FBI notes from Ressam's interrogation, Zubaida asked Ressam to send him original Canadian passports to help Zubaida "get people to America." Zubaida "wanted an operation in the US" and talked about the need to get explosives into the US for this operation, but Ressam makes it clear this was a separate plot from the one he was involved with. Notes from this day further explain that Ressam doesn't know if any explosives made it into the US because once an operation was initiated, operators were not supposed to talk about it to anyone. There's no concrete evidence that Ressam knows any detail of the 9/11 attacks. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/28/2005](#)) However, Fox News will later report that roughly around this time Ressam testifies "that attack plans, including hijackings and attacks on New York City targets, [are] ongoing." ([Cameron 5/17/2002](#)) Ressam will repeat some of this in a public trial a month later (see [July 8, 2001](#)). Questioned shortly after 9/11, Ressam will point out that given what he's already told his US interrogators, the 9/11 attacks should not be surprising. He notes that he'd described how Zubaida talked "generally of big operations in [the] US with big impact, needing great preparation, great perseverance, and willingness to die." Ressam had told of "plans to get people hired at airports, of blowing up airports, and airplanes." Apparently, the FBI waits until July to share the information from this debriefing with other intelligence agencies, the INS, Customs Service, and the State Department. Ressam's warnings will first be mentioned to Bush in his now famous August 6, 2001 briefing (see [August 6, 2001](#)), but as Newsweek will note, "The information from Ressam that was contained in [Bush's] PDB [is] watered down and seem[s] far more bland than what the Algerian terrorist was actually telling the FBI." Zubaida's second plot will be boiled down to one sentence in the PDB: "Ressam also said that in 1998 Abu Zubaida was planning his own US attack." ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/28/2005](#))

May 30, 2001: Yemenis Are Caught Taking Suspicious New York Photos

Two Yemeni men are detained after guards see them taking photos at 26 Federal Plaza in New York City. They are questioned by INS agents and let go. A few days later, their confiscated film is developed, showing photos of security checkpoints, police posts, and surveillance cameras of federal buildings, including the FBI's counterterrorism office.

The two men are later interviewed by the FBI and determined not to be a threat. However, they had taken the pictures on behalf of a third person said to be living in Indiana. By the time the FBI looks for him, he has fled the country and his documentation is found to be based on a false alias. In 2004, the identity of the third man reportedly still will be unknown. The famous briefing given to President George W. Bush on August 6, 2001 (see [August 6, 2001](#)), will mention the incident, warning that the FBI is investigating “suspicious activity in this country consistent with the preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks, including recent surveillance of federal buildings in New York.” When Bush’s August 6 briefing will be released in 2004, a White House fact sheet will fail to mention the still missing third man. ([Guart 7/1/2001](#); [Stevenson 9/16/2001](#); [Pincus and Eggen 5/16/2004](#)) In 2004, it will be reported that Dhiren Barot (a.k.a. Issa al-Hindi or Issa al-Britani), an alleged al-Qaeda operative in British custody, was sent to the US in early 2001 by Khalid Shaikh Mohammed to case potential targets in New York City. He headed a three-man team that surveyed the New York Stock Exchange and other buildings. While there are obvious similarities between the two Yemeni man with an unknown boss and Barot with two helpers, it is not known if the two cases are related. ([Jehl and Rashbaum 8/7/2004](#))

May 30, 2001: CIA Leaders Warn Rice about Expected Al-Qaeda Attack

During a regularly scheduled weekly meeting between National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and CIA Director George Tenet, CIA official Rich B. describes a “truly frightening” list of warning signs of an upcoming terrorist attack. He says that al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida is working on attack plans. CIA leaders John McLaughlin and Cofer Black are also present at this meeting, as is counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke and Mary McCarthy, a CIA officer serving as National Security Council senior director. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 145](#)) Just the day before, Clarke suggested that Tenet and Rice discuss what could be done to stop Zubaida from launching “a series of major terrorist attacks,” so presumably this discussion is in response to that (see [May 29, 2001](#)). Tenet will later recall, “Some intelligence suggested that [Zubaida’s] plans were ready to be executed; others suggested they would not be ready for six months. The primary target appeared to be in Israel, but other US assets around the world were at risk.” Rice asks about taking the offensive against al-Qaeda and asks how bad the threat is. Black estimates it to be a seven on a one-to-ten scale, with the millennium threat at the start of 2000 ranking an eight in comparison. Clarke tells her that adequate warning notices have been issued to the appropriate US entities. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 145-146](#))

May 31, 2001: Network of Al-Qaeda US Cells Mentioned in US Media

The Wall Street Journal summarizes tens of thousands of pages of evidence disclosed in a recently concluded trial of al-Qaeda operatives. They are called “a riveting view onto the shadowy world of al-Qaeda.” The documents reveal numerous connections between al-

Qaeda and specific front companies and charities. They even detail a “tightly organized system of cells in an array of American cities, including Brooklyn, N.Y.; Orlando, Fla.; Dallas, Tex.; Santa Clara, Calif.; Columbia, Mo., and Herndon, Va.” The 9/11 hijackers had ties to many of these same cities and charities. ([Emerson and Pipes 5/31/2001](#))

Summer 2001: Threat Alerts Increase to Record High

Congressman Porter Goss (R), Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, later says on the intelligence monitoring of US-designated terrorist groups, “The chatter level [goes] way off the charts” around this time and stays high until 9/11. Given Goss’s history as a CIA operative, presumably he is kept “in the know” to some extent. ([Drogin 5/18/2002](#)) A later Congressional report will state: “Some individuals within the intelligence community have suggested that the increase in threat reporting was unprecedented, at least in terms of their own experience.” ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) Two counterterrorism officials later describe the alerts of this summer as “the most urgent in decades.” ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

Summer 2001: Israel Warns US of ‘Big Attack’

The Associated Press will report in May 2002, “Israeli intelligence services were aware several months before Sept. 11 that bin Laden was planning a large-scale terror attack but did not know what his targets would be, Israeli officials have said. An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity, tells the Associated Press shortly after the attacks that ‘everybody knew about a heightened alert and knew that bin Laden was preparing a big attack.’ He said information was passed on to Washington but denied Israel had any concrete intelligence that could have been used to prevent the Sept. 11 attacks.” ([Haven 5/19/2002](#)) The claim that Israel lacks concrete intelligence is contradicted by other media reports (see [August 8-15, 2001](#)) (see [August 23, 2001](#)) (see [September 4, 2001](#)).

Summer 2001: Al-Qaeda Plot Described as Upcoming ‘Hiroshima’ on US Soil

After 9/11, Secretary of State Colin Powell will claim that the Bush administration received a “lot of signs” throughout the summer of 2001 that Islamic militants were plotting US attacks. These include al-Qaeda mentions of an impending “Hiroshima” on US soil. ([USA Today 10/15/2001](#)) The 2002 book *The Cell* also describes an intercepted al-Qaeda message in the summer of 2001 talking about a “Hiroshima-type” event coming soon. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 288](#)) So this appears to be a different warning than an intercepted communication in 2000 warning of a “Hiroshima-type event” (see [August 2000](#)), or perhaps a repeat of that.

Summer 2001: Tenet Believes Something Is Happening



CIA Director George Tenet. *[Source: CIA]* Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage later will claim that at this time, CIA Director “Tenet [is] around town literally pounding on desks saying, something is happening, this is an unprecedented level of threat information. He didn’t know where it was going to happen, but he knew that it was coming.” ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#))

Summer 2001: Bin Laden Speech Mentions 20 Martyrs in Upcoming Attack; Other Hints of Attack Spread Widely

Word begins to spread within al-Qaeda that an attack against the US is imminent, according to later prison interrogations of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. Many within al-Qaeda are aware that Mohammed has been preparing operatives to go to the US. Additionally, bin Laden makes several remarks hinting at an upcoming attack, spawning rumors throughout Muslim extremist circles worldwide.

- In a recorded speech at the al Faruq training camp in Afghanistan, bin Laden specifically urges trainees to pray for the success of an upcoming attack involving 20 martyrs. ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#))

- A bin Laden bodyguard later will claim that in May 2001 or earlier in the year he heard bin Laden tell people in Afghanistan that the US would be hit with an attack, and thousands would die (see [Early 2001](#)). ([Tanner 11/28/2002](#))

- In mid-June 2001, bin Laden tells training camp trainees there will be an attack in the near future. US intelligence soon learns of this (see [Mid-June 2001](#)).

There are other indications that knowledge of the attacks spreads in Afghanistan. The Daily Telegraph later reports that “the idea of an attack on a skyscraper [is] discussed among [bin Laden’s] supporters in Kabul.” At some unspecified point before 9/11, a neighbor in Kabul sees diagrams showing a skyscraper attack in a house known as a “nerve center” for al-Qaeda activity. ([Philps 11/16/2001](#)) US soldiers will later find forged visas, altered passports, listings of Florida flight schools and registration papers for a flight simulator in al-Qaeda houses in Afghanistan. ([Rohde 12/6/2001](#))

Summer 2001: FBI Field Offices Not Told to Increase Surveillance of Terrorism Suspects

According to National Security Adviser Rice, in the summer of 2001, “The FBI tasked all 56 of its US field offices to increase surveillance of known suspected terrorists and to reach out to known informants who might have information on terrorist activities.” ([9/11 Commission 4/8/2004](#)) But the 9/11 Commission later will conclude, “An NSC [National Security Council] staff document at the time describes such a tasking as having occurred in late June but does not indicate whether it was generated by the NSC or the FBI.... [H]owever, the FBI could not find any record of having received such a directive.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 264](#)) According to Newsday, 9/11 Commissioner Tim Roemer “told Rice that the Commission had ‘to date... found nobody, nobody at the FBI, who knows anything about a tasking of field offices.’ Even Thomas Pickard, at the time acting FBI director, told the panel that he ‘did not tell the field offices to do this,’ Roemer said.” ([Royce and Brune 4/10/2004](#)) The last time the FBI field offices were tasked about the Muslim extremist threat was in April 2001 (see [April 13, 2001](#)). Pickard claims that he did individually warn some field offices about the heightened threat in July, but the 9/11 Commission will conclude, “We found little evidence that any such concerns had reached FBI personnel beyond the New York Field Office.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 264, 536](#))

Summer 2001: FBI Tells Local Law Enforcement There Is No Credible Threat of Terrorism In the US

The FBI shares information on terrorist threats with state and local law enforcement entities through National Law Enforcement Threat System (NLETS) reports. However, at this time, the heightened state of alert for an attack in the US is not reflected at all in these NLETS reports. The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry notes, “In a May 2001 NLETS report, for example, the FBI assessed the risk of terrorism as ‘low,’ and, in a July 2, 2001 NLETS report, stated that the FBI had no information indicating a credible threat of terrorist attack in the United States, although the possibility of such an attack could not be discounted.” Further reports focus only on the potential of attacks against US interests overseas. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) On July 5 and 6, 2001, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke specifically warns FBI officials that al-Qaeda is planning “something spectacular,” and says, “They may try to hit us at home. You have to assume that is what they are going to do.” Yet apparently the FBI doesn’t pass any of Clarke’s warnings or sense of urgent emergency to the state and local emergency responders (see [July 5, 2001](#)) (see [July 6, 2001](#)).

Summer 2001: Military Plans Reducing Domestic Air Defenses Still Further

During this period, apparently, there are only 14 fighter planes on active alert to defend the continental US (and six more defending Canada and Alaska). ([Kelly 12/5/2003](#)) However, in the months before 9/11, rather than increase the number, the Pentagon was planning to reduce the number still further. Just after 9/11, the Los Angeles Times will report, “While defense officials say a decision had not yet been made, a reduction in air defenses had been gaining currency in recent months among task forces assigned by [Defense Secretary] Rumsfeld to put together recommendations for a reassessment of the military.” By comparison, in the Cold War atmosphere of the 1950s, the US had thousands of fighters on alert throughout the US. ([Reza, Halper, and Getter 9/15/2001](#)) In fact, there will be high level military discussions as late as September 8, 2001, where the option of eliminating the bases altogether is considered (see [September 8, 2001](#)). As late as 1998, there were 175 fighters on alert status. ([Kelly 12/5/2003](#)) Also during this time, FAA officials try to dispense with “primary” radars altogether, so that if a plane were to turn its transponder off, no radar could see it. NORAD rejects the proposal ([Scott 6/3/2002](#))

Summer 2001: FBI Lacks Resources But Ashcroft Denies More Funding

The New York Times will later report that, according to senior government officials, “A top secret report warned top officials of the FBI in the months before Sept. 11 that the bureau faced significant terrorist threats from Middle Eastern groups like al-Qaeda but lacked enough resources to meet the threat...” The internal assessment finds that virtually every major FBI field office is undermanned when evaluating and dealing with the threat from groups like al-Qaeda. The report gives detailed recommendations and spending increases to address the problem. However, in August 2001, acting FBI Director Tom Pickard meets Attorney General John Ashcroft to ask for supplemental funding for counterterrorism, but his request is turned down. On September 10, 2001, Ashcroft rejects a proposed \$58 million increase in FBI counterterrorism funding for the next year’s budget (see [September 10, 2001](#)). ([Risen and Johnston 6/1/2002](#))

Summer 2001: FBI Neglects Chance to Infiltrate Al-Qaeda Training Camp

A confidential informant tells an FBI field office agent that he has been invited to a commando-training course at a camp operated by al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. The information is passed up to FBI headquarters, which rejects the idea of infiltrating the camp. An “asset validation” of the informant, a routine but critical exercise to determine whether information from the source was reliable, is also not done. The FBI later has no comment on the story. ([Duffy 6/10/2002](#))

Summer 2001: Hijackers Use a Variety of Means to Get into Cockpit During Test Flights

According to the Boston Globe, during various cross-country test run flights in the summer of 2001, “Some of the hijackers were seen videotaping crews on their flights. Other times, they asked for cockpit tours. Two also rode in the cockpit of the planes of one national airline, said a pilot who requested anonymity. The practice, known as ‘jumpseating,’ allows certified airline pilots to use a spare seat in the cockpit when none is available in the passenger cabin. Airlines reciprocate to help pilots get home or to the city of their originating flight.” ([Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) Abdulaziz Alomari fails in an effort to sit in a jumpseat in August 2001 (see [August 1, 2001](#)).

Summer 2001: NSA Fails to Share Intercepted Information about Calls between Atta and KSM

Around this time, the NSA intercepts telephone conversations between Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) and Mohamed Atta, but apparently does not share the information with any other agencies. The FBI has a \$2 million reward for Mohammed at the time, while Atta is in charge of operations inside the US. ([Landay 6/6/2002](#); [Gumbel 6/6/2002](#)) The NSA either fails to translate these messages in a timely fashion or fails to understand the significance of what was translated. ([Landay 6/6/2002](#)) However, it will later be revealed that an FBI squad built an antenna in the Indian Ocean some time before 9/11 with the specific purpose of listening in on KSM’s phone calls, so they may have learned about these calls to Atta on their own (see [Before September 11, 2001](#)).

Summer 2001: Pakistani Intelligence Protects Al-Qaeda Leader from Arrest



Ahmed Said Khadr. [*Source: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*] The Pakistani ISI allows an al-Qaeda leader to escape arrest. Egyptian investigators are looking for Ahmed Said Khadr, because he is wanted for funding the bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, in 1995 (see [November 19, 1995](#)). ([McGirk 5/6/2002](#); [Bell 10/14/2003](#)) Khadr, a Canadian citizen, had been arrested in Pakistan shortly after the bombing but was then let go after a huge strike and an appeal by the Canadian government. He runs the Pakistan office of a Canadian charity called Human Concern International. ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 4/20/2006](#)) A 1996 CIA report that referred to Khadr called this a charity front that funds radical militants (see [January 1996](#)). His name appeared on a list of top al-Qaeda suspects issued by the

United Nations in 1999. ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 3/3/2004](#)) Egyptians surround the safe house in Pakistan where Khadr is hiding. They notify the ISI to help arrest him, and ISI Director Mahmood Ahmed promises swift action. Instead, a car sent by the ISI filled with Taliban and having diplomatic plates arrives, grabs Khadr, and drives him to safety in Afghanistan. ([McGirk 5/6/2002](#)) Khadr will be killed in an October 2003 shootout with the Pakistani army. After his death, a sympathetic jihadist group will refer to him as a “founding member” of al-Qaeda. ([Bell 10/14/2003](#); [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 4/20/2006](#))

Summer 2001: Human Rights Report Details ISI's Massive Support to Taliban

According to a July 2001 report from Human Rights Watch, the ISI has been “bankrolling Taliban military operations... arranging training for its fighters, planning and directing offensives, providing and facilitating shipments of ammunition and fuel, and on several occasions apparently directly providing combat support.” ([Silverstein 10/9/2001](#)) The report further states that Pakistan’s assistance “include[s] soliciting funding for the Taliban, bankrolling Taliban operations, providing diplomatic support as the Taliban’s virtual emissaries abroad, arranging training for Taliban fighters, recruiting skilled and unskilled manpower to serve in Taliban armies... In April and May 2001 Human Rights Watch sources reported that as many as thirty trucks a day were crossing the Pakistan border; sources inside Afghanistan reported that some of these convoys were carrying artillery shells, tank rounds, and rocket-propelled grenades. Such deliveries are in direct violation of UN sanctions... Pakistan’s army and intelligence services, principally the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), contribute to making the Taliban a highly effective military force. While these Pakistani agencies do not direct the policies of the [Taliban’s army], senior Pakistani military and intelligence officers help plan and execute major military operations. A retired senior Pakistani military officer claimed in an interview with Human Rights Watch that up to 30 percent of Taliban fighting strength is made up of Pakistanis serving in units organized by [Pakistani] political parties.” ([Human Rights Watch 7/1/2001](#))

Summer 2001: Saudi and Taliban Leaders Reportedly Discuss Bin Laden

An Asia Times article published just prior to 9/11 claims that Crown Prince Abdullah, the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia, makes a clandestine visit to Pakistan around this time. After meeting with senior army officials, he visits Afghanistan with ISI Director Mahmood. They meet Taliban leader Mullah Omar and try to convince him that the US is likely to launch an attack on Afghanistan. They insist bin Laden be sent to Saudi Arabia, where he would be held in custody and not handed over to any third country. If bin Laden were to be tried in Saudi Arabia, Abdullah would help make sure he is acquitted. Mullah Omar apparently rejects the proposal. The article suggests that Abdullah is secretly a

supporter of bin Laden and is trying to protect him from harm. ([Shahzad 8/22/2001](#)) A similar meeting may also take place about a week after 9/11 (see [September 19, 2001](#)).

Summer 2001: Pentagon's Police Force Holds Various, Unknown Emergency Drills

The Pentagon's police force, the Defense Protective Service (DPS), conducts emergency drills throughout summer 2001. Some members of the DPS subsequently assist in directing rescue efforts at the Pentagon on 9/11. ([Cooper 9/13/2001](#))

Summer 2001: Manager Where Hanjour Trains Has Concerns But FBI Does Not Contact Him

While most evidence places Hani Hanjour on the East Coast in the summer of 2001, he may undergo some flight training in Phoenix, Arizona. Hanjour had trained at the Sawyer School of Aviation previously (see [1998](#)), and there is some evidence he returns there. One school document records Hanjour's name for use of a flight simulator on June 23, 2001, though his name does not appear on payment records. Faisal al-Salmi, Rayed Abdullah, and Lotfi Raissi also use the flight simulator that day. Al-Salmi will later be convicted of lying about his associations with Hanjour. Abdullah had moved with Hanjour from Florida in 1997, and is known for giving extremist speeches at a Phoenix mosque (see [October 1996-Late April 1999](#)). Raissi will later be suspected of involvement in the 9/11 plot, then cleared (see [September 21, 2001](#)). There are also indications that Hanjour signs up to use a flight simulator in August with three other Muslim men, including al-Salmi. One Sawyer employee is fairly certain she sees Hanjour during the summer. Another witness sees Hanjour with al-Salmi elsewhere in Phoenix. The 9/11 Commission will note that the evidence of Hanjour training in Phoenix during the summer is not definitive, but "the FBI's Phoenix office believes it is plausible that Hanjour return[s] to Arizona for additional training." On July 10, 2001, Phoenix FBI agent Ken Williams sends a memorandum to FBI headquarters urging a nationwide check on Middle Eastern students at flight schools (see [July 10, 2001](#)). Yet he does not seem to conduct any kind of check on Phoenix flight schools at this time. Phoenix flight school managers will later claim that the FBI did not ask them for tips on suspicious students before 9/11. A Sawyer School manager apparently had suspicions about some of his students (though he does not mention Hanjour specifically). He later will say that had he known the FBI was concerned that some students might be Islamic militants, "I would have called someone." Another flight school manager claims he has a good relationship with the FBI and is surprised he is not asked about Williams' concerns. He will complain, "Should flight schools be clairvoyant?" ([Thomas 5/24/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 529](#))

Summer 2001: Hijackers Have 'a Great Time' Riding Scooters on Florida Beaches

During much of the summer, four of the alleged 9/11 hijackers rent scooters from AAA Car Rental in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Like many students do, they pass time riding up and down the city's beaches. One of the owners of AAA Car Rental later remarks, "For guys that hated America, they sure looked like they were having a great time here. They didn't seem to have a care in the world." ([Wall Street Journal 10/16/2001](#)) Though the identities of the four are unstated, many of the hijackers are reportedly in the Fort Lauderdale area around this time, including Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, Ziad Jarrah, and nine of the so-called "muscle hijackers" (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)). ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#))

Summer 2001: Two CIA Bin Laden Experts Consider Resigning in Protest

According to the 9/11 Commission, two unnamed, veteran CIA Counter Terrorism Center officers deeply involved in bin Laden issues are so worried about an impending attack that they consider resigning and going public with their concerns. Apparently they are also unhappy with the Bush administration's lack of response. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 259-260)

Summer 2001: Tenet Believes Rumsfeld Is Blocking Effort to Develop Strategy to Get Bin Laden

According to a 2006 book by journalist Bob Woodward, in the months before 9/11, CIA Director Tenet believes that Defense Secretary Rumsfeld is impeding the effort to develop a coherent strategy to capture or kill bin Laden. Rumsfeld questions al-Qaeda communications intercepts by the NSA and other other intelligence. ([Sanger 9/29/2006](#)) Woodward writes in his book, "Could all this be a grand deception? Rumsfeld had asked. Perhaps it was a plan to measure US reactions and defenses. Tenet had the NSA review all the intercepts, and the agency concluded they were of genuine al-Qaeda communications." As a result of these doubts, on June 30, 2001, a Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB) sent to top White House officials contains an article entitled, "Bin Laden Threats Are Real" (see [June 30, 2001](#)). ([Woodward 2006](#), pp. 50) However, apparently this does not quell the doubts. For instance, in mid-July 2001, Tenet is told that Deputy Defense Secretary and close Rumsfeld ally Paul Wolfowitz still doubts the surge of warnings and suggests that bin Laden may merely be trying to study US reactions to an attack threat (see [Mid-July 2001](#)).

Summer 2001-September 10, 2001: US Domestic Agencies Fail to Mobilize in Response to Attack Warnings

The 9/11 Commission will later conclude that in spite of an unprecedented attack threat in the months before 9/11, US "domestic agencies never mobilized in response to the

threat. They did not have direction, and did not have a plan to institute. The borders were not hardened. Transportation systems were not fortified. Electronic surveillance was not targeted against a domestic threat. State and local law enforcement were not marshaled to augment the FBI's efforts. The public was not warned." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 265](#))

June 2001: Germans Warn of Plan to Use Aircraft as Missiles on US and Israeli Symbols

German intelligence warns the CIA, Britain's intelligence agency, and Israel's Mossad that Middle Eastern militants are planning to hijack commercial aircraft to use as weapons to attack "American and Israeli symbols, which stand out." A later article quotes unnamed German intelligence sources who state the information was coming from Echelon surveillance technology, and that British intelligence had access to the same warnings. However, there were other informational sources, including specific information and hints given to, but not reported by, Western and Near Eastern news media six months before 9/11. ([Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung \(Frankfurt\) 9/11/2001](#); [Stafford 9/14/2001](#); [Cameron 5/17/2002](#))

June 2001: US Intelligence Warns of Spectacular Attacks by Al-Qaeda Associates

US intelligence issues a terrorist threat advisory, warning US government agencies that there is a high probability of an imminent attack against US interests: "Sunni extremists associated with al-Qaeda are most likely to attempt spectacular attacks resulting in numerous casualties." The advisory mentions the Arabian Peninsula, Israel, and Italy as possible targets for an attack. Afterwards, intelligence information provided to senior US leaders continues to indicate that al-Qaeda expects near-term attacks to have dramatic consequences on governments or cause major casualties. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

June 2001: US Intelligence Fears Al-Qaeda Will Strike on Fourth of July

The CIA provides senior US policy makers with a classified warning of a potential attack against US interests that is thought to be tied to Fourth of July celebrations in the US. ([McKeone 9/23/2001](#)) The head of counterterrorism at the FBI, Dale Watson, will later recall that he and Cofer Black, the head of counterterrorism at the CIA, expected an attack to occur around the Fourth of July. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 265](#))

June 2001: Al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad Complete Merger

Two major terrorist organizations, al-Qaeda and the Egypt-based Islamic Jihad, formally merged into one. This completes a merging process that had been going on for years (see [August 11-20, 1988](#), [December 1, 1996-June 1997](#), and [February 22, 1998](#)). The technical name of the new entity is Qaeda al-Jihad, though it is widely called al-Qaeda. Bin Laden remains in charge, and Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of Islamic Jihad, remains second in command. ([Wright 9/9/2002](#))

June 2001: Clarke Asks for Different Job as White House Fails to Share His Urgency about Terrorism

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke asks for a transfer to start a new national program on cyber security. His request is granted, and he is to change jobs in early October 2001 (which he does, see [October 9, 2001](#)). He makes the change despite the 9/11 attacks. He claims that he tells National Security Adviser Rice and her deputy Steve Hadley, “Perhaps I have become too close to the terrorism issue. I have worked it for ten years and to me it seems like a very important issue, but maybe I’m becoming like Captain Ahab with bin Laden as the White Whale. Maybe you need someone less obsessive about it.” ([White House 10/9/2001](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 25-26](#)) He later claims, “My view was that this administration, while it listened to me, either didn’t believe me that there was an urgent problem or was unprepared to act as though there were an urgent problem. And I thought, if the administration doesn’t believe its national coordinator for counterterrorism when he says there’s an urgent problem, and if it’s unprepared to act as though there’s an urgent problem, then probably I should get another job.” ([Bumiller and Miller 3/24/2004](#))

June 2001: US Still Fails to Aid Taliban Resistance

The US considers substantially aiding Ahmed Shah Massoud and his Northern Alliance. As one counterterrorism official put it, “You keep [al-Qaeda terrorists] on the front lines in Afghanistan. Hopefully you’re killing them in the process, and they’re not leaving Afghanistan to plot terrorist operations.” A former US special envoy to the Afghan resistance visits Massoud this month. Massoud gives him “all the intelligence he [has] on al-Qaeda” in the hopes of getting some support in return. However, he gets nothing more than token amounts and his organization isn’t even given “legitimate resistance movement” status. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#))

June 2001: Enron Shuts Down Expensive Indian Plant After Afghan Pipeline Fails to Materialize

Enron’s power plant in Dabhol, India, is shut down. The failure of the \$3 billion plant, Enron’s largest investment, contributes to Enron’s bankruptcy in December. Earlier in the year, India stopped paying its bill for the energy from the plant, because energy from the plant cost three times the usual rates. ([Dugger 3/20/2001](#)) Enron had hoped to feed the plant with cheap Central Asian gas, but this hope was dashed when a gas pipeline through Afghanistan was not completed. The larger part of the plant is still only 90 percent

complete when construction stops around this time. ([Dugger 3/20/2001](#)) Enron executives meet with Commerce Secretary Donald L. Evans about its troubled Dabhol power plant during this year ([Stevenson 2/21/2002](#)) , and Vice President Cheney lobbies the leader of India's main opposition party about the plant this month. ([Stevenson 2/21/2002](#))

June or July 2001: Hijackers Plan Attacks from German University

Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, and an unknown third person are seen in the ground-floor workshops of the architecture department at this time, according to at least two witnesses from the Hamburg university where Atta had studied. They are seen on at least two occasions with a white, three-foot scale model of the Pentagon. Between 60 and 80 slides of the Sears building in Chicago and the WTC are found to be missing from the technical library after 9/11. ([Sunday Times \(London\) 2/3/2002](#)) A Hamburg friend of Atta's, Margritte Schroeder, will confirm that Atta is in Hamburg around this time, saying later in 2001, "I saw him here in early July and he was as nice as ever." Other eyewitnesses see Atta and Alshehhi in Hamburg as well. But there is no record of Alshehhi leaving the US around this time, which suggests that he travels on a false passport for this trip. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 251, 290](#))

June 2001: Group of 9/11 Hijackers Allegedly Meet in London

British investigators believe that at least five of the 9/11 hijackers have a "vital planning meeting" held in a safe house in north London, Britain. No specific hijacker names are mentioned, but eleven of the hijackers are known to visit London around this time (see [January-June 2001](#) and [April 22-June 27, 2001](#)). ([McGrory and Kennedy 9/26/2001](#)) Authorities suspect that the meeting takes place in a home owned by Mustapha Labsi, an Algerian. It is believed Labsi also trained the hijackers in Afghanistan. However, Labsi could not have been at the June meeting because he was arrested in February 2001 in Britain and will be held continuously after that. He is a suspect in Ahmed Ressam's attempted bombing of the Los Angeles airport. He is also wanted in France for planning a suspected attack at the 1996 G7 summit. ([Bamber, Hastings, and Syal 9/30/2001](#))

June 2001: DEA Draws Up Report on Israeli Spies



States the Israeli spy ring were known to have operated in, according to a June 2001 Drug Enforcement Administration report (this Fox news graphic was based on information from that report). [Source: Fox News/The DEA's Office of Security Programs prepares a 60-page internal memo on the Israeli "art student spy ring." ([Drug Enforcement Agency 6/2001](#)) The Memo is a compilation of dozens of field reports, and was meant only for the eyes of senior officials at the Justice Department (of which the DEA is adjunct), but it is leaked to the press around December 2001. The report connects the spies to efforts to foil investigations into Israeli organized crime activity involving the importation of the drug Ecstasy. The spies also appear to be snooping on top-secret military bases. For instance, on April 30, 2001, an Air Force alert was issued from Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City concerning "possible intelligence collection being conducted by Israeli art students." Tinker AFB houses AWACS surveillance craft and Stealth bombers. By the time of the report, the US has "apprehended or expelled close to 120 Israeli nationals" but many remain at large. ([Cypel 3/5/2002](#); [Ketcham 5/7/2002](#)) An additional 20 or so Israeli spies are apprehended between June and 9/11. ([Cameron 12/12/2001](#))

June 2001: The KLA Begins an Offensive in Macedonia

The KLA launches an offensive in Macedonia. Many of the KLA commanders involved in the offensive also held appointments in the UN's Kosovo Protection Corps. The regular Macedonian security forces are forced to withdraw, and the Macedonian military and elite police forces engage the KLA. ([Taylor 2002, pp. 119-120](#))

June 2001: Bank Refuses to Cash Check for 'Suspicious' Hijacker

A branch of the SunTrust Bank in Florida refuses to cash a \$2,180 check for hijacker pilot Marwan Alshehhi, as he arouses suspicion by presenting identification documents with different addresses and the bank personnel think the signature on the check does not match the signature on the file. The bank manager refuses to cash the check and issues an internal alert to other SunTrust branches to watch out for possible fraud. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 53, 140](#))

June 2001: Hijacker Almihdhar Requests More Information about Planned Attack on US Warship



Jemaah Islamiyah operative Faiz abu Baker Bafana. [Source: *Channel News Asia*] 9/11 hijacker Khalid Almihdhar makes another visit to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to continue planning for an attack on a US warship in Singapore (see [October 2000](#)). He asks Faiz abu Baker Bafana, an operative for the al-Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) group, for more information about the operation and for a proposed budget. Almihdhar was apparently involved in the attacks on the USS *The Sullivans* and USS *Cole* in Yemen (see [Late 1999](#) and [Around October 12, 2000](#)). Bafana then begins meeting with two other bin Laden operatives to discuss the Singapore operation and an attack that is being planned for Manila. They end up only meeting twice, because by the second meeting Bafana believes he is under surveillance by Malaysian intelligence. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/8/2006](#)) JI has been under increased surveillance from the authorities in Southeast Asia since a series of bomb attacks at the end of 2000 (see [December 24-30, 2000](#) and [January 2001 and after](#)). Malaysian intelligence also monitored an al-Qaeda summit held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which Almihdhar and JI leader Hambali attended (see January 5-8, 2000 and [January 6-9, 2000](#)). If Malaysian intelligence did monitor this meeting, they had an opportunity to recognize Almihdhar from their earlier surveillance of the 2000 al-Qaeda summit, but it is not known if they did so.

June 2001: Janitor Claims to Witness Hijacker inside World Trade Center



Mohand Alshehri. [Source: FBI] Janitor William Rodriguez, who has worked at the World Trade Center for 20 years, believes he sees Flight 175 hijacker Mohand Alshehri in one of the towers. Rodriguez is cleaning washrooms on the Trade Center's concourse level one weekend, when a person he later believes to have been Alshehri approaches him and asks, "[H]ow many public bathrooms are in this area?" Rodriguez says he finds this "very strange." After 9/11, he will recognize the man from newspaper photos as having been the suspected hijacker. He will say he is "very certain, I'll give it 90 percent" that the man he'd seen was Alshehri. He will tell the FBI of this encounter, but will never hear back from them. FBI officials later say they have never heard of Rodriguez, but they do not discount his story. ([Daily Telegraph 6/15/2004](#); [MSNBC 6/15/2004](#); [Meek 6/15/2004](#)) According to FBI and 9/11 Commission accounts, Mohand Alshehri has only recently entered the US, on May 28, 2001 (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)), though other reports suggest he was in the country several months earlier (see [January or July 28, 2001](#)). ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 23](#).)

June 2001: Hijacker Almihdhar Said to Receive Money from Plot Facilitator

According to the 9/11 Commission's Terrorist Finance Monograph, Khalid Almihdhar receives \$4,900 from plot facilitator Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi in the United Arab Emirates. Almihdhar then uses the money to buy traveler's checks in Saudi Arabia. The commission says, "According to al-Hawsawi's notebook, al-Hawsawi gave the funds to Almihdhar in the UAE in June 2001." ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 137](#).) However:

- The section of the 9/11 Commission's main report that details his travel during this time does not include a trip to the United Arab Emirates; ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 237](#))
- Al-Hawsawi's substitute for testimony at the trial of Zacarias Moussoaui does not mention this transaction or any meeting with Almihdhar, although it deals with al-Hawsawi's meetings with four other hijackers and telephone conversations with Mohamed Atta, as well as his dealings with some other al-Qaeda operatives; ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#).)
- No mention of this transaction is made at al-Hawsawi's Combat Status Review Tribunal hearing, even though it again deals with the assistance provided to four hijackers and conversations with Atta. ([US department of Defense 3/21/2007](#).)

June-September 11, 2001: CD Cover Depicts Scene Much Like 9/11 Attacks on WTC



The original cover design for The Coup's album Party Music. [Source: 75 Ark] Cover artwork is designed for a forthcoming CD, which looks eerily like the attack on the World Trade Center that occurs three months later. The CD, "Party Music," is the fourth album by a little-known hip-hop group called The Coup, which is known for its political activism. ([CNN 9/13/2001](#); [Segal 5/22/2002](#)) The intended cover design shows the two members of the group standing in front of the Twin Towers. One of them is pressing a button on a guitar tuner, as if it was a detonator, and two fireballs are exploding from the top floors of the WTC above them. ([Kogan 11/2/2001](#)) Days after 9/11, Wired magazine comments, "If it weren't for the super-imposed images of the Oakland, California, hip-hop duo known as The Coup, the scene could pass for a remarkably precise replica of the horrific tragedy that befell New York City on Tuesday morning." The CD is in fact initially scheduled for release in early September, but at some point before 9/11, it is pushed back two months for release in November. Furthermore, as Wired describes, "Timing of the original album printing was disturbingly in sync with real-world events. The printers were set to crank out copies of the fiery World Trade Center image on Tuesday [September 11]... when the label put in a last-minute call, urging them to stop the presses." ([Glasner 9/13/2001](#)) The group's lead member, Raymond "Boots" Riley, is described by Kansas City newspaper The Pitch as a "confessed communist" who "has built a career out of making bold political statements." ([Edwards 11/8/2001](#)) Riley later says he'd come up with the idea for the CD cover along with his photographer, and they'd finished work on it by the beginning of June. He says, "Any similarities [with 9/11] are totally coincidental, and it was originally supposed to be more of a metaphor for destroying capitalism—where the music is making capitalist towers blow up." ([Goedde 9/20/2001](#)) A new cover will be designed and used when the CD is eventually released. ([Edwards 11/8/2001](#)) But copies are sent out prior to 9/11 to members of the press and others, and reviews appear in several publications before September 11 that show the original cover artwork of the exploding WTC. ([Glasner 9/13/2001](#))

June 2001: Moussaoui Expresses Interest in Crop-Dusting

Zacarias Moussaoui, living in the US, makes some professional inquiries about crop-dusting. He uses the pretext of launching a crop-spraying company. Information about this, including a computer disk about the aerial dispersal of pesticides, will be found on Moussaoui's computer after 9/11. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 146](#)) Roughly around the same time, Mohamed Atta expresses interest in flying crop-duster planes (see [March-August 2001](#)). Counterterrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna will later comment that this suggests al-Qaeda was already working on another plot using crop-duster aircraft to distribute unconventional weapons. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 146](#))

June 2001: CIA Gets Hints of Imminent, Multiple Al-Qaeda Attacks

CIA Director George Tenet will later write that in June 2001, the CIA learns that Arabs in Afghanistan are said to be anticipating as many as eight celebrations. Additionally, al-Qaeda operatives are being told to await important news within days. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 148-149](#))

June 2001: CIA Hears Key Al-Qaeda Operatives Are Disappearing, Preparing for Suicide Attack

In June 2001, the CIA learns that key al-Qaeda operatives are disappearing, while others are preparing for martyrdom. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) CIA Director George Tenet will later elaborate in a 2007 book that during the month of June, the CIA learns:

- Several training camps in Afghanistan are closing, a sign that al-Qaeda is anticipating a retaliatory strike.
- Bin Laden is leaving Afghanistan in fear of a US strike (this later turns out to be erroneous).
- Al-Qaeda operatives are leaving Saudi Arabia and returning to Afghanistan, which fits a pattern of movement just before attacks.
- Ayman al-Zawahiri is warning associates in Yemen to flee in anticipation of a crackdown.
- Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, one of the masterminds of the USS 'Cole' bombing, has disappeared.
- Other important operatives are disappearing or preparing for martyrdom.
- A key Afghan training camp commander was reportedly weeping for joy because he believed he could see his trainees in heaven. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 148-149](#)) The CIA also heard in May that operatives are disappearing and preparing for martyrdom (see [May 2001](#)).

June 2001: Wolfowitz Asks CIA and DIA to Look into Theory that Iraq Masterminded 1993 Bombing of WTC

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz asks the CIA to look over the 2000 book, *Study of Revenge: Saddam Hussein's Unfinished War Against America* by Laurie Mylroie, which argued that Iraq was behind the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center (see [Late 2000](#)). Wolfowitz will mention shortly after 9/11 how he asked the CIA to do this, but it is unknown what their response is. Presumably it is not one Wolfowitz liked. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 559](#)) Wolfowitz also asks Thomas Wilson, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), to have his analysts look at the book. The DIA is unable to find any evidence that support the theory. ([Isikoff and Corn 2006, pp. 76](#)) Around late July, the US reopens the files on WTC bomber Ramzi Yousef, presumably in response to these requests (see [Late July or Early August 2001](#)). But no evidence will be found to support Mylroie's theory that Yousef was an Iraqi agent. The 9/11 Commission will conclude in 2004, "We have found no credible evidence to support theories of Iraqi government involvement in the 1993 WTC bombing." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 559](#))

June-July 2001: Terrorist Threat Reports Surge, Frustration with White House Grows

During this time, President Bush and other top White House officials are given a series of Presidential Daily Briefings relating to an al-Qaeda attack (see [January 20-September 10, 2001](#)). The exact contents of these briefings remain classified, but according to the 9/11 Commission they consistently predict upcoming attacks that will occur "on a catastrophic level, indicating that they would cause the world to be in turmoil, consisting of possible multiple—but not necessarily simultaneous—attacks." CIA Director Tenet later will recall that he feels President Bush and other officials grasp the urgency of what they are being told. ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#)) But Deputy CIA Director John McLaughlin later states that he feels a great tension, peaking these months, between the Bush administration's apparent misunderstanding of terrorism issues and his sense of great urgency. McLaughlin and others are frustrated when inexperienced Bush officials question the validity of certain intelligence findings. Two CIA officials even consider resigning in protest (see [Summer 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) Dale Watson, head of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division, wishes he had "500 analysts looking at Osama bin Laden threat information instead of two." ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#))

Early June 2001: Counterterrorism Plan Circulated, but Contingency Plans Are Not Created



Steve Hadley. [Source: NATO] Deputy National Security Adviser Steve Hadley circulates a draft presidential directive on policy toward al-Qaeda. Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke and his staff regard the new approach as essentially the same as the proposal that they developed in December 2000 and presented to the Bush administration in January 2001. The draft has the goal of eliminating al-Qaeda as a threat over a multi-year period, and calls for funding through 2006. It has a section calling for the development of contingency military plans against al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Hadley contacts Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz to tell him these contingency plans will be needed soon. However, no such plans are developed before 9/11. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and others later admit that the contingency plans available immediately after 9/11 are unsatisfactory. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) The draft is now discussed in three more deputy-level meetings.

Early June 2001: Taliban Leader Claims Interest in Resolving bin Laden Issue

Reclusive Taliban leader Mullah Omar says the Taliban would like to resolve the bin Laden issue, so there can be “an easing and then lifting of UN sanctions that are strangling and killing the people of [Afghanistan].” ([Waterman 4/9/2004](#))

Early June 2001: Extensive ISI Support for Taliban Continues

UPI reporters visiting Taliban leader Mullah Omar note, “Saudi Arabia and the [United Arab Emirates] secretly fund the Taliban government by paying Pakistan for its logistical support to Afghanistan. Despite Pakistan’s official denials, the Taliban is entirely dependent on Pakistani aid. This was verified on the ground by UPI. Everything from bottled water to oil, gasoline and aviation fuel, and from telephone equipment to military supplies, comes from Pakistan.” ([Waterman 4/9/2004](#))

Early June-September 10, 2001: Armed Drone Ready to Hit Bin Laden, but Bureaucratic Concerns Prevent Its Use



A Predator drone firing a Hellfire missile. [Source: US Air Force] An armed version of the Predator drone successfully passes a test showing it is ready for use in Afghanistan. The Predator had been used successfully in 2000 to spot bin Laden (see [September 7-October 2000](#)), but it was not used in early 2001 while an armed version was prepared (see [January 10-25, 2001](#)). A Hellfire missile was successfully test fired from a Predator on February 16, 2001. ([CBS News 6/25/2003](#)) In early June 2001, a duplicate of the brick house where bin Laden is believed to be living in Kandahar, Afghanistan, is built in Nevada, and destroyed by a Predator missile. The test shows that the missile fired from miles away would have killed anyone in the building, and one participant calls this the long sought after “holy grail” that could kill bin Laden within minutes of finding him. ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#)) But National Security Adviser Rice reportedly wants to use the Predator only after an overall strategy for confronting al-Qaeda is worked out, and no such plan is close to being ready. ([Bridis and Solomon 6/22/2003](#)) She and her deputy Steve Hadley decide to delay reconnaissance flights until all the arrangements for using the armed version can be worked out. In July 2001, Hadley directs the military to have armed Predators ready to deploy no later than September 1. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) The main hold up seems to be bureaucratic. Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke repeatedly advocates using the Predator, armed or unarmed. However, infighting between the CIA and the Air Force over who would pay for it and take responsibility delays its use. Clarke later says, “Every time we were ready to use it, the CIA would change its mind.” ([Mayer 7/28/2003](#)) The issue comes to a head in early September 2001, but even then, a decision to use the Predator is delayed (see [September 4, 2001](#)). ([Mayer 7/28/2003](#)) The armed Predator will finally be used in Afghanistan just days after 9/11. ([Bridis and Solomon 6/25/2003](#))

June 1, 2001: Revised Hijacking Procedure Outlines Defense Department Responsibilities

A military instruction is issued by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, outlining the procedure for dealing with hijackings within the United States. The instruction, titled “Aircraft Piracy (Hijacking) and Destruction of Derelict Airborne Objects,” states that “the administrator, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), has exclusive responsibility to

direct law enforcement activity related to actual or attempted aircraft piracy (hijacking) in the ‘special aircraft jurisdiction’ of the United States. When requested by the administrator, Department of Defense will provide assistance to these law enforcement efforts.” It adds that the National Military Command Center (NMCC) within the Pentagon “is the focal point within Department of Defense for providing assistance. In the event of a hijacking, the NMCC will be notified by the most expeditious means by the FAA. The NMCC will, with the exception of immediate responses as authorized by reference d, forward requests for DOD assistance to the secretary of defense for approval.” ([US Department of Defense 6/1/2001](#).) Some will later assume that this requirement for defense secretary approval was new with this instruction. ([Sheehy 6/17/2004](#)) But it has in fact been a requirement since 1997, when the previous instruction was issued, if not earlier. ([US Department of Defense 7/31/1997](#).) Although the defense secretary has this responsibility, the 9/11 Commission will conclude that, on the day of 9/11, the “secretary of defense did not enter the chain of command until the morning’s key events were over.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 15](#).) Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld will later incorrectly claim that, up to 9/11, terrorism and domestic hijackings were “a law enforcement issue.” ([9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#); [PBS 3/25/2004](#); [US Department of Defense 6/14/2005](#))

June 1, 2001: Hijacker Almihdhar Acquires New Saudi Passport Despite Presence on Saudi Watchlist

Hijacker Khalid Almihdhar obtains a new passport in Saudi Arabia, despite being on the terrorist watchlist there due to his part in a failed gunrunning plot (see [1997](#)). The passport contains an indicator of possible terrorist affiliation and lacks an expiry date. Although the nature of the indicator is not clear, one of the other hijackers, Ziad Jarrah, has an overlay of the Koran in his passport and immigration officials in the United Arab Emirates are said to find this suspicious, so the indicator in Almihdhar’s passport may be similar. Nevertheless, Almihdhar uses it to obtain a US visa (see [June 13, 2001](#)) and travels to the US on it (see [July 4, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 496](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 24, 27](#).)

Summer 2001: 9/11 Hijackers’ Associates Call Monitored Al-Qaeda Communications Hub in Yemen

Associates of the 9/11 hijackers call a number in Yemen also called by the radicals who bombed two US embassies in East Africa in 1998. The calls, which MSNBC says are made “in the weeks before the attacks,” are presumably to an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana’a, Yemen, run by Ahmed al-Hada, an associate of Nairobi embassy bomber Mohamed al-Owhali (see [August 5-25, 1998](#)). The number is monitored by US intelligence at this time and is also called by the hijackers themselves (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)), at least one of the calls being around this time (see [August 2001](#)). But it is not clear what intelligence the NSA and CIA gleaned from these calls or which associates of the hijackers make the calls. ([MSNBC 10/3/2001](#)) However, it is thought

that one of the hijackers' associates, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, met with an associate of al-Hada's in Yemen the year before (see [Before October 12, 2000](#)) and traveled to Yemen before the bombing of the USS *Cole* (see [Around September 15-16 and October 10-21, 2000](#)).

June 1-2, 2001: Military Conducts Exercises Based on Scenario in which Cruise Missiles Are Launched against US



Bin Laden is pictured on the cover of the first Amalgam Virgo exercise. [Source: NORAD] The US military conducts Amalgam Virgo 01, a multi-agency planning exercise sponsored by NORAD involving the hypothetical scenario of a cruise missile being launched by “a rogue [government] or somebody” from a barge off the East Coast. Bin Laden is pictured on the cover of the proposal for the exercise. ([Gilmore 6/4/2002](#)) The exercise takes place at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida. ([GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 4/14/2002](#)) The next Amalgam Virgo exercise, scheduled to take place the following year, will involve two simultaneous commercial aircraft hijackings. Planning for the exercises begins before 9/11 (see [July 2001](#)).

June 2, 2001: Wolfowitz Discusses Danger of Surprise Attack, Like Pearl Harbor

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz gives a commencement address at the United States Military Academy graduation at West Point, New York, where he focuses on the danger of surprise attacks. To an audience of about 15,000 people, he points out that 2001 marks the 60th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor—“a military disaster whose name has become synonymous with surprise”—and notes that, “Interestingly, that ‘surprise attack’ was preceded by an astonishing number of unheeded warnings and missed signals.” He continues, “Yet military history is full of surprises... Very few of these surprises are the product of simple blindness or simple stupidity. Almost always there have been warnings and signals that have been missed.” He says one of the reasons these warnings have so often been missed is “a routine obsession with a few familiar dangers,” which “has gotten whole governments, sometimes whole societies, into trouble.” He stresses the need to “use the benefit of hindsight to replace a poverty of

expectations with an anticipation of the unfamiliar and the unlikely,” thereby overcoming “the complacency that is the greatest threat to our hopes for a peaceful future.” ([US Department of Defense 6/1/2001](#); [Wolfowitz 6/2/2001](#)) Journalist James Mann will later reflect on this speech, saying that Wolfowitz “was more prescient than he could have imagined. America was about to be attacked. Once again the United States was unable to deal with the unfamiliar and the unlikely. Once again there were unheeded warnings and missed signals.” ([Mann 2004, pp. 29](#)) In spite of his words of caution, around this time Wolfowitz himself appears to be ignoring the danger of a possible attack by al-Qaeda. In July, he will reportedly doubt whether the recent surge in al-Qaeda warnings is really of significance (see [Mid-July 2001](#)). And at a meeting on terrorism in April, he’d complained, “I just don’t understand why we are beginning by talking about this one man bin Laden” (see [April 30, 2001](#)).

June 3, 2001-July 24, 2001: Al-Qaeda Leader Escapes Ireland Despite Being under Surveillance

On June 3, 2001, a British newspaper reveals that Hamid Aich, who is on the FBI’s international wanted list, is living in Dublin where he is applying for asylum. ([Breslin 2/18/2001](#); [O’Shea and Hanley 6/3/2001](#)) Irish intelligence has been monitoring Aich’s movements since 1997, when authorities tied him to the mass murder of 77 tourists in Luxor, Egypt (see [November 18, 1997](#)). ([Tynan and Lane 10/17/2001](#); [O’Neill 11/8/2001](#)) He has since been linked to a number of militant groups (see, e.g., [December 14, 1999](#)). It is believed that between 1999 and 2001, Aich assisted 22 Islamic terrorist organizations, and even funded non-Islamic groups, for instance giving \$200,000 to the ETA, a separatist group in the Basque region of Spain. Aich was also the director of Mercy International’s Ireland branch. (This charity has several known al-Qaeda connections by this time (see [1988-Spring 1995](#) and [Late 1996-August 20, 1998](#)).) Despite these connections, he will continue to live openly in Dublin after the newspaper discloses his location. ([Young 9/17/2001](#)) Irish authorities only publicly say, “Aich’s case is at a very delicate stage.” ([O’Shea and Hanley 6/3/2001](#)) Then, on July 24, he leaves Ireland using a false passport. The FBI, which took no action against him while he was living in Dublin, is reportedly “furious” with Irish police for allowing him to escape. He has not been heard of since, and he has not been included in any known lists of wanted al-Qaeda leaders. It is believed that Aich eventually ends up in Afghanistan. After 9/11, Aich will be described as “one of the FBI’s chief targets” and “one of bin Laden’s most trusted men” who ranks seventh in al-Qaeda’s hierarchy. ([Young 9/17/2001](#))

June 4, 2001: Congressional Committee Warned of Large Attacks Soon

A deputy head of the CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center warns a closed session of the House Intelligence Committee, “We’re on the verge of more attacks that are larger and more deadly.” Apparently this is based on the spike in “chatter” picked up by NSA and

CIA monitors and the realization that a number of well-known al-Qaeda operatives have gone underground. ([Zeman et al. 11/2004](#))

June 4, 2001: Illegal Afghans Overheard Discussing New York City Hijacking Attack

At some point in 2000, three men claiming to be Afghans but using Pakistani passports entered the Cayman Islands, possibly illegally. ([Whitefield 9/20/2001](#)) In late 2000, Cayman and British investigators began a yearlong probe of these men, which will last until 9/11. ([Serrano and Dahlburg 9/20/2001](#)) They are overheard discussing hijacking attacks in New York City during this period. On this day, they are taken into custody, questioned, and released some time later. This information is forwarded to US intelligence. ([Cameron 5/17/2002](#)) In late August, a letter to a Cayman radio station will allege these same men are agents of bin Laden “organizing a major terrorist act against the US via an airline or airlines.” ([Whitefield 9/20/2001](#); [Serrano and Dahlburg 9/20/2001](#))

June 7-10, 2001: Hijacker Jarrah Suspects He Is Followed as He Flies to Vegas



Ziad Jarrah. [Source: *National*

Geographic] Ziad Jarrah takes a trip to Las Vegas, but will reportedly later say he was followed on the trip. One of the hijackers’ associates, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, will later say that Jarrah felt he was followed on a flight from New York to California by “security officers.” Bin al-Shibh will also say that fellow hijacker Marwan Alshehhi was followed on a similar flight (see [May 24-27, 2001](#)). Hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar also thought they were followed on a flight to the US (see [January 15, 2000](#) and [Mid-July 2000](#)). ([Fouda and Fielding 2003, pp. 135](#)) Jarrah flies first class from Baltimore to Los Angeles on a United Airlines Boeing 757, the same type of plane he will apparently fly on 9/11, and then continues to Las Vegas. Three days later he returns his rental car, having driven 350 miles, and flies back to Baltimore, where he boards a plane back to Fort Lauderdale. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 23](#) ^a; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 55](#) ^a) His uncle will describe the trip as a

“gambling junket.” ([Williams 10/23/2001](#)) Several other hijackers also travel to Vegas (see [May 24-August 14, 2001](#)).

June 9, 2001-July 10, 2001: Wright Says FBI Unit Is Making ‘Virtually No Effort’ to Neutralize Known Terrorists Inside the US

FBI agent Robert Wright gives the FBI a mission statement he wrote that outlines his complaints against his agency. It reads, in part, “Knowing what I know, I can confidently say that until the investigative responsibilities for terrorism are removed from the FBI, I will not feel safe. The FBI has proven for the past decade it cannot identify and prevent acts of terrorism against the United States and its citizens at home and abroad. Even worse, there is virtually no effort on the part of the FBI’s International Terrorism Unit to neutralize known and suspected terrorists residing within the United States.

Unfortunately, more terrorist attacks against American interests, coupled with the loss of American lives, will have to occur before those in power give this matter the urgent attention it deserves.” Wright asks the FBI for permission to make his complaints public. Larry Klayman, chairman of the public-interest group Judicial Watch, claims that regulations require the FBI to give or deny clearance within 30 days, which would have made FBI failures an issue before 9/11. But the FBI delays making a decision and will only allow Wright to publicly reveal his mission statement in May 2002. ([Johnson 5/30/2002](#); [Federal News Service 5/30/2002](#)) One month later, Wright and his lawyer David Schippers have a meeting with a reporter from the CBS news program 60 Minutes to express the concerns in his statement. He claims that he says it is only a matter of time before there will be an attack on US soil. However, he is prohibited by his superior from speaking to 60 Minutes or any other media outlet. ([Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#))

Schippers will later claim that this month he also attempts to contact a number of important politicians with his concerns based on information from Wright and other FBI agents that he knows, but he was rebuffed (see [July-Late August 2001](#)).

June 11, 2001: FBI and CIA Hold Shouting Match over Information on Al-Qaeda; CIA Still Withholds Information

The FBI and the CIA hold a meeting to discuss the investigation into the USS *Cole* bombing and a possible connection between it and al-Qaeda’s Malaysia summit (see January 5-8, 2000). However, the CIA and FBI headquarters refuse to share all they know, and agents investigating the *Cole* bombing become angry over this. The meeting, which lasts between two and four hours, is attended by CIA officer Clark Shannon, FBI headquarters agent Dina Corsi, an FBI agent loaned to the CIA named Margaret Gillespie, FBI agent Steve Bongardt, FBI agent Russell Fincher, and assistant US attorney David Kelley. Although there is no agenda for the meeting and Corsi will later say it is a brainstorming session, author Lawrence Wright will say that one of the reasons

for the meeting is that CIA officer Tom Wilshire, an associate of Shannon's, "want[ed] to know... what the FBI knew" about al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit. Initially, Bongardt and Fincher brief Shannon on progress in the *Cole* investigation. Corsi then shows the two *Cole* investigators three photographs taken at al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit in 2000 (see January 5-8, 2000), showing 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar, Nawaf Alhazmi, and another man, and Shannon asks if the agents recognize Fahad al-Quso, who is thought to have attended the Malaysia meeting and has been interviewed by the FBI. However, one of the photos shows Khalid Almihdhar, Nawaf Alhazmi, and a tree, and the CIA has already recognized Almihdhar and Alhazmi, so it is unclear how the *Cole* investigators are supposed to recognize al-Quso in the photo. Corsi received the photographs from CIA officer Tom Wilshire, but Wilshire did not provide her with all the relevant information about them (see [Late May, 2001](#)). Bongardt and Fincher ask who is in the pictures, why were taken, and whether there are other photos of the meeting. Shannon refuses to say, but Corsi eventually admits one of the men is named Khalid Almihdhar. As a name alone is not sufficient to start an investigation, Bongardt asks for a date of birth or other details that will allow him to know which Khalid Almihdhar in the world is being discussed, but Shannon refuses to provide them. Shannon admits that Almihdhar was traveling on a Saudi passport and then leaves the meeting. Author Lawrence Wright will say that providing a date of birth is "standard procedure—the first thing most investigators would do." Realizing that the photos pertain to the *Cole* investigation, Bongardt and Fincher become angry at the lack of information being provided and the meeting descends into a "shouting match." ([ABC News 8/16/2002](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 289-294](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#)) Shannon will later admit that at the time he knew Almihdhar had a US visa, that Alhazmi had traveled to the US in 2000, that al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash had been recognized in one of the photos, and that Alhazmi was known to be an experienced operative. However, he does not tell any of this to any FBI agents, as he apparently thinks he does not have the authority. He does not let them keep copies of the photos either and will give conflicting accounts of the meeting after 9/11 (see [Between September 12, 2001 and October 17, 2002](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 289-292](#)) Corsi has NSA information saying Almihdhar and Alhazmi attended the Malaysia meeting, but apparently believes that the *Cole* agents cannot be told more because of restrictions on sharing intelligence with criminal agents (see [July 19, 1995](#)). However, one of the *Cole* agents present is an intelligence agent, so the information can be communicated to him immediately without Corsi obtaining permission from the NSA and/or Justice Department. In addition, the NSA sent the information to the FBI's New York field office, where the *Cole* investigators are based, in 1999 (see [December 1999-January 2000](#)). Further, when she asks the NSA's permission to share the information ten weeks later, the NSA approves the request on the same day (see [August 27-28, 2001](#)). She does not share the information at this time, but promises Bongardt and Fincher to try to do so later. The *Cole* agents will not receive more information for months. ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 269, 537](#)) Two days after this meeting, Almihdhar has no trouble getting a new, multiple reentry US visa (see [May 2001](#) and [June 13, 2001](#)). ([Pound 12/12/2001](#); [US Congress 9/20/2002](#))

June 12, 2001: CIA Learns KSM Is Sending Operatives to US to Meet Up with Operatives Already There

A CIA report says that a man named “Khaled” is actively recruiting people to travel to various countries, including the US, to stage attacks. CIA headquarters presume from the details of this report that Khaled is Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM). On July 11, the individual source for this report is shown a series of photographs and identifies KSM as the person he called “Khaled.” ([Diamond 12/12/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. [277, 533](#)) This report also reveals that:

- Al-Qaeda operatives heading to the US would be “expected to establish contact with colleagues already living there.”
- KSM himself had traveled to the US frequently, and as recently as May 2001.
- KSM is a relative of bomber Ramzi Yousef.
- He appears to be one of bin Laden’s most trusted leaders.
- He routinely tells others that he can arrange their entry into the US as well. However, the CIA doesn’t find this report credible because they think it is unlikely that he would come to the US (in fact, it appears he had (see [Summer 1998](#))). Nevertheless, they consider it worth pursuing. One agent replies, “If it is KSM, we have both a significant threat and an opportunity to pick him up.” In July, the source clarifies that the last time he can definitely place KSM in the US was in the summer of 1998 (see [Summer 1998](#)). The CIA disseminates the report to all other US intelligence agencies, military commanders, and parts of the Treasury and Justice Departments. The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will later request that the CIA inform them how CIA agents and other agencies reacted to this information, but the CIA does not respond to this. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) It appears that KSM will send at least one and probably two operatives to the US after this time and before 9/11 (see [August 4, 2001](#) and [September 10, 2001](#)). On July 23, 2001, the US consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia will give KSM a US visa (he uses an alias but his actual photo appears on his application) (see [July 23, 2001](#)). Also, during this summer and as late as September 10, 2001, the NSA will intercept phone calls between KSM and Mohamed Atta, but the NSA will not share this information with any other agencies (see [Summer 2001](#)).

June 12, 2001: Sting Operation Exposes Al-Qaeda, ISI, and Drug Connections; Investigators Face Obstacles to Learn More



Kevin Ingram, Randy Glass, and Diaa Mohsen in August 1999. [*Source: Getty Images*] (click image to

enlarge)Operation Diamondback, a sting operation uncovering an attempt to buy weapons illegally for the Taliban, bin Laden, and others, ends with a number of arrests. An Egyptian named Daa Mohsen and a Pakistani named Mohammed Malik are arrested and accused of attempting to buy Stinger missiles, nuclear weapon components, and other sophisticated military weaponry for the Pakistani ISI. ([Frieden 6/15/2001](#); [Burstein 8/23/2001](#); [Mintz 8/2/2002](#)) Malik appears to have had links to important Pakistani officials and Kashmiri militants, and Mohsen claims a connection to a man “who is very connected to the Taliban” and funded by bin Laden. ([Mintz 8/2/2002](#); [MSNBC 8/2/2002](#)) Some other ISI agents came to Florida on several occasions to negotiate, but they escaped being arrested. They wanted to pay partially in heroin. One mentioned that the WTC would be destroyed. These ISI agents said some of their purchases would go to the Taliban in Afghanistan and/or militants associated with bin Laden. ([Mintz 8/2/2002](#); [MSNBC 8/2/2002](#)) Both Malik and Mohsen lived in Jersey City, New Jersey. ([Morrill 6/20/2001](#)) Mohsen pleads guilty after 9/11, “but remarkably, even though [he was] apparently willing to supply America’s enemies with sophisticated weapons, even nuclear weapons technology, Mohsen was sentenced to just 30 months in prison.” ([MSNBC 8/2/2002](#)) Malik’s case appears to have been dropped, and reporters find him working in a store in Florida less than a year after the trial ended. ([MSNBC 8/2/2002](#)) Malik’s court files remain completely sealed, and in Mohsen’s court case, prosecutors “removed references to Pakistan from public filings because of diplomatic concerns.” ([Mintz 8/2/2002](#)) Also arrested are Kevin Ingram and Walter Kapij. Ingram pleads guilty to laundering \$350,000 and he is sentenced to 18 months in prison. ([Frieden 6/15/2001](#); [Hocker 6/19/2001](#); [Riddle 12/1/2001](#)) Ingram was a former senior investment banker with Deutsche Bank, but resigned in January 1999 after his division suffered costly losses. ([Hocker 6/19/2001](#); [Morrill 6/20/2001](#)) Walter Kapij, a pilot with a minor role in the plot, is given the longest sentence, 33 months in prison. ([Frieden 6/15/2001](#); [Hocker 6/19/2001](#); [Pacanti 1/12/2002](#)) Informant Randy Glass plays a key role in the sting, and has thirteen felony fraud charges against him reduced as a result, serving only seven months in prison. Federal agents involved in the case later express puzzlement that Washington higher-ups did not make the case a higher priority, pointing out that bin Laden could have gotten a nuclear bomb if the deal was for real. Agents on the case complain that the FBI did not make the case a counterterrorism matter, which would have improved bureaucratic backing and opened access to FBI information and US intelligence from around the world. ([Mintz 8/2/2002](#); [MSNBC 8/2/2002](#)) Federal agents frequently couldn’t get prosecutors to approve wiretaps. ([Pacanti 8/2/2002](#)) Glass says, “Wouldn’t you think that there should have been a wire tap on Daa [Mohsen]’s phone and Malik’s phone?” ([WPBF 25 \(West Palm Beach\) 8/5/2002](#)) An FBI supervisor in Miami refused to front money for the sting, forcing agents to use money from US Customs and even Glass’s own money to help keep the sting going. ([Pacanti 8/2/2002](#))

June 12-September 11, 2001: Cole Investigator Repeatedly Asks FBI Headquarters for Information Leading to 9/11 Hijackers, but Gets Nothing

Following a meeting at which FBI agents investigating the attack on the USS *Cole* were shown pictures of operatives who attended al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit, including 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, but were not given all the relevant information (see [June 11, 2001](#)), deputy head of the investigation Steve Bongardt continues to ask for the material, but FBI headquarters fails to provide it. Bongardt apparently has "heated telephone conversations and e-mail exchanges" with FBI headquarters agent Dina Corsi over the passage of the information. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 291, 294](#)) Bongardt will tell the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, "I've had several conversations with the analyst [Corsi] after that, because we would talk on other matters, and almost every time I would ask her, 'What's the story with the Almihdhar information, when is it going to get passed, do we have anything yet, when is it going to get passed,' and each time I was told that the information had not been passed yet. And the sense I got from here, based on our conversations, was that she was trying as hard as she could to get the information passed or at least the ability to tell us about the information." ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#)) But in fact Corsi does not appear to take any steps towards having the information passed to the *Cole* investigators for two and a half months after the meeting. Part of the relevant information is from a wiretap on Almihdhar's phone (see [Shortly Before December 29, 1999](#)) and, due to measures related to the "wall," the NSA general counsel has to approve its passage to criminal agents. Corsi finally asks the NSA to approve passage of the information on August 27; the NSA immediately agrees, but Corsi continues to withhold the information from Bongardt (see [August 27-28, 2001](#)). The other part of the information consists of photos of the two hijackers in Malaysia with other extremists (see January 5-8, 2000). Corsi will later say she "probably" has follow up conversations about passing the photographs with the two CIA officers, Tom Wilshire and Clark Shannon, who gave them to her (see [Late May, 2001](#)), but these alleged conversations do not result in the photos being passed to Bongardt, even though Wilshire will later say that, as far as he was concerned at this point, they could be distributed through the FBI. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 294](#)) After Corsi is told that Almihdhar is in the US (see [August 21-22, 2001](#)), this information is made available to intelligence investigators at the FBI (see [August 28, 2001](#)), but not to the team investigating the *Cole* bombing (see [August 28, 2001](#)).

June 13, 2001: Bin Laden Wants to Assassinate Bush with an Explosives-Filled Airplane

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak later claims that Egyptian intelligence discovers a "communiqué from bin Laden saying he wanted to assassinate President Bush and other G8 heads of state during their summit in Genoa, Italy" on this day. The communiqué specifically mentions this would be done via "an airplane stuffed with explosives." The US and Italy are sent urgent warnings of this. ([Sanger 9/26/2001](#)) Mubarak will claim that Egyptian intelligence officials informed American intelligence officers between March and May 2001 that an Egyptian agent had penetrated al-Qaeda. Presumably, this explains how Egypt is able to give the US these warnings. ([Tyler and MacFarquhar 6/4/2002](#))

June 13, 2001: Counterterrorism Not Part of Bush Defense Plan

At President Bush's first meeting with NATO heads of state in Brussels, Belgium, Bush outlines his five top defense issues. Missile defense is at the top of the list. Terrorism is not mentioned at all. This is consistent with his other statements before 9/11. Almost the only time he ever publicly mentions al-Qaeda or bin Laden before 9/11 is later in the month, in a letter that renews Clinton administration sanctions on the Taliban. ([CNN 6/13/2001](#); [Wright 4/1/2004](#)) He only speaks publicly about the dangers of terrorism once before 9/11, in May, except for several mentions in the context of promoting a missile defense shield. ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#))

June 13, 2001: Hijacker Almihdhar Obtains US Visa Despite Incorrect Passport and Lies on Application, even though US Intelligence Knows He Is an Al-Qaeda Operative

Hijacker Khalid Almihdhar obtains a second US visa from the US consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. His passport, which was issued two weeks previously (see [June 1, 2001](#)), lacks an expiry date, but contains an indicator of possible terrorist affiliation. His application form is incomplete, as it lists his occupation as "businessman," but does not give his employer's name and address. The application form, which is submitted through the Visa Express program (see [May 2001](#)) meaning he is not interviewed, contains two lies: he says he has never received an American visa or traveled to the US, whereas he received a visa in 1999 (see [April 3-7, 1999](#)) and traveled to the US on it in 2000 (see [January 15, 2000](#)). As Almihdhar's first visa was also issued by the Jeddah consulate, through which the CIA sent radical Arabs to the US for training during the Soviet-Afghan war (see [September 1987-March 1989](#)), consular officials could discover he is lying, but information about prior visas issuances is not automatically displayed to them. Eleven of the 14 visas issued to the hijackers in Jeddah are issued by the same consular officer, but it is unclear whether this visa is issued by that officer or another one. By this time several intelligence agencies are aware that Almihdhar is an al-Qaeda operative; for example, the CIA (see [January 4-6, 2000](#)), NSA (see [December 29, 1999](#)), FBI (see [January 5-6, 2000](#)), a US army intelligence program (see [January-February 2000](#)), the Saudi General Intelligence Directorate (see [1997](#)), Malaysian Special Branch (see [January 5-8, 2000](#)), and an intelligence service in the United Arab Emirates (see [January 2-5, 2000](#)). Almihdhar re-enters the US on the visa three weeks later (see [July 4, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission will find that the series of missteps preceding the issuance of visas to Almihdhar and the other 9/11 hijackers has some "eerie parallels" to the "series of exceptional failures" that led to US visas being issued to Blind Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman (see [December 15, 1986-1989](#) and [July 1990](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 24-27, 33, 49](#))

June 14, 2001: Asian Alliance Seeks to Counter US Dominance in Central Asia



The Shanghai Cooperation Organization logo. [Source: *Shanghai Cooperation Organization*] The Shanghai Five (see [1996](#)) becomes known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and expands to include Uzbekistan. ([BBC 6/11/2001](#)) SCO member-states agree unanimously to take the organization to a “higher level” and expand its mission beyond the original objectives of resolving border disputes and dealing with Islamic separatists to include issues such as regional economic development, commerce, and investment. ([Shanghai Cooperation \[org\] 6/20/2005](#)) Leaders of the organization’s member-states say they hope the SCO will counterbalance US dominance of world affairs. According to Chinese President Jiang Zemin, the organization will foster “world multi-polarization” and contribute to the “establishment of a fair and reasonable international order.” ([Associated Press 6/15/2001](#)) During their meeting in Shanghai, members sign a letter of support for the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which the United States has said it wants to scrap to make way for a missile defense shield. ([BBC 6/15/2001](#)) SCO members say the defense system will have a “negative impact on world security.” ([Associated Press 6/15/2001](#)) One Russian official at the meeting says the 1972 ABM Treaty is the “cornerstone of global stability and disarmament.” ([BBC 6/15/2001](#)) China and Russia also discuss collaborating on a joint program to develop a radar system capable of tracking US F-117A stealth fighter planes. ([Lam 6/20/2001](#))

Mid-June 2001: US Hears Bin Laden Tell Followers of an Attack in Near Future

Bin Laden tells trainees in his Afghanistan training camps that there will be an attack in the near future. US intelligence learns of this comment and it is mentioned to top US leaders in an early July 2001 briefing (see [July 10, 2001](#)). More details, such as how the US learned this or how many people bin Laden told this to, have not been made public. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 152](#)) But in the summer of 2001, bin Laden is overheard making a number of similar comments hinting at upcoming attacks (see [Summer 2001](#)).

June 16, 2001: Major Simulated Terrorist Attack Exercise is Held in Pennsylvania

A major training exercise based upon a simulated terrorist attack is held in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, which neighbors Somerset County where Flight 93 crashes on 9/11. The exercise, called Mall Strike 2001, is conducted in Greengate Mall, Hempfield, and involves over 600 emergency first responders and emergency managers responding to the simulated release of a toxic chemical agent and the simulated release of radiation and radiological contamination. ([Pavetti 2001](#); [Kline 9/11/2002](#)) Mall Strike is organized by the Pennsylvania Region 13 Working Group: a 13-county organization that began preparing for terrorist attacks in 1998. When Flight 93 crashes on September 11, the Region 13 Working Group's chair immediately contacts other members of the group and emergency teams are quickly deployed to the crash site. The group's four years of preparing and working together "allowed them to develop and train teams that could work efficiently together during an event of this magnitude." ([Department of Homeland Security 3/12/2003](#))

Early-Late June, 2001: Plot Facilitator Assists Four 9/11 Hijackers in United Arab Emirates



Documentation used by Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi in the United Arab Emirates. [Source: *US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division*] Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi assists four hijackers transiting Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on their way to the US: Fayez Ahmed Banihammad, Salem Alhazmi, Abdulaziz Alomari, and Saeed Alghamdi. Banihammad stays at al-Hawsawi's flat in nearby Sharjah for two or three weeks and they open bank accounts together (see [June 25, 2001](#) and [Early August-August 22, 2001](#)), and al-Hawsawi recognizes Alghamdi and Alhazmi from Afghanistan. He coordinates their arrival dates in telephone conversations with Mohamed Atta and then purchases tickets for them, paying for Alomari and Alhazmi. Al-Hawsawi provides this information to the US under interrogation, which is considered by some to make it unreliable (see [June 16, 2004](#)), and then again before a military tribunal in Guantanamo Bay to determine his combat status (see [March 9-April 28, 2007](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US department of Defense 3/21/2007](#)) It is unclear who assisted the nine muscle hijackers who transited Dubai before this: Waleed Alshehri, Satam Al Suqami, Ahmed Alghamdi, Maqad Moqed, Hamza Alghamdi, Mohand Alshehri, Ahmed Alnami, Ahmed Alhaznawi, and Wail Alshehri (see [April 11-June 28, 2001](#) and [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)).

June 17, 2001: USS *Cole* Investigators Withdrawn from Yemen Over Threats



A guard on the US embassy in Sana'a, Yemen. [Source: CNN] In early June new threats are received in Yemen and create a security crisis for the FBI team investigating the bombing of the USS *Cole*, as Yemeni authorities say they have arrested eight men who are part of a plot to blow up the US embassy in Aden, where the team is staying. Although the FBI is apparently on the verge of being granted access to a group of people who may have further information about the bombing, FBI manager John O'Neill and director Louis Freeh agree that the team should be pulled out and they all fly home. The investigation moved at a reduced pace after staff were relocated from Aden, where the attack occurred, to the country's capital. FBI manager John O'Neill will send agents back to Yemen on his last day with the FBI in late August (see [October 14-Late November, 2000](#)). (Calabresi 7/10/2001; Wright 7/10/2006³⁸)

June 19, 2001: Bin Laden Calls for 'Blood and Destruction' and Tells Followers to 'Penetrate America and Israel'



Scenes in the al-Qaeda recruitment video show operatives training at the al-Farouq camp in Afghanistan. [Source: CBC] An al-Qaeda recruitment video created months earlier is made public. The video had been circling amongst radical militants, but appears on the news worldwide after a Kuwaiti newspaper gets a copy. The video celebrates the bombing of the USS *Cole*. Bin Laden appears on the video, and while he does not take credit for the bombing, others in the video do. Bin Laden says that Muslims have to leave countries that are ruled by “allies of Jews and Christians,” and join his cause to be “prepared” for holy war. In an address to Palestinians, he calls for “blood, blood and destruction, destruction.” He says, “We give you the good news that the forces of Islam are coming...” He also issues a call to arms: “Your brothers in Palestine are waiting for you; it’s time to penetrate America and Israel and hit them where it hurts the most.” He also tells his supporters to “slay the United States and Israel.” A similar video appeared shortly before the bombing of the USS *Cole*. ([Associated Press 6/20/2001](#); [Associated Press 6/20/2001](#); [Newsweek 7/22/2001](#); [Eggen and Loeb 9/11/2001](#)) Interest in the videotape will grow in the Muslim world in the months before the 9/11 attacks (see [September 9, 2001](#)).

June 19, 2001: Hanjour Fails Night Flying Test

Hani Hanjour attempts to obtain pilot’s certification to fly at night, but is unsuccessful as he fails the test. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 67](#).) More details, such as the location of the airfield where the test was taken, are not known, but Hanjour’s flying skills were previously said to be poor (see [January-February 2001](#)).

June 19-25, 2001: Nawaf Alhazmi Flies to Miami to Meet Other 9/11 Hijackers

Nawaf Alhazmi flies from Newark to Miami and presumably meets the other hijackers there. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 243](#)) Earlier in the month the CIA showed the FBI a photo of Alhazmi taken at a meeting in Malaysia with other al-Qaeda members, but refused to identify him in the photo (see [June 11, 2001](#)). The CIA will watchlist Alhazmi in August (see August 23, 2001), but his Florida trip apparently fails to lead US intelligence to the other hijackers. He obtains a Florida driver's license on June 25 (see [April 12-September 7, 2001](#)), giving the same address as two of the other Florida-based hijackers, but this will not be noticed before 9/11 either. ([Bousquet and Ulferts 9/16/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 26](#).) Alhazmi purchased his ticket for the outward journey at Apollo Travel in Paterson, New Jersey, which was also used by Mohamed Atta (see [March 2001-September 1, 2001](#)), and perhaps some of the other hijackers (see [July 2001](#)). ([CNN 10/29/2001](#))

June 20, 2001: Time Magazine Mentions Al-Qaeda Planning to Use Planes as Weapons

Time magazine reports: "For sheer diabolical genius (of the Hollywood variety), nothing came close to the reports that European security services are preparing to counter a bin Laden attempt to assassinate President Bush at next month's G8 summit in Genoa, Italy. According to German intelligence sources, the plot involved bin Laden paying German neo-Nazis to fly remote-controlled model aircraft packed with Semtex into the conference hall and blow the leaders of the industrialized world to smithereens. (Paging Jerry Bruckheimer)." The report only appears on the Time website and not in the US version of the magazine. ([Karon 6/20/2001](#)) This report follows warnings given by Egypt the week before. In addition, there are more warnings before the summit in July. James Hatfield, author of an unflattering book on Bush called *Fortunate Son*, repeats the claim in print a few days later, writing: "German intelligence services have stated that bin Laden is covertly financing neo-Nazi skinhead groups throughout Europe to launch another terrorist attack at a high-profile American target." ([Hatfield 7/3/2001](#)) Two weeks later, Hatfield apparently commits suicide. However, there is widespread speculation that his death was payback for his revelation of Bush's cocaine use in the 1970s. ([York 7/20/2001](#))

June 21, 2001: Senior Al-Qaeda Officials Say Important Surprises Coming Soon



Baker Atyani, reporter for the Middle East Broadcasting Company, sits with Ayman al-Zawahiri and bin Laden. [Source: CNN] (click image to enlarge) Baker Atyani, a reporter for the Middle East Broadcasting Company interviews bin Laden. Keeping a promise made to Taliban leader Mullah Omar, bin Laden does not say anything substantive, but Ayman al-Zawahiri and other top al-Qaeda leaders promise that “[the] coming weeks will hold important surprises that will target American and Israeli interests in the world.” ([Mroue 6/24/2001](#); [Associated Press 6/25/2001](#)) Atyani says, “There is a major state of mobilization among the Osama bin Laden forces. It seems that there is a race of who will strike first. Will it be the United States or Osama bin Laden?” ([Reuters 6/23/2001](#)) He adds, “I told my channel that his followers were telling me that the coffin business will increase in the states, the United States.” ([CNN 8/23/2006](#)) After 9/11, Aytani will conclude, “I am 100 percent sure of this, and it was absolutely clear they had brought me there to hear this message.” ([Bamford 2004, pp. 236](#)) He is also shown a several-months-old videotape in which bin Laden declares, “It’s time to penetrate America and Israel and hit them where it hurts most.” The video is soon made public (see [June 21, 2001](#)). ([CNN 6/21/2001](#)) Author James Bamford theorizes that the original 9/11 plot involved a simultaneous attack on Israel and that shoe bomber Richard Reid may have originally wanted to target an Israeli aircraft around this time. For instance, Reid flies to Tel Aviv, Israel on July 12, 2001, to test if airline security would check his shoes for bombs. ([Bamford 2004, pp. 236-39](#))

June 21, 2001: Warnings Cause High Security Alert for US Forces in Arabia

US Central Command raises the force protection condition level for US forces based in the Arabian peninsula. The US Fifth Fleet moves out of port in Bahrain, regional military exercises are cancelled, and US embassies are temporarily closed. Newsweek reports that this alert comes after “Western intelligence agencies picked up ‘quite reliable’ signs of increased activity among Islamic extremists with Afghanistan ties. These indications are said to have included information picked up through electronic monitoring of suspected militants, who US experts say have acquired fairly sophisticated communications and computer equipment.” ([Newsweek 7/22/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 257](#))

June 21, 2001: Military Put on Alert Overseas in Response to Al-Qaeda Threat

US military forces in the Persian Gulf are placed on heightened alert. This is in response to an al-Qaeda video which surfaced the previous week containing the message, “It’s time to penetrate America and Israel and hit them where it hurts most” (see [June 19, 2001](#)). In six countries the force protection level is raised to Delta, the highest level possible. The US orders all its naval ships docked in those countries out to sea. Other defensive steps are also taken. However, as author James Bamford later notes, “No precautions were ever taken within the United States, only overseas.” ([Bamford 2004, pp. 241](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 256, 534](#))

June 22, 2001: CIA Warns of Imminent Al-Qaeda Suicide Attack

The CIA notifies its station chiefs about intelligence suggesting a possible al-Qaeda suicide attack on a US target over the next few days. CIA Director George Tenet asks that all US ambassadors be briefed on the warning. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 256](#))

June 22, 2001: Bush Adviser Karl Rove Meets with Suspected Supporters of US-Designated Terrorist Groups



Abduraham Alamoudi (far left), Bush (center), and Rove (far right). Judging from the background, this picture was probably taken in 2000. [*Source: PBS*] (click image to enlarge) Sami al-Arian attends a meeting in the White House complex with President Bush’s adviser Karl Rove. Al-Arian is one of 160 members of the American Muslim Council who are briefed on political matters by Rove and others. Al-Arian had been under investigation for at least six years by this time, and numerous media accounts reported that US investigators suggested al-Arian had ties to US-designated terrorist groups. Yet al-Arian passes the Secret Service’s stringent security check, enabling him to attend the meeting. ([Clemetson and Naughton 7/16/2001](#); [Allen and Leiby 2/22/2003](#)) “A law-enforcement official... [said] the Secret Service had flagged al-Arian as a potential terrorist prior to the event,” Newsweek later reports. “But White House aides, apparently reluctant to create an incident, let him through anyway.” ([Isikoff 3/3/2003](#)) In 2005, al-Arian will be found innocent of serious terrorism charges, but sentenced to almost three years in a US prison on lesser charges (see [December 6, 2005](#)). Abduraham Alamoudi is also at the meeting. US intelligence have suspected Alamoudi of ties to bin Laden and Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman since

1994 (see [Shortly After March 1994](#)). Rove and Bush met with Alamoudi in 1999 and 2000 as well (see [1999](#) and [July 2000](#)). Alamoudi will later be sentenced to 23 years in a US prison for illegal dealings with Libya (see [October 15, 2004](#)). ([Allen and Leiby 2/22/2003](#))

June 23, 2001: White House Warned ‘Bin Laden Attacks May Be Imminent’

A Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB) with the title “Bin Laden Attacks May Be Imminent” is sent to top White House officials. The details of this brief are not known. It is probable President Bush received this warning since SEIBs are usually rehashes of the previous days’ President Daily Briefing (see [January 20-September 10, 2001](#)). Also on this day a CIA cable is distributed with the title, “Possible Threat of Imminent Attack from Sunni Extremists.” The cable warns that there is a high probability of near-term “spectacular” terrorist attacks resulting in numerous casualties. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 256, 534](#))

June 25, 2001: Clarke Tells Rice That Pattern of Warnings Indicates an Upcoming Attack

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke warns National Security Adviser Rice and Assistant National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley that six separate intelligence reports show al-Qaeda personnel warning of a pending attack. These include a warning by al-Qaeda leaders that the next weeks “will witness important surprises” (see [June 21, 2001](#)) and a new recruitment video making further threats (see [June 19, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission will say that “Clarke [argues] that this [is] all too sophisticated to be merely a psychological operation to keep the United States on edge...” It is unclear how Rice and Hadley respond, but the CIA agrees with Clarke’s assessment. ([Newsweek 7/22/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 257](#))

June 25, 2001: 9/11 Hijacker Opens Bank Account in Dubai

9/11 facilitator “Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi” uses a cash deposit to open a checking account at a Standard Chartered Bank branch in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). (Al-Hawsawi is thought by some to be an alias for Saeed Sheikh, see [September 7-10, 2001](#) and [September 24, 2001-December 26, 2002](#)). Hijacker Fayeze Ahmed Banihammad opens a savings account and a checking account with approximately \$30,000 in UAE currency, at the same branch. ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 138](#).) Banihammad, a UAE national apparently from the Emirate of Sharjah, flies to the US two days later. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#).) Banihammad gives power of attorney to “al-Hawsawi” on July 18. Then “al-Hawsawi” sends Visa and ATM cards to Banihammad in Florida and deposits an

extra \$4,900 in Banihammad's account (see [Early August-August 22, 2001](#)). Banihammad uses the Visa card to buy his and Mohand Alshehri's airplane ticket for 9/11. ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#); [Eggen 12/13/2001](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ³) Several other hijackers have foreign accounts that they use while they are in the US (see [December 5, 2000](#)).

June 25, 2001: White House Warned Multiple Attacks Are Expected within Days

A Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB) sent to top White House officials is entitled, "Bin Laden and Associates Making Near-Term Threats." It reports that multiple attacks are expected over the coming days, including a "severe blow" against US and Israeli "interests" during the next two weeks. SEIBs usually contain the same information as the previous day's President Daily Briefings (see [January 20-September 10, 2001](#)), so it is probable Bush received this warning. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 256, 534](#))

June 26, 2001: State Department Issues Worldwide Caution

The State Department issues a worldwide caution warning American citizens of possible attacks. ([CNN 3/2002](#)) Around the same time, the State Department notifies all US embassies about the increased terrorist threat. ([US District Court of Eastern Virginia 5/4/2006, pp. 3](#) ³)

June 26, 2001: US, Russia, and Regional Powers Cooperate to Oust Taliban

An Indian magazine reports more details of the cooperative efforts of the US, India, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran against the Taliban regime: "India and Iran will 'facilitate' US and Russian plans for 'limited military action' against the Taliban if the contemplated tough new economic sanctions don't bend Afghanistan's fundamentalist regime." Earlier in the month, Russian President Vladimir Putin told a meeting of the Confederation of Independent States that military action against the Taliban may happen, possibly with Russian involvement using bases and forces from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as well. ([IndiaReacts 6/26/2001](#))

June 27, 2001: India and Pakistan Discuss Building Pipeline Project Through Iran

The Wall Street Journal reports that Pakistan and India are discussing jointly building a gas pipeline from Central Asian gas fields through Iran to circumvent the difficulties of

building the pipeline through Afghanistan. Iran has been secretly supporting the Northern Alliance to keep Afghanistan divided so no pipelines could be put through it. ([Pearl 6/27/2001](#))

June 27-July 16, 2001: Counterterrorism Plan Delayed with More Deputies Meetings

The first Bush administration deputy-secretary-level meeting on terrorism in late April is followed by three more deputy meetings. Each meeting focuses on one issue: one meeting is about al-Qaeda, one about the Pakistani situation, and one on Indo-Pakistani relations. Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke’s plan to roll back al-Qaeda, which has been discussed at these meetings, is worked on some more, and is finally approved by National Security Adviser Rice and the deputies on August 13. It now can move to the Cabinet-level before finally reaching President Bush. The Cabinet-level meeting is scheduled for later in August, but too many participants are on vacation, so the meeting takes place in early September. ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))

June 27, 2001-July 11, 2001: Al-Marabh Arrested But Quickly Released; While in Prison He Boasts of FBI Ties



A courtroom artist's depiction of Mahmoud Jaballah. [*Source: CBC*] On June 27, 2001, Nabil al-Marabh is arrested while trying to enter the US from Canada in the back of a tractor-trailer, carrying a forged Canadian passport and a bogus social insurance card. ([Walter 10/2/2001](#)) The New York Times will note that, “American officials had plenty of reason to believe that he was up to no good. Nine months earlier, he had been identified to American intelligence agents as one of Osama bin Laden’s operatives in the United States. American customs agents knew about money he had transferred to an associate of Osama bin Laden in the Middle East. And the Boston police had issued a warrant for his arrest after he violated probation for stabbing a friend with a knife. But [US officials] simply let him go.” ([Zernike 10/14/2001](#)) The US turns him back to the Canadians. He is held for two weeks, then released on bail after his lawyer argues that he can be kept in line by a religious uncle. The lawyer does not mention that the uncle also worked at a school headed by Mahmoud Jaballah. Canadian intelligence officials had long suspected Jaballah was a member of Islamic Jihad, the radical militant

group closely tied to al-Qaeda. In 1999, Canadian authorities arrested Jaballah and held him for 11 months for alleged terrorist ties. In August 2001, he will be arrested again, and will still be in Canadian custody as of late 2005. After Jaballah's second arrest, al-Marabh's uncle takes over as principal at Jaballah's school. ([Risen and Engelberg 10/14/2001](#); [Shephard 7/17/2004](#)) During his two-week detention in a Canadian prison, al-Marabh boasts to other prisoners that he remains in contact with the FBI. When one prisoner asks him why, his reply is "because I'm special." After 9/11, these prisoners will be puzzled that the FBI has not tried to interview them on what they know about al-Marabh. Al-Marabh will fail to show up for a Canadian deportation hearing in August and for a court date in September. It appears he quickly sneaks back into the US instead. ([Walter 10/2/2001](#)) Al-Marabh's Boston landlord will later be asked if he thought al-Marabh could have been a terrorist. The landlord will reply, "He was too stupid, number one, to be a terrorist. Because terrorists today are very intelligent people. But he might be used by some smarter or intelligent sources, who use people like that." ([ABC News 1/31/2002](#)) In July, just after he is released on bail in Canada, the Boston police will go to his former Boston address with a warrant for his March arrest, but he will not be there. ([Risen and Engelberg 10/14/2001](#)) Also at some point in July, Canadian authorities inform US Customs about some dubious financial transactions involving al-Marabh, and apparently the information is used in a Customs money-laundering probe (see [Spring 2001](#)). ([Thomas 10/1/2001](#)) One prominent former Canadian intelligence official will say that whether a more detailed look at al-Marabh at this time could have stopped the 9/11 attacks is an "intriguing question.... It becomes ever more intriguing as evidence seeps in." ([Dimmock and Sands 10/29/2001](#))

June 27-August 23, 2001: Hijackers Open Bank Accounts in New Jersey, Information Sufficient to Roll Up Plot

All the hijackers based in New Jersey open at least one bank account there:

- Hani Hanjour opens an account with the Hudson United Bank on June 27, 2001;
- He opens another account with the same bank three days later, when Nawaf Alhazmi also opens one;
- Ahmed Alghamdi, Nawaf Alhazmi, and Majed Moqed open accounts with the Dime Savings Bank on July 9, 2001;
- Khalid Almihdhar opens an account with the Hudson United Bank on July 18, 2001. He closes it on August 31;
- Salem Alhazmi opens an account with the Hudson United Bank on July 21, 2001;
- Abdulaziz Alomari opens an account with the Hudson United Bank on July 26, 2001;
- Khalid Almihdhar opens an account with the First Union National Bank on August 22, 2001 with a \$50 deposit. He changes his contact address on September 5;
- Hani Hanjour opens an account with First Union National Bank on August 23, 2001 with a \$50 deposit. He then attempts to withdraw \$5,000 on September 5 and \$4,900 from it on September 7, despite it containing nothing but the original \$50. Unable to make the withdrawal, he cashes a \$20 check instead. Hanjour closes the account the next day. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)); [US](#)

[District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) These hijackers will subsequently fly on three of the planes on 9/11. In its Terrorist Financing monograph the 9/11 Commission will note: “Among other things they used the debit cards to pay for hotel rooms—activity that would have enabled the FBI to locate them, had the FBI been able to get the transaction records fast enough. Moreover, Alhazmi used his debit card on August 27 to buy tickets for himself... and fellow Flight 77 hijacker Salem Alhazmi. If the FBI had found either Almihdhar or Nawaf Alhazmi, it could have found the other. They not only shared a common bank but frequently were together when conducting transactions. After locating Almihdhar and Alhazmi, the FBI could have potentially linked them through financial records to the other Flight 77 hijackers... Nawaf Alhazmi and Flight 77 pilot Hani Hanjour had opened separate savings accounts at the same small New Jersey bank at the same time and both gave the same address. On July 9, 2001, the other Flight 77 muscle hijacker, Majed Moqed, opened an account at another small New Jersey bank at the same time as Nawaf Alhazmi, and used the same address. Given timely access to the relevant records and sufficient time to conduct a follow-up investigation, the FBI could have shown that Hani Hanjour, Majed Moqed, and Salem al Hazmi were connected to potential terrorist operatives Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi.” ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 58-59, 141](#)) The hijackers also open several other bank accounts (see [June 28-July 7, 2000](#)).

June 28, 2001: Tenet Warns Rice of Imminent Al-Qaeda Attack

CIA Director Tenet writes an intelligence summary for National Security Adviser Rice: “It is highly likely that a significant al-Qaeda attack is in the near future, within several weeks.” A highly classified analysis at this time adds, “Most of the al-Qaeda network is anticipating an attack. Al-Qaeda’s overt publicity has also raised expectations among its rank and file, and its donors.” ([Gellman 5/17/2002](#)) The same day, CIA Director Tenet is briefed by another CIA official that bin Laden “will launch a significant terrorist attack against US and/or Israeli interests in the coming weeks. The attack will be spectacular and designed to inflict mass casualties against US facilities or interests” (see [June 28, 2001](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) Apparently, these warnings are partly based on a warning given by al-Qaeda leaders to a reporter a few days earlier (see [June 21, 2001](#)). Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke also later asserts that Tenet tells him around this time, “It’s my sixth sense, but I feel it coming. This is going to be the big one.” ([Clarke 2004, pp. 235](#))

June 28, 2001: Clarke Warns Rice That Threat Level Has Reached a Peak

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke writes an e-mail to National Security Adviser Rice saying that the pattern of al-Qaeda activity indicating attack planning has “reached a crescendo.” He adds, “A series of new reports continue to convince me and analysts at

State, CIA, DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency], and NSA that a major terrorist attack or series of attacks is likely in July.” For instance, one report from an al-Qaeda source in late June warned that something “very, very, very, very” big is about to happen, and that most of bin Laden’s network is anticipating the attack. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 256](#); [US District Court of Eastern Virginia 5/4/2006, pp. 1](#)³) CIA Director Tenet sends Rice a very similar warning on the same day (see [June 28, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission does not record Rice taking any action in response to these warnings. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 256](#))

June 28, 2001: CIA Leaders Told Bin Laden Will Launch Spectacular Attack against US and/or Israeli Targets within Weeks

A CIA official known only as Rich B. gives a briefing on the state of the terrorism threat to CIA Director George Tenet and Counterterrorism Center Director Cofer Black. According to an account by Tenet in his 2007 book, Rich identifies more than ten specific pieces of intelligence about impending attacks. Tenet claims that experienced analysts call this intelligence “both unprecedented and virtually 100 percent reliable.” Rich specifically mentions:

- A key Afghanistan training camp commander was seen weeping with joy because he believed he could see his trainees in heaven, implying a successful suicide attack to come.
- For the last three to five months, al-Qaeda’s number two leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, is believed to have been involved in an unprecedented effort to prepare terrorist operations.
- Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, one of the USS *Cole* bombing masterminds, has disappeared. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 149](#)) Leaders of the *Cole* bombing are believed to be planning new attacks against the US. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 147](#))
- Other important operatives around the world are disappearing or preparing for martyrdom. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 149](#))

Rich concludes by saying, “Based on a review of all source reporting over the last five months, we believe that [bin Laden] will launch a significant terrorist attack against US and/or Israeli interests in the coming weeks. The attack will be spectacular and designed to inflict mass casualties against US facilities or interests. Attack preparations have been made. Attack will occur with little or no warning.” ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 322](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 149](#)) This warning, including the concluding quote, is shared with “senior Bush administration officials” in early July. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

June 29, 2001: Surveillance Indicates Al-Qaeda Will Attack Genoa Summit with Multiple Planes



Abu Hamza al-Masri. *[Source: BBC]* The Italian Secret Service SISDE records a meeting in the Finsbury Park mosque, in northern London, Britain. Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Masri (an Afghanistan war veteran heading a radical Islamic group), Mustapha Melki (linked to al-Qaeda member Abu Doha), and a man only known as Omar talk to each other. Notes of the meeting state, “Abu Hamza proposed an ambitious but unlikely plot which involved attacks carried by planes.” This is apparently a reference to an attack on the upcoming G8 summit in Genoa scheduled in several weeks. But unlike other reports of an al-Qaeda attack on that summit, this refers to an attack using more than one plane. The notes of the meeting conclude, “The belief that Osama bin Laden is plotting an attack is spreading among the radical Islamic groups.” ([Lorenzi 9/13/2001](#))

June 29, 2001: MASCAL Training Exercise Held at Fort Belvoir

A MASCAL (mass casualty) training exercise is held at Fort Belvoir, an army base 12 miles south of the Pentagon. It is “designed to enhance the first ready response in dealing with the effects of a terrorist incident involving an explosion.” ([Passino 7/5/2001](#))

Late Summer 2001: US Contingency Plans to Attack Afghanistan

According to a later Guardian report, “reliable western military sources say a US contingency plan exist[s] on paper by the end of the summer to attack Afghanistan from the north.” ([Leigh 9/26/2001](#))

Late Summer 2001: US Intelligence Learns Al-Qaeda Is Considering Mounting Operations in the US

US intelligence learns that an al-Qaeda operative is considering mounting operations in the US. There is no information on the timing or specific targets. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

Late June 2001: FAA Disregards Recommended Antiterrorist Measures

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke gives a direct warning to the FAA to increase security measures in light of an impending terrorist attack. The FAA refuses to take such measures. ([Wright 1/14/2002](#))

Late June 2001: Bin Al-Shibh Travels to Malaysia; Atta Fails to Meet Him There

According to a statement later made by plot facilitator Ramzi bin al-Shibh under interrogation, at this time he is to courier operational details that are too sensitive to trust to telephone or e-mail to Mohamed Atta. He arranges a meeting with Atta in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and travels there on a genuine Saudi passport in the name of Hasan Ali al-Assiri. While in Kuala Lumpur, bin al-Shibh applies for a Yemeni passport, but Atta does not show up and bin al-Shibh travels to Bangkok. Atta fails to come to Bangkok as well and bin al-Shibh then flies to Amsterdam and travels to Hamburg by train. In Hamburg he purchases a plane ticket to Spain, where he finally meets Atta (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 5](#)) However, the reliability of such statements by detainees is questioned due to the methods used to extract them (see [June 16, 2004](#)). Another of the hijackers, Khalid Almihdhar, is in Malaysia around this time, but it is not clear whether he and bin al-Shibh meet (see [June 2001](#)).

Late June-Early July 2001: KLA Forces Are Rescued by US in Macedonia

At the end of June, the KLA had captured the Macedonian town of Aracinovo on the outskirts of Kopje. However, within a few days 500 KLA fighters are surrounded by the Macedonian military and elite police units, cut off from re-supply and hopelessly outnumbered. The Macedonian forces are closing in and could easily capture or kill the entire KLA force there, except NATO intervenes. NATO brokers a deal with the Macedonians, under the threat of extreme economic sanctions, under which NATO would oversee the demilitarization of Aracinovo and transport the captured KLA members to internment camps in Kosovo. US troops then enter Aracinovo with 15 buses to evacuate the trapped KLA fighters. They are escorted safely away from the surrounding Macedonian forces, and then, contrary to the agreement, the KLA members are released to rejoin other KLA forces and fight again. The American forces involved in the rescue include 16 members of MPRI (see [August 1994](#)) (see [1999](#)), who had been assisting and training the KLA forces. ([Taylor 2002, pp. 120-121](#))

Late June-August, 2001: Atta Calls Plot Facilitator Several Times

9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta makes several calls to plot facilitator Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi to coordinate the arrival in the US of four muscle hijackers (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)) and one candidate hijacker (see [August 4, 2001](#)) al-Hawsawi is assisting in the United Arab Emirates. Al-Hawsawi is in contact with Atta both before tickets are purchased, to learn where the hijackers are traveling, and after the hijackers arrive, to check whether they have made it through immigration. Atta and two other hijackers also call al-Hawsawi later to make arrangements for returning unspent money (see [September 5-10, 2001](#)). (US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006 ³; US department of Defense 3/21/2007 ³)

June 30, 2001: White House Warned ‘Bin Laden Planning High-Profile Attacks’

A Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB) sent to top White House officials is entitled, “Bin Laden Planning High-Profile Attacks.” It states that bin Laden operatives expect near-term attacks to have dramatic consequences of catastrophic proportions. Despite evidence of delays possibly caused by heightened US security, the planning for the attacks is continuing. The briefing also contains another report entitled, “Bin Laden Threats Are Real.” SEIBs are typically based on the previous day’s President Daily Briefings (see [January 20-September 10, 2001](#)), so it is probable Bush is given this warning. Also on this day, Saudi Arabia declares its highest level of terror alert. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 256-257, 534](#); [US District Court of Eastern Virginia 5/4/2006, pp. 3](#) ³)

June 30-July 1, 2001: New York Times Reporter Told Al-Qaeda Is ‘Planning Something So Big the US Will Have to Respond,’ but Fails to Publish Warning



The three authors of the book *Germes*, Judith Miller (left), Stephen Engelberg (top), and William Broad (bottom). This was the book Miller was working on before 9/11; it was published several weeks after 9/11. [*Source: Publicity photo*] New York Times reporter Judith Miller learns her government counterterrorism sources are worried that al-Qaeda is going to attack a US target on the Fourth of July

holiday. There has been an increase in chatter about an impending attack. In 2005, Miller will recall, “Everyone in Washington was very spun-up in the counterterrorism world at that time. I think everybody knew that an attack was coming—everyone who followed this.... I got the sense that part of the reason that I was being told of what was going on was that the people in counterterrorism were trying to get the word to the president or the senior officials through the press, because they were not able to get listened to themselves.” She has a conversation with a still-anonymous top-level White House source who reveals there is some concern about a top-secret NSA intercept between two al-Qaeda operatives. She explains, “They had been talking to one another, supposedly expressing disappointment that the United States had not chosen to retaliate more seriously against what had happened to the [USS] Cole. And one al-Qaeda operative was overheard saying to the other, ‘Don’t worry; we’re planning something so big now that the US will have to respond.’ And I was obviously floored by that information. I thought it was a very good story: (1) the source was impeccable; (2) the information was specific, tying al-Qaeda operatives to, at least, knowledge of the attack on the Cole; and (3) they were warning that something big was coming, to which the United States would have to respond. This struck me as a major page one-potential story.” Miller tells her editor Stephen Engelberg about the story the next day. But Engelberg says, “You have a great first and second paragraph. What’s your third?” Miller finds only one other source to confirm these details. She later learns from her first source that the conversation occurred in Yemen. Though the telephone number is never disclosed, some circumstances suggest one of the parties taking part in the call may have been at the al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana’a, Yemen, that is monitored by US intelligence. One of the hijackers, Khalid Almihdhar, lives there with his wife and children (see [Late August 1998](#)), and communicates there will be forthcoming attacks to at least one family member (see [Late October 2000-July 4, 2001](#)). The hijackers in the US apparently call the Yemen hub around this time (see [August 2001](#)). Miller later regrets not following through more because she “had a book coming out” as well as other stories and that there wasn’t a “sense of immediacy” about the information. In 2005, Engelberg will confirm Miller’s story and agree that he wanted more specifics before running the story. Engelberg also later wonders “maybe I made the wrong call,” asking, “More than once I’ve wondered what would have happened if we’d run the piece?” The New York Times has yet to mention the warning in all of their post-9/11 reporting and the 9/11 Commission has never mentioned anything about the warning either. In 2005, Miller will spend 85 days in jail for refusing to reveal a source and then leave the New York Times after widespread criticism about her reporting. ([McCollam 9/2005](#); [O’Connor and Malone 5/18/2006](#); [Strupp 5/18/2006](#))

July 2001: CIA Learns Impending Attack Widely Known in Afghanistan

The CIA hears an individual who had recently been in Afghanistan say, “Everyone is talking about an impending attack.” ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [Milbank 9/19/2002](#)) This corresponds with evidence that bin Laden and others were telling many in Afghanistan about the attacks at this time (see [Summer 2001](#)).

July 2001: India Warns US of Possible Terror Attacks

India gives the US general intelligence on possible terror attacks; details are not known. US government officials later will confirm that Indian intelligence had information “that two Islamist radicals with ties to Osama bin Laden were discussing an attack on the White House,” but apparently, this particular information is not included in the July general warning and is not be given to the US until two days after 9/11. ([Cameron 5/17/2002](#))

July 2001: NORAD Plans a Mock Simultaneous Hijacking Threat From Inside the US

NORAD is already planning for the Amalgam Virgo 02 exercise. This exercise, scheduled for June 2002, will involve the simulation of two simultaneous commercial aircraft hijackings. One plane, a Delta 757, flown by Delta pilots, will fly from Salt Lake City, Utah to Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage, Alaska. It will be “hijacked” by FBI agents posing as terrorists. The other plane will be a Navy C-9 bound from Oak Harbor, Washington to Vancouver, British Columbia, and will be “hijacked” by Royal Canadian Mounted Police. On both planes, military personnel will act as civilian passengers. US and Canadian fighters are to respond, and either force the planes to land or simulate shooting them down. Describing Amalgam Virgo 02 to the 9/11 Commission, NORAD’s Major General Craig McKinley later says, “Threats of killing hostages or crashing were left to the script writers to invoke creativity and broaden the required response for players.” About 1,500 people will participate in the exercise. USA Today will note that this is an exception to NORAD’s claim that, prior to 9/11, it focused only on external threats to the US and did not consider the possibility of threats arising from within the US. 9/11 Commissioner Richard Ben-Veniste will similarly comment that this planned exercise shows that, despite frequent comments to the contrary, the military considered simultaneous hijackings before 9/11. ([CNN 6/4/2002](#); [Gilmore 6/4/2002](#); [Wadhams 6/5/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#); [Komarow and Squitieri 4/18/2004](#))

July 2001: Seven 9/11 Hijackers Allegedly Obtain IDs in New Jersey

FBI Director Robert Mueller will later tell the joint inquiry of Congress that, “In July 2001, Mohamed Atta, Abdulaziz Alomari, Nawaf Alhazmi, Salem Alhazmi, Khalid Almihdhar, Ahmed Alghamdi, and Majed Moqed purchased personal identification cards at Apollo Travel in Paterson, New Jersey. Atta purchased a Florida identification card, while the others purchased New Jersey identification cards.” ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) Although the travel agency’s owner will be interviewed several times after 9/11 and will mention selling plane tickets to Atta and Nawaf Alhazmi, he will never mention selling them ID cards (see [June 19-25, 2001](#) and [March 2001-September 1, 2001](#)). ([Chadwick 9/27/2001](#); [Maddux 9/27/2001](#); [CNN 10/29/2001](#); [Berry 9/19/2002](#)) Neither the 9/11 Commission or any other body will say any hijacker received an ID card from Apollo.

However, the Commission will say that a similar group of hijackers obtained similar ID cards around this time (see [\(July-August 2001\)](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 27](#)) Some of these cards may have been obtained from Mohamed el-Atriss, who will be sentenced to jail for selling the hijackers false ID (see [\(July-August 2001\)](#) and [November 2002-June 2003](#)). El-Atriss will be co-operating with the FBI at the time Mueller makes this statement and will have promised to “keep his eyes and ears open” for other terrorists (see [September 13, 2001-Mid 2002](#)).

July 2001: CIA Rejects Third FBI Request for Malaysia Summit Information

Ali Soufan, an FBI agent working on the investigation into the USS *Cole* bombing, submits a third request to the CIA for information about travel by al-Qaeda operatives in Southeast Asia (see [Late November 2000](#) and [April 2001](#)). Whereas in previous requests to the CIA he had only asked for information about a possible meeting somewhere in Southeast Asia, he has now developed a much clearer understanding of the relationship between al-Qaeda manager Khallad bin Attash and the *Cole* conspirators, and correctly suspects some operatives met in Malaysia in January 2000. He asks the CIA about this and about a trip by bin Attash to Bangkok to meet another two members of the *Cole* bombing team (see [January 8-15, 2000](#)). The CIA actually monitored the meeting Soufan suspects took place in Malaysia (see January 5-8, 2000) and considered it so important that the CIA director and other top officials were repeatedly briefed about it (see [January 6-9, 2000](#)), but the CIA does not respond to his inquiry. FBI managers are also aware of some of this information, including the existence of an al-Qaeda meeting in Malaysia at the time Soufan suspects one took place, but they apparently do not tell Soufan either (see [January 6, 2000](#)). ([Wright 7/10/2006](#)) Author Lawrence Wright will later say: “The FBI’s investigating the death of 17 American sailors and they’re asking the CIA for information that would solve the crime. And the CIA is refusing, essentially obstructing justice.” ([Wright 10/5/2006](#))

July 2001: Jordan Warns that Al-Qaeda Is Planning Attack Inside US

In February 2002, it will be reported on the ABC News program Nightline that in July 2001, “Jordanian intelligence picked up an... alarming threat. ABC News has learned Jordan told US officials al-Qaeda was planning an attack on American soil.” ([ABC News 2/19/2002](#)) It has been reported elsewhere that in late summer 2001, Jordan warns the US that aircraft will be used in a major attack inside the US, but it is not known if that is a separate warning or the same as this one (see [Late Summer 2001](#)). Also in late July, Jordan will offer the US to send its elite troops to Afghanistan to attack al-Qaeda, an offer the US turns down (see [July 24, 2001](#)).

July-August 2001: Translator Alleges FBI Agent Is Deliberately Deceived Regarding Skyscraper Warning

FBI translator Sibel Edmonds later will make some allegations of serious FBI misconduct, but the specifics of these allegations will be generally publicly unknown due to a gag order placed on her. However, in comments made in 2004 and 2005, she will allege that in July or August 2001, an unnamed FBI field agent discovers foreign documentation revealing “certain information regarding blueprints, pictures, and building material for skyscrapers being sent overseas. It also reveal[s] certain illegal activities in obtaining visas from certain embassies in the Middle East, through network contacts and bribery.” The document is in a foreign language and apparently the agent isn’t given an adequate translation of it before 9/11. Approximately one month after 9/11, the agent will suspect the original translation is insufficient and will ask the FBI Washington Field Office to retranslate it. The significant information mentioned above will finally be revealed, but FBI translation unit supervisor Mike Feghali will decide not to send this information back to the field agent. Instead, Feghali will send a note stating that the translation was reviewed and the original translation was accurate. The field agent will never receive the accurate translation. This is all according to Edmonds’ letter. She will claim Feghali “has participated in certain criminal activities and security breaches, and [engaged] in covering up failures and criminal conducts within the department...” While the mainstream media will not yet report on this incident, in January 2005 an internal government report will determine that most of Edmonds’ allegations have been verified and none of them could be refuted. ([Edmonds 8/1/2004](#); [Edmonds 8/22/2005](#))

July 2001-December 2001: Ali Mohamed Never Publicly Sentenced; Whereabouts Are Unknown



Ali Mohamed, from a late 1980s US Army video. [Source: *US Army*]The State Department reported in May 2001, “[Ali Mohamed’s] sentencing date has been tentatively set for July 2001.” ([Aita 5/15/2001](#)) But in fact, his sentencing date never comes, or least is never publicly revealed. The Raleigh News and Observer notes in October 2001, “Defense lawyers and many other observers believe that Mohamed, who has not yet been sentenced, is now cooperating with the United States, though the government has never confirmed this. When he is sentenced, he could receive as little as

25 years under his plea agreement.” ([Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#)) The San Francisco Chronicle similarly notes shortly after 9/11 that Mohamed “has never been sentenced, and defense lawyers and security experts believe he had begun giving evidence about bin Laden to the government in hopes of winning his release from prison.” ([Williams and McCormick 9/21/2001](#)) At the end of December 2001, the Associated Press reports that Mohamed’s sentencing “has been postponed indefinitely.” ([Hays and Theimer 12/31/2001](#)) Larry Johnson, a former CIA agent and the State Department’s director of counterterrorism during the elder Bush’s administration, speculates, “He was an active source for the FBI, a double agent.” Further, Johnson believes that “The reason he didn’t testify was so they wouldn’t have to face uncomfortable statements on the FBI. They are more interested in covering their ass.” ([Sullivan and Neff 10/21/2001](#)) There are a flurry of articles about Mohamed in the months after 9/11, but then his story will fade. The 9/11 Commission will mention him only twice in their 2004 final report, and don’t bring up the possibility of him being a double agent, or even his collaboration with the CIA and FBI. They merely note his role in the 1998 embassy bombings and his training of some of the 1993 World Trade Center bombers. He will be described as “a former Egyptian army officer who had moved to the United States in the mid-1980s, enlisted in the US Army, and became an instructor at Fort Bragg.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 67, 472](#)) In 2006, his wife will reveal that he is still imprisoned and still has not been sentenced (see [March 2006](#)).

July-September 2001: 9/11 Hijacker Associate Travels around US and to Canada and Trinidad

In the weeks before 9/11, an associate of the hijackers, Adnan Shukrijumah, travels around the US, visiting New York, Washington, and Chicago, as well as Montreal in Canada, for about a week each. According to the FBI, he is scouting potential terrorist targets. Shukrijumah then visits his childhood home, Charlieville in Trinidad and Tobago, for a week around the date of the attacks. Shukrijumah lives near the hijackers in Florida in 2001 and is apparently seen with Mohamed Atta (see [2000-2001](#) and [May 2, 2001](#)). He was also investigated by the FBI in the spring of 2001, as they thought he might be involved in terrorism (see [Spring 2001](#) and [April-May 2001](#)). ([Meyer 9/3/2006](#))

July-August 2001: US Finally Agrees to See Sudan’s Al-Qaeda Files

In the summer of 2001, the team officially concludes that the Sudan government no longer has any terrorist ties. However, the US does not take Sudan off its official list of terrorist states (and as of 2007 Sudan has yet to be taken off the list). A few weeks before 9/11, the US team finally agrees to examine Sudan’s files on al-Qaeda. The US has repeatedly been offered the files and turned them down (see [March 8, 1996-April 1996](#), [April 5, 1997](#), and [May 2000](#)), but by now the bulk of the files are six years old and date back to when bin Laden lived in Sudan. It is not entirely certain if the files are handed over before 9/11, but one account specifies that the files are handed over in July 2001.

Vanity Fair will later note that in any case, “Events suggest that by then it was too late.” ([Rose 9/30/2001](#); [Rose 1/2002](#); [Minter 2003](#), pp. 148)

July 1, 2001: Senators Warn of Al-Qaeda Attack Within Three Months

Senators Dianne Feinstein (D) and Richard Shelby (R), both members of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, appear on CNN’s “Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer,” and warn of potential attacks by bin Laden. Feinstein says, “One of the things that has begun to concern me very much as to whether we really have our house in order, intelligence staff have told me that there is a major probability of a terrorist incident within the next three months.” ([CNN 3/2002](#))

July 2, 2001: FBI Warns of Possible Al-Qaeda Attacks; Little Action Results

The FBI’s Counterterrorism Division issues a warning of possible al-Qaeda attacks to law enforcement agencies called “Potential Anti-US Attacks.” It states, “[T]here are threats to be worried about overseas. While we cannot foresee attacks domestically, we cannot rule them out.” It further states, “[T]he FBI has no information indicating a credible threat of terrorist attack in the United States.” It asks law enforcement agencies to “exercise vigilance” and “report suspicious activities” to the FBI. Two weeks later, acting FBI Director Thomas Pickard has a conference call with all field office heads mentioning the heightened threat. However, FBI personnel later fail to recall any heightened sense of threat from summer 2001. Only those in the New York field office took any action or recall this later. ([CNN 3/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#))

July 2, 2001: Osama bin Laden Periodically Undergoes Dialysis with Approval of the ISI

Indian sources claim that “bin Laden, who suffers from renal deficiency, has been periodically undergoing dialysis in a Peshawar military hospital with the knowledge and approval of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), if not of [Pakistani President] Musharraf himself.” ([Raman 7/2/2001](#)) While one might question the bias of an Indian newspaper on this issue, highly respected intelligence newsletter Jane’s Intelligence Digest later reports the story, and adds, “None of [these details] will be unfamiliar to US intelligence operatives who have been compiling extensive reports on these alleged activities.” ([Jane’s Intelligence Digest 9/20/2001](#)) CBS will later report bin Laden had emergency medical care in Pakistan the day before 9/11. ([CBS News 1/28/2002](#)) If these stories are true, it appears Pakistan could have captured bin Laden for the US at any time. The Jane’s Intelligence Digest article adds, “It is becoming clear that both the Taliban and al-Qaeda would have found it difficult to have continued functioning—including the latter group’s

terrorist activities—without substantial aid and support from Islamabad [Pakistan].” ([Jane's Intelligence Digest 9/20/2001](#))

July 3, 2001: Rare Discussion Takes Place Between National Security Advisers on Terrorism

This is one of only two dates that Bush’s national security leadership discusses terrorism. (The other discussion occurs on September 4.) Apparently, the topic is only mentioned in passing and is not the focus of the meeting. This group, made up of the national security adviser, CIA director, defense secretary, secretary of state, Joint Chiefs of staff chairman and others, met around 100 times before 9/11 to discuss a variety of topics, but apparently rarely terrorism. The White House “aggressively defended the level of attention [to terrorism], given only scattered hints of al-Qaeda activity.” This lack of discussion stands in sharp contrast to the Clinton administration and public comments by the Bush administration. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#)) Bush said in February 2001, “I will put a high priority on detecting and responding to terrorism on our soil.” A few months earlier, Tenet told Congress, “The threat from terrorism is real, it is immediate, and it is evolving” (see [February 7, 2001](#)). ([Bridis 6/28/2002](#))

July 3, 2001: Tenet Makes Urgent Request for Help from Allies

CIA Director Tenet makes an urgent special request to 20 friendly foreign intelligence services, asking for the arrests of anyone on a list of known al-Qaeda operatives. ([Gellman 5/17/2002](#)) Also in late June, the CIA orders all its station chiefs overseas to share information on al-Qaeda with their host governments and to push for immediate disruptions of al-Qaeda cells. Vice President Cheney asks Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah for help on July 5, and counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke makes appeals to other foreign officials. As a result, several terrorist operatives are detained by foreign governments. According to a later analysis by the 9/11 Commission, this possibly disrupts operations in the Persian Gulf and Italy (see [June 13, 2001](#)) and perhaps averts attacks against two or three US embassies. For instance, al-Qaeda operative Djamel Beghal is detained by the French government in July and gives up information about a plot to attack the US embassy in France (see [July 28, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 258, 534](#))

July 3, 2001: US Intelligence Hears Bin Laden Promise Attack Is Near

US intelligence learns that bin Laden has recently promised colleagues that an attack is near. This warning is first revealed in CIA Director George Tenet’s 2007 book. He will not explain how this was known except that it was “learned as a result of intelligence.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 149](#) Sources: [George J. Tenet](#))

July 4, 2001: Hijacker Who Should Have Been on Watch List Re-enters US Without Difficulty on Invalid Passport, Lists WTC as Destination

Hijacker Khalid Almihdhar reenters the US. The CIA and FBI have recently been showing interest in him, but have still failed to place him on a watch list of US-designated terrorists. Had he been placed on a watch list by this date, he would have been stopped and possibly detained as he tried to enter the US. He enters on a new US visa obtained in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on June 13, 2001. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 169](#)) His passport is invalid, as it lacks an expiry date. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 27](#)) His visa application said that he had not previously been to the US, which is not true (see [January 15, 2000](#)), so his entry is illegal. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 351](#)) The FBI notes that he returns just days after the last of the hijacker “muscle” has entered the US, and speculates that he returns because his job in bringing them over is finished. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 169](#)) He lists the Marriot Hotel in the World Trade Center complex as his destination, but does not stay there that night. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 52](#))

July 4-14, 2001: Bin Laden Reportedly Receives Lifesaving Treatment in Dubai, Said to Meet with CIA While There



The American Hospital in Dubai. [*Source: American Hospital*] Bin Laden, America’s most wanted criminal with a \$5 million bounty on his head, supposedly receives lifesaving treatment for renal failure from American specialist Dr. Terry Callaway at the American hospital in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. He is possibly accompanied by Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri (who is said to be bin Laden’s personal physician as well as al-Qaeda’s second-in-command), plus several bodyguards. Callaway supposedly treated bin Laden in 1996 and 1998, also in Dubai. Callaway later refuses to answer any questions on this matter. ([Richard 10/31/2001](#); [Agence France-Presse 11/1/2001](#); [Sage 11/1/2001](#)) During his stay, bin Laden is visited by “several members of his family and Saudi personalities,” including Prince Turki al-Faisal, then head of Saudi intelligence. ([Sampson 11/1/2001](#)) On July 12, bin Laden reportedly meets with CIA agent Larry Mitchell in the hospital. Mitchell apparently lives in Dubai as an Arab specialist under the cover of being a consular agent. The CIA, the Dubai hospital, and even bin Laden deny the story. The two news organizations that broke the story, Le Figaro and Radio France International, stand by their reporting. ([Richard 10/31/2001](#);

[Labeviere 11/1/2001](#)) The explosive story is widely reported in Europe, but there are only two, small wire service stories on it in the US. ([Bryant 11/1/2001](#); [Laden 11/10/2001](#)) The Guardian claims that the story originated from French intelligence, “which is keen to reveal the ambiguous role of the CIA, and to restrain Washington from extending the war to Iraq and elsewhere.” The Guardian adds that during his stay bin Laden is also visited by a second CIA officer. ([Sampson 11/1/2001](#)) In 2003, reporter Richard Labeviere will provide additional details of what he claims happened in a book entitled “The Corridors of Terror.” He claims he learned about the meeting from a contact in the Dubai hospital. He claims the event was confirmed in detail by a Gulf prince who presented himself as an adviser to the Emir of Bahrain. This prince claimed the meeting was arranged by Prince Turki al-Faisal. The prince said, “By organizing this meeting... Turki thought he could start direct negotiations between [bin Laden] and the CIA on one fundamental point: that bin Laden and his supporters end their hostilities against American interests.” In exchange, the CIA and Saudis would allow bin Laden to return to Saudi Arabia and live freely there. The meeting is said to be a failure. ([Reuters 11/14/2003](#)) On July 15, Larry Mitchell reportedly returns to CIA headquarters to report on his meeting with bin Laden. ([Labeviere 11/1/2001](#)) French counterterrorism expert Antoine Sfeir says the story of this meeting has been verified and is not surprising: It “is nothing extraordinary. Bin Laden maintained contacts with the CIA up to 1998. These contacts have not ceased since bin Laden settled in Afghanistan. Up to the last moment, CIA agents hoped that bin Laden would return to the fold of the US, as was the case before 1989.” ([Bouilhet 11/1/2001](#)) A CIA spokesman calls the entire account of bin Laden’s stay at Dubai “sheer fantasy.” ([Reuters 11/14/2003](#))

July 5, 2001: Genoa Planes as Weapons Threat Helps Inspire Bush to Ask For Famous August 2001 Briefing

In 2002, Newsweek will report, “The White House acknowledged for the first time, [President] Bush was privately beginning to worry about the stream of terror warnings he was hearing that summer, most of them aimed at US targets abroad. On July 5, five days before the Phoenix memo (see [July 10, 2001](#)), Bush directed [Condoleezza] Rice to figure out what was going on domestically.” ([Hirsh and Isikoff 5/27/2002](#)) In 2004, President Bush will explain why he requested this. “[T]he reason I did is because there had been a lot of threat intelligence from overseas. And part of it had to do with the Genoa [Italy] G8 conference that I was going to attend.” ([US President 4/19/2004](#)) Though he doesn’t mention it, the chief security concern at the late July 2001 conference he mentions is intelligence that al-Qaeda plans to fly an airplane into the conference. This threat is so widely reported before the conference (with some reports before July 5 (see [June 13, 2001](#)) (see [Mid-July 2001](#))) that the attack is called off (see [July 20-22, 2001](#)). For instance, in late June, Time magazine mentioned a German intelligence report of a bin Laden plot “to fly remote-controlled model aircraft packed with Semtex into the conference hall and blow the leaders of the industrialized world to smithereens.” (see [June 20, 2001](#)) Bush’s request will result in the later-famous August 6, 2001 briefing entitled, “bin Laden Determined to Strike in US.” (see [August 6, 2001](#)) ([US President 4/19/2004](#))

July 5, 2001: Clarke Warns Domestic Agencies of ‘Something Spectacular’ Planned by Al-Qaeda

At the request of National Security Adviser Rice and White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke leads a meeting of the Counterterrorism Security Group, attended by officials from a dozen federal agencies, including the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the FAA, the Coast Guard, the Secret Service, Customs, the CIA, and the FBI. The CIA and FBI give briefings on the growing al-Qaeda threat. ([Gellman 5/17/2002](#); [Elliott 8/4/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 258](#)) Then Clarke later recalls saying, “You’ve just heard that CIA thinks al-Qaeda is planning a major attack on us. So do I. You heard CIA say it would probably be in Israel or Saudi Arabia. Maybe. But maybe it will be here. Just because there is no evidence that says that it will be here, does not mean it will be overseas. They may try to hit us at home. You have to assume that is what they are going to do.” ([Clarke 2004, pp. 236](#)) Two attendees later recall Clarke stating that “something really spectacular is going to happen here, and it’s going to happen soon.” One who attended the meeting later calls the evidence that “something spectacular” is being planned by al-Qaeda “very gripping.” ([Gellman 5/17/2002](#); [Elliott 8/4/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 256](#)) Clarke directs every counterterrorist office to cancel vacations, defer non-vital travel, put off scheduled exercises, and place domestic rapid-response teams on much shorter alert. However, there is very poor follow up to the meeting and the attendees don’t share the warnings with their home agencies (see [Shortly After July 5, 2001](#)). By early August, all of these emergency measures are no longer in effect. ([CNN 3/2002](#); [Gellman 5/17/2002](#))

July 5, 2001: Ashcroft Is Warned of Imminent, Multiple Attacks from Al-Qaeda

The CIA briefs Attorney General Ashcroft on the al-Qaeda threat. Several senior CIA Counterterrorism Center officials warn him that a significant attack is imminent, preparations for multiple attacks are in the late stages or already complete, and that little additional warning can be expected. He is told the attack is more likely to occur overseas than in the US. He was also briefed by the CIA on the al-Qaeda threat on May 15, 2001. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 258-259, 534](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 150](#)) CIA Director Tenet will later claim in a book that at the end of the briefing, Ashcroft turned to some FBI personnel and asked them, “Why are they telling me this? Why am I not hearing this from you?” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 150](#)) One week later, the FBI will brief him about the al-Qaeda threat in the US and he will reportedly reply, “I do not want to hear about this anymore” (see [July 12, 2001](#)). By the end of July, he will stop flying commercial aircraft in the US (see [July 26, 2001](#)).

July 5, 2001: Atta Pulled over for Speeding, Police Do not Notice Warrant for his Arrest

Mohamed Atta is pulled over for speeding in Delray Beach, Florida, but is only given a warning. There is a warrant for Atta's arrest, as he skipped court following a previous traffic offense (see [April 26, 2001](#)), but it apparently has not yet been entered in the database, so the police officer does not know this. ([Ulferts 12/14/2001](#); [Zeller 3/16/2004](#); [PBS 10/10/2006](#))

(July-August 2001): 9/11 Hijackers Obtain Fake ID



Nawaf Alhazmi's USA ID card, recovered from the Pentagon crash site. [*Source: US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division*] (click image to enlarge) Khalid Almihdhar obtains a fake USA ID card from forger Mohamed el-Atriss. Abdulaziz Alomari also obtains fake ID, an international driver's license, from el-Atriss, and some of the other hijackers may do as well. ([National Public Radio 8/20/2002](#); [Hanley 6/25/2003](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 372-3](#); [Kelly 9/11/2006](#)) USA ID cards are not issued by governmental organizations, as are passports and driver's licenses, for example. They are marketed by the manufacturer as being suitable for frequent customers to small businesses, such as VIP diners at a restaurant, gym members, and visitors to a check cashing store. ([Usaidsystems \(.com\) 7/1/2007](#)) El-Atriss, who is called seven times by Hani Hanjour and also by another unknown hijacker, is an associate of Waleed al-Noor, a co-conspirator in the 1993 'Landmarks' bomb plot (see [June 24, 1993](#)), and will be sentenced to six months in jail after 9/11 despite being of assistance to the FBI (see [Before September 11, 2001](#), [September 13, 2001-Mid 2002](#), and [November 2002-June 2003](#)). ([Associated Press 7/3/2003](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 372-3](#); [Kelly 9/11/2006](#)) An image of Almihdhar's card, which gives his address as a hotel where he stayed for two nights after returning to the US a few days before, will be reproduced in the 9/11 Commission's Terrorism Travel Monograph, but the Commission will fail to point out it was a fake. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 192](#) ^a; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 52](#) ^a) Five other hijackers obtain USA ID cards around this time: Nawaf Alhazmi, Salem Alhazmi, Abdulaziz Alomari, Majed Moqed, and Ahmed Alghamdi. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 27-29, 31-32, 34-44](#) ^a) Almihdhar's card is similar to some of these hijackers' USA ID cards, indicating they may also be fake, although this is not certain. Nawaf Alhazmi's USA ID card contains the same hotel address and the same expiry date as Almihdhar's card. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) Salem Alhazmi's card contains the same expiry date, indicating it was issued at a time Salem Alhazmi was out of the country (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)). In addition, the serial numbers are similar: the number of Salem Alhazmi's card, which was supposedly issued on July 1 or 2, is

3408826-A, whereas the number of Almihdhar's card, which the 9/11 Commission says was issued eight or nine days later, is 3408825-A. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 192](#) ; [Burger and Bennett 8/29/2005](#)) The fake document for Alomari is purchased from el-Atriss' All Service Plus business in Paterson, New Jersey, by fellow hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi. ([CBS News 7/31/2002](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 61](#) ; [Kelly 9/11/2006](#))

July 5, 2001: CIA Officer Says Malaysia Summit Attendees May Be Linked to Current Threat Reporting

Tom Wilshire, a CIA officer assigned to the FBI, sends an e-mail to managers at Alec Station, the CIA's bin Laden unit, saying there is a potential connection between recent warnings of an attack against US interests and al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit in January 2000 (see January 5-8, 2000). He notes "how bad things look in Malaysia" and points out that hijacker Khalid Almihdhar may be connected to the radicals who attacked the USS *Cole* (see [October 12, 2000](#)). He recommends that the *Cole* bombing and the Malaysia summit be re-examined for potential connections to the current warnings of an attack. The e-mail ends, "all the indicators are of a massively bad infrastructure being readily completed with just one purpose in mind." ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 298](#).)

July 5-16, 2001: John O'Neill's Movements in Spain Roughly Overlap with Those of 9/11 Hijackers and Associates

The movements of John O'Neill, the FBI manager responsible for tracking Osama bin Laden, appear to mirror those of the 9/11 hijackers and their associates while they are in Spain. Associates of the hijackers gather in Granada, in southern Spain, at the beginning of July (see [July 6, 2001 and Shortly After](#)). O'Neill arrives in Spain with some friends on July 5 and stays in Marbella until at least July 8. For at least part of the time in Marbella he is accompanied by Mark Rossini, an FBI agent currently detailed to Alec Station, the CIA's bin Laden unit, who translates for O'Neill in Spain and whose friend lets O'Neill use his beach house. ([Weiss 2003, pp. 340-2](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 316-7, 344-5](#)) (Note: Marbella and Granada are both in the southern Spanish province of Andalusia, but are about 120 miles apart.) Lead hijacker Mohamed Atta then arrives in Madrid on July 8, leaving on July 9. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 244](#)) O'Neill and Rossini arrive in Madrid on July 9 and O'Neill gives a speech to the Spanish Police Foundation there on July 10. ([O'Neill 7/10/2001](#); [Weiss 2003, pp. 340-2](#)) After leaving Madrid, Atta travels to Catalonia, where he meets Ramzi bin al-Shibh and possibly other associates (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)). The authors of *The Cell*, one of whom—John Miller—was a close friend of O'Neill's, will say O'Neill also visits the same part of Catalonia to make a speech at some point on his trip to Spain (note: it is unclear whether this is just a garbled account of his speech in Madrid, or whether he made two speeches). They will also say that he and Atta even stay at the same hotel, the Casablanca Playa in the small town of Salou, but at different times. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 289-90, 293](#)) O'Neill leaves Spain

on July 16, so he and his girlfriend Valerie James would probably be in the Salou area at around the same time as Atta, bin al-Shibh, and their associates. ([Weiss 2003, pp. 340-2](#)) The overlap between the 9/11 operatives on the one hand and O'Neill and Rossini on the other is usually ignored in media accounts, but the episode in Salou is mentioned in *The Cell*, which indicates it is a mere coincidence. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 289-90](#))

Shortly After July 5, 2001: Warning from Urgent Meeting Is Not Shared within Domestic Agencies

On July 5, 2001, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke gave a dramatic briefing to representatives from several domestic agencies on the urgent al-Qaeda threat (see [July 5, 2001](#)). However, the warnings given generally are not passed on by the attendees back to their respective agencies. The domestic agencies were not questioned about how they planned to address the threat and were not told what was expected of them. According to the 9/11 Commission, attendees later “report that they were told not to disseminate the threat information they received at the meeting. They interpreted this direction to mean that although they could brief their superiors, they could not send out advisories to the field.” One National Security Council official has a different recollection of what happened, recalling that attendees were asked to take the information back to their agencies and “do what you can” with it, subject to classification and distribution restrictions. But, for whatever reason, none of the involved agencies post internal warnings based on the meeting, except for Customs which puts out a general warning based entirely on publicly known historical facts. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 258, 264](#)) The FAA issues general and routine threat advisories that don’t reflect the level of urgency expressed by Clarke and others (see [January-August 2001](#)). FAA Administrator Jane Garvey later claims she was unaware of a heightened threat level, but in 2005 it will be revealed that about half of the FAA’s daily briefings during this time period referred to bin Laden or al-Qaeda (see [April 1, 2001-September 10, 2001](#)). ([Johnston and Dwyer 4/18/2004](#)) Clarke said rhetorically in the meeting that he wants to know if a sparrow has fallen from a tree. A senior FBI official attended the meeting and promised a redoubling of the FBI’s efforts. However, just five days after Clarke’s meeting, FBI agent Ken Williams sends off his memo speculating that al-Qaeda may be training operatives as pilots in the US (see [July 10, 2001](#)), yet the FBI fails to share this information with Clarke or any other agency. ([Gellman 5/17/2002](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 236-37](#)) The FBI will also fail to tell Clarke about the arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui (see [August 16, 2001](#)), or what they know about Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar (see August 23, 2001).

July 6, 2001: CIA Warns Upcoming Al-Qaeda Attack Will Be ‘Spectacular’ and Different

The CIA warns the interagency Counterterrorism Security Group (CSG) that al-Qaeda members “believe the upcoming attack will be ‘spectacular,’ qualitatively different from anything they have done to date.” ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission](#)

[7/24/2004, pp. 259](#)) Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke, who leads the CSG, similarly warned the CSG of a “spectacular” al-Qaeda attack the day before (see [July 5, 2001](#)).

July 6, 2001: Clarke Tells Rice to Warn Agencies to Prepare for 3 to 5 Simultaneous Attacks; No Apparent Response

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke sends National Security Adviser Rice an e-mail message “outlining a number of steps agreed on” at the Counterterrorism Security Group meeting the day before (see [July 5, 2001](#)), “including efforts to examine the threat of weapons of mass destruction and possible attacks in Latin America. One senior administration official [says] Mr. Clarke [writes] that several agencies, including the FBI, the CIA, and the Pentagon, [have] been directed to develop what the official [says are] ‘detailed response plans in the event of three to five simultaneous attacks.’” However, no response or follow-up action has been pointed out. ([Johnston and Schmitt 4/4/2004](#))

July 7, 2001: Random Police Check Almost Uncovers Hijacker Meeting Near New York City

Police officer Dave Agar in South Hackensack, New Jersey, is searching the parking lots of cheap motels, looking for suspicious cars. He submits the license plate number of a 1988 Toyota parked outside the Jade East motel to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), a computer database frequently used by every level of law enforcement. He discovers that Nawaf Alhazmi owns the car. The computer record shows no outstanding warrants for Alhazmi (though it does give other information, including his address in San Diego). Agar makes a record of his search and continues his patrol. It is later discovered that Abdulaziz Alomari registered a room in the Jade East motel from July 6-13, and Khalid Almihdhar stayed most of that week with Alhazmi at the nearby Congress Inn. It is also discovered that Almihdhar, Alhazmi, and two or three other men had dinner together at a local diner. Police speculate the hijackers were holding a meeting to discuss their plot. One officer later says, “You wonder what would have happened if the check had turned up something on Alhazmi. We certainly would have brought him in for questioning.” ([Pochna 7/11/2002](#); [Kelly 5/18/2004](#)) In late August, an FBI agent will look for Alhazmi and Almihdhar in the New York City area, but he will fail to check NCIC or car registration records that would have revealed the record of Agar’s search mentioning Alhazmi’s name (see [August 29, 2001](#)).

July 6, 2001 and Shortly After: Monitored Spanish Operatives Attend Meeting Possibly Connected to Atta-Bin Al-Shibh Summit

At the same time as Mohamed Atta and one of his associates, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, meet in the north of Spain to finalize the details of the 9/11 plot (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)), other al-Qaeda operatives hold a parallel meeting in Granada, in the south of the country. Spanish authorities are monitoring some of these operatives, at least, and overhear their discussions. On July 6, the Spanish intercept a call from Mamoun Darkazanli, an associate of Atta's from Germany, to Barakat Yarkas, head of an al-Qaeda affiliate in Spain, in which Darkazanli says that he has arrived in Granada. Yarkas tells Darkazanli that he has arrived in the city on July 10. They are joined by Al Jazeera reporter Tayseer Allouni and possibly Mohammed Haydar Zammar, a relative of Allouni's wife and associate of Atta and Darkazanli from Germany. The Spanish later overhear a conversation in which Yarkas discusses Zammar's movements at this time. Spanish authorities will later doubt that these four operatives actually meet Atta and bin al-Shibh in Spain, but will suspect a connection between the two meetings, especially as Yarkas seems to have made preparations for the other meeting (see [Before July 8, 2001](#)). ([Rotella 1/14/2003](#); [Miles 2005](#), pp. 305-313)

Before July 8, 2001: Monitored European Operatives Appear to Prepare for 9/11 Summit



Amer el-Azizi helped arrange a meeting for Mohamed Atta and Ramzi bin al-Shibh despite being under surveillance. [*Source: Libertaddigital*] European operatives connected to al-Qaeda appear to be making preparations for a summit between lead hijacker Mohamed Atta and associate Ramzi bin al-Shibh in Spain to finalize the details of the 9/11 plot (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)). As these European operatives are known to Spanish authorities, the preparations are monitored. For example, a conversation between operatives Barakat Yarkas and Amer el-Azizi is overheard. However, Spanish authorities do not pass this information on to their German counterparts. ([Johnson et al. 3/19/2004](#); [Zeman et al. 11/2004](#)) El-Azizi is also overheard talking to an Algerian, possibly Mohammed Belfatmi, based in Tarragona, where Atta stays for part of the time he is in Spain. ([Rotella 4/29/2004](#)) In one recorded conversation between Yarkas and another militant, Yarkas says that "Amer"—presumably a reference to Amer al-Azizi—is handling the arrangements for a meeting. ([Rotella 4/14/2004](#)) Police will later find el-Azizi's address book; it contains the names of three contacts in the small town of Reus, where bin al-Shibh landed when he flew in from Germany. ([Johnson and Crawford 4/7/2004](#)) These European operatives hold a parallel meeting elsewhere in Spain (see [July 6, 2001 and Shortly After](#)) and some may also meet with Atta and bin al-Shibh (see [July](#)

[8-19, 2001](#)). El-Azizi's arrest will be frustrated by Spanish intelligence after 9/11 (see [October 2001](#) and [Shortly After November 21, 2001](#)) and he will go on to be involved in the 2004 Madrid bombings (see [Before March 11, 2004](#) and [March 11, 2004](#)).

July 8, 2001: Prominent Prisoner Publicly Warns of Al-Qaeda Intent to Export Violence to US Soil

About a month after al-Qaeda prisoner Ahmed Ressam told US interrogators new details of al-Qaeda plans to attack the US (see [May 30, 2001](#)), he conveys similar information during a public trial. As the Los Angeles Times reports at the time, "Testifying in the New York trial of an accused accomplice, Ressam said his [al-Qaeda] colleagues are intent on exporting violence to US soil. 'If one is to carry out an operation, it would be better to hit the biggest enemy. I mean America,' he told a federal jury. Ressam also identified a number of other Algerian terrorists who had been part of his original attack team [to bomb the Los Angeles airport in 2000], most of whom remain at large." ([Pyes, Meyer, and Rempel 7/8/2001](#))

July 8-19, 2001: Atta Meets Bin Al-Shibh and Possibly Others to Finalize Attack Plans

Some senior al-Qaeda operatives hold a meeting in northern Spain to finalize plans for the 9/11 attack. The first two operatives listed are definitely present, it is less certain that the others are there:

- Mohamed Atta. ([Olmedo 9/30/2001](#))
- Ramzi Bin al-Shibh, an associate of Atta from Hamburg, arrives in Spain on July 9, and stays until July 16. Spanish authorities are notified of his arrival in the country by German intelligence (see [Around July 9, 2001](#)). ([Frantz 5/1/2002](#))
- Some reports also say that Marwan Alshhehi attends, although if he does, he may use a false identity, as US immigration has no records of his departure or return. ([Olmedo 9/30/2001](#); [US Department of Justice 5/20/2002](#))
- The Spanish newspaper La Vanguardia later reports that 9/11 hijackers Waleed and Wail Alshehri meet Atta on July 16. ([Associated Press 9/27/2001](#)) However, there is no mention of them attending the meeting in some other accounts. For example, it is not mentioned in the relevant section in the 9/11 Commission report. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 243-5](#))
- Amer el-Azizi. ([Johnson and Crawford 4/7/2004](#); [Shrader 1/23/2005](#)) El-Azizi, who seems to have made preparations for the meeting, is under surveillance at the time, as Spanish authorities are listening in to his phone calls. ([Johnson et al. 3/19/2004](#)) Calls possibly related to the meeting's organization are overheard (see [Before July 8, 2001](#)). ([Rotella 4/14/2004](#); [Rotella 4/29/2004](#)) Spanish judge Baltasar Garzon will later indict el-Azizi for helping plan 9/11 and say that el-Azizi assisted the plotters by arranging accommodation for them and acting as a courier. However, US officials will be less certain of his involvement. ([Shrader 1/23/2005](#)) His arrest shortly after 9/11 will be frustrated by Spanish intelligence (see [October 2001](#) and [Shortly After November 21,](#)

2001) and he will go on to be involved in the 2004 Madrid bombings (see [Before March 11, 2004](#) and [March 11, 2004](#)).

- Barakat Yarkas, head of an al-Qaeda-linked cell in Spain. ([Dillon 11/21/2001](#); [Rotella 1/14/2003](#))

- Mohammed Belfatmi. Belfatmi is an associate of Yarkas, and lives near the hotels where Atta and bin al-Shibh stay. He will later flee Europe with bin al-Shibh just before 9/11 (see [September 3-5, 2001](#)). ([Rotella 1/14/2003](#); [BBC Worldwide Monitoring 12/2/2004](#))

- Mamoun Darkazanli and Mohammed Haydar Zammar, associates of Atta from Germany.

- Al Jazeera reporter Tayseer Allouni.

However, there is a parallel meeting in Granada, in the south of Spain, at this time, and Yarkas, Darkazanli, Zammar, and Allouni may be only at this meeting and may not meet Atta and bin al-Shibh in person (see [July 6, 2001 and Shortly After](#)). ([Dillon 11/21/2001](#); [Rotella 1/14/2003](#)) After being captured, bin al-Shibh will deny meeting anyone other than Atta while in Spain. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 243-5](#)) However, questions will be raised about the quality of information obtained from detainees due to the methods used to extract it (see [June 16, 2004](#)). The movements of Atta and his associates in Spain are apparently mirrored by those of FBI agents John O'Neill and Mark Rossini (see [July 5-16, 2001](#)).

July 8-August 30, 2001: Hijackers Purchase Knives

Hijacker	Knife	Date Purchased	Photo of Replica
Mohamed Atta	Victorinox Camper Knife	July 8, 2001 Zurich Airport Zurich, Switzerland	
Mohamed Atta	Victorinox Soldier's Knife	July 8, 2001 Zurich Airport Zurich, Switzerland	
Mohamed Atta	Folding Knife	Unknown	
Marwan al-Shehhi	Cliphanger Viper	August 13, 2001 Sports Authority Boynton Beach, FL	
Marwan al-Shehhi	Imperial Tradesman Dual Edge	August 13, 2001 Sports Authority Boynton Beach, FL	
Nawaf al-Hazmi	Leatherman Wave Multitool	August 27, 2001 Target Laurel, MD	
Hamza al-Ghamdi	Leatherman Wave Multitool	August 30, 2001 Lowe's Home Improvement Boynton Beach, FL	
Nawaf al-Hazmi (from vehicle)	Box cutter	Unknown	
Fayed Ahmed	Stanley two-piece knife snap set	August 13, 2001 Wal-Mart Boynton Beach, FL	

An adapted 9/11 Commission chart of knives purchased by the hijackers. [Source: 9/11 Commission] According to the 9/11 Commission, several 9/11 hijackers purchase multi-use tools and small knives that “may actually have been used in the attacks.” (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 248-249)

- On July 8, Flight 11 hijacker Mohamed Atta buys two Victorinox Swiss Army knives at Zurich Airport, Switzerland, while on his way to Spain (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)). He possibly attempts to buy box cutters in Florida on August 27. On August 30, he buys a Leatherman multi-tool in Boynton Beach, Florida. (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 530; 9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 4, 85.)
- On August 13, Flight 175 hijackers Marwan Alshehhi, Fayed Ahmed Banihammad, and Hamza Alghamdi buy knives and multi-tools. Alshehhi buys a Cliphanger Viper and an Imperial Tradesman Dual Edge, both short-bladed knives. Banihammad buys a Stanley two-piece snap knife set, and Alghamdi buys a Leatherman Wave multi-tool. All purchases are made in the same city, though the 9/11 Commission does not say where this is. (9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 17.)
- On August 27, Flight 77 hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi buys Leatherman multi-tool knives. (9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 27.) Although it is unknown whether any of these knives and tools are used on 9/11, the 9/11 Commission will point out, “While FAA rules did not expressly prohibit knives with blades under 4 inches long, the airlines’ checkpoint

operations guide (which was developed in cooperation with the FAA), explicitly permitted them.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 84](#)) Regarding Flight 93, personal financial records do not reflect weapons being purchased by any of the hijackers. However, the FBI will reportedly recover “14 knives or portions of knives, including a box cutter,” at the crash site. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 457](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 35](#).)

Between July 9 and July 16, 2001: Atta and Bin Al-Shibh Discuss Targeting a Nuclear Plant



Indian Point nuclear power plant. [*Source: New York Power Authority*] According to the 9/11 Commission, during their meeting in Spain where they discuss the looming attacks (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)), Mohamed Atta tells Ramzi Bin al-Shibh he has considered targeting a nuclear facility he saw during familiarization flights near New York. This is presumably Indian Point, which is about 30 miles north of NYC. ([Herbert 4/4/2002](#)) Flight 11, which Atta pilots on 9/11, passes directly over Indian Point minutes before hitting the WTC (see [8:39 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). However, “the other pilots did not like the idea. They thought a nuclear target would be difficult because the airspace around it was restricted, making reconnaissance flights impossible and increasing the likelihood that any plane would be shot down before impact.... Nor would a nuclear facility have particular symbolic value.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 245](#)) Also, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the 9/11 “mastermind,” supposedly later tells his US interrogators he originally planned ten hijackings, with the additional targets including nuclear power plants. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 154](#)) In 2002, Mohammed will reportedly tell an Al Jazeera reporter he’d thought of hitting a couple of nuclear facilities on 9/11, but decided not to, “for fear it would go out of control.” (see [April, June, or August 2002](#)) Although the 9/11 hijackers had dismissed the idea, in January 2002 the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will send a memo to power plants around the US, based upon information from the FBI, warning that al-Qaeda has planned a second airline attack, which would involve flying a commercial aircraft into a nuclear plant. ([CNN 1/31/2002](#)) Also that month, in his State of the Union speech, President Bush will say US soldiers in Afghanistan have discovered diagrams of American nuclear power plants there. ([US President 2/4/2002](#))

(July 9, 2001): Chechen Leader Promises Fighters ‘Very Big News’; CIA Learns of This and Briefs White House

Chechen rebel leader Ibn Khattab promises some “very big news” to his fighters and this statement is communicated to the CIA. The CIA then forwards the warning to National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice together with several similar pieces of intelligence, saying it is evidence that an al-Qaeda attack is imminent (see [July 10, 2001](#)). ([Tenet 2007, pp. 151](#)) The FBI is already aware that Ibn Khattab and Osama bin Laden, who have a long relationship (see [1986-March 20, 2002](#)), may be planning a joint attack against US interests (see [Before April 13, 2001](#)). One of the operatives, Zacarias Moussaoui, will be arrested a month later (see [August 16, 2001](#)), but a search warrant for his belongings will not be granted (see August 16, 2001, [August 22, 2001](#) and [August 28, 2001](#)).

(Around July 9, 2001): German Authorities Notify Spanish of Bin Al-Shibh’s Trip to Spain

German authorities notify their Spanish counterparts of a trip by Ramzi bin al-Shibh to Spain, where he meets an associate, lead 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)). Presumably, the notification is before or soon after the trip, but the original news report merely says, “Despite the fact that the German authorities informed Spain of Ramzi’s trip, the meeting in which the 11 September attacks were finalized was not detected.” Several of bin al-Shibh’s German associates are known to have been under surveillance around this time (see [1996, November 1, 1998-February 2001](#), and [May 22, 2000](#)), and, if the article is correct, this indicates that bin al-Shibh’s movements are also being monitored by German intelligence. Spanish authorities are monitoring some operatives who may interact with Atta and bin al-Shibh in Spain (see [Before July 8, 2001](#) and [July 8-19, 2001](#)), but the Spanish apparently do not conduct surveillance of the two men. ([BBC Worldwide Monitoring 12/2/2004](#))

July 10, 2001: FBI Agent Sends Memo Warning that Unusual Number of Muslim Extremists Are Learning to Fly in Arizona



FBI agent Ken Williams. [Source: FBI/Phoenix, Arizona, FBI agent Ken Williams sends a memorandum warning about suspicious activities

involving a group of Middle Eastern men taking flight training lessons in Arizona. The memo is titled: “Zakaria Mustapha Soubra; IT-OTHER (Islamic Army of the Caucasus),” because it focuses on Zakaria Soubra, a Lebanese flight student in Prescott, Arizona, and his connection with a terror group in Chechnya that has ties to al-Qaeda. It is subtitled: “Osama bin Laden and Al-Muhjiroun supporters attending civil aviation universities/colleges in Arizona.” ([Behar 5/22/2002](#); [House 7/24/2003](#)) Williams’ memo is based on an investigation of Sorba that Williams had begun in 2000 (see [April 2000](#)), but he had trouble pursuing because of the low priority the Arizona FBI office gave terror investigations (see [April 2000-June 2001](#)). Additionally, Williams had been alerted to suspicions about radical militants and aircraft at least three other times (see [October 1996](#); [1998](#); [November 1999-August 2001](#)). In the memo, Williams does the following:

- Names nine other suspect students from Pakistan, India, Kenya, Algeria, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. ([Schrom 10/1/2002](#)) Hijacker Hani Hanjour, attending flight school in Arizona in early 2001 and probably continuing into the summer of 2001 (see [Summer 2001](#)), is not one of the students, but, as explained below, it seems two of the students know him. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#) ^٥; [Smith 7/25/2003](#))
- Notes that he interviewed some of these students, and heard some of them make hostile comments about the US. Additionally, he noticed that they were suspiciously well informed about security measures at US airports. ([Schrom 10/1/2002](#))
- Notes an increasing, “inordinate number of individuals of investigative interest” taking flight lessons in Arizona. ([Schrom 10/1/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#) ^٥)
- Suspects that some of the ten people he has investigated are connected to al-Qaeda. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#) ^٥) One person on the list, Ghassan al Sharbi, will be arrested in Pakistan in March 2002 with al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida (see [March 28, 2002](#)). Al Sharbi attended a flight school in Prescott, Arizona. He also apparently attended the training camps in Afghanistan and swore loyalty to bin Laden in the summer of 2001. He apparently knows Hani Hanjour in Arizona (see [October 1996-Late April 1999](#)). He also is the roommate of Soubra, the main target of the memo. ([Krikorian 1/24/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 521](#))
- Discovers that one of them was communicating through an intermediary with Abu Zubaida. This apparently is a reference to Hamed al Sulami, who had been telephoning a Saudi imam known to be Zubaida’s spiritual advisor. Al Sulami is an acquaintance of Hanjour in Arizona (see [October 1996-Late April 1999](#)). ([Mercury News \(San Jose\) 5/23/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 520-521, 529](#))
- Discusses connections between several of the students and a radical group called Al-Muhajiroun. ([Mercury News \(San Jose\) 5/23/2002](#)) This group supported bin Laden, and issued a fatwa, or call to arms, that included airports on a list of acceptable terror targets. ([Solomon 5/22/2002](#)) Soubra, the main focus of the memo, is a member of Al-Muhajiroun and an outspoken radical. He met with the leader of Al-Muhajiroun in Britain and started an Arizona chapter of the organization. After 9/11, some US officials will suspect that Soubra has ties to al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. He will be held two years, then deported to Lebanon in 2004. ([Connell 10/28/2001](#); [Krikorian 1/24/2003](#); [Wagner 5/2/2004](#); [Sherman 11/2004](#)) Though Williams doesn’t include it in his memo, in the summer of 1998 the leader of Al-Muhajiroun publicized a fax sent by bin Laden to him that listed al-Qaeda’s four objectives in fighting the US. The first objective was “bring down their airliners.” (see [Summer 1998](#)). ([Connell 10/28/2001](#))

- Warns of a possible “effort by Osama bin Laden to send students to the US to attend civil aviation universities and colleges” ([Behar 5/22/2002](#)) , so they can later hijack aircraft. ([Schrom 10/1/2002](#))
- Recommends that the “FBI should accumulate a listing of civil aviation universities and colleges around the country. FBI field offices with these types of schools in their area should establish appropriate liaison. FBI [headquarters] should discuss this matter with other elements of the US intelligence community and task the community for any information that supports Phoenix’s suspicions.” ([House 7/24/2003](#)) (The FBI has already done this, but because of poor FBI communications, Williams is not aware of the report.)
- Recommends that the FBI ask the State Department to provide visa data on flight school students from Middle Eastern countries, which will facilitate FBI tracking efforts. ([Risen 5/4/2002](#))

The memo is addressed to the following FBI Agents:

- Dave Frasca, chief of the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters;
- Elizabeth Harvey Matson, Mark Connor and Fred Stremmel, Intelligence Operations Specialists in the RFU;
- Rod Middleton, acting chief of the Usama bin Laden Unit (UBLU);
- Jennifer Maitner, an Intelligence Operations Specialist in the UBLU;
- Jack Cloonan, an agent on the New York FBI’s bin Laden unit, the I-49 squad; (see [January 1996](#) and [Spring 2000](#)).
- Michael S. Butsch, an agent on another New York FBI squad dealing with other Sunni terrorists. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 7/10/2001](#) ³; [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#) ³)

However, the memo is not uploaded into the FBI’s information system until the end of the month and is apparently not received by all these people (see [July 27, 2001 and after](#)). Williams also shares some concerns with the CIA (see [July 27, 2001](#)). ([Mercury News \(San Jose\) 5/23/2002](#)) One anonymous government official who has seen the memo says, “This was as actionable a memo as could have been written by anyone.” ([Insight 5/27/2002](#)) However, the memo is merely marked “routine,” rather than “urgent.” It is generally ignored, not shared with other FBI offices, and the recommendations are not taken. One colleague in New York replies at the time that the memo is “speculative and not very significant.” ([Schrom 10/1/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 135](#) ³) Williams is unaware of many FBI investigations and leads that could have given weight to his memo. Authorities later claim that Williams was only pursuing a hunch, but one familiar with classified information says, “This was not a vague hunch. He was doing a case on these guys.” ([Mercury News \(San Jose\) 5/23/2002](#))

July 10, 2001: Urgent CIA Request for Funds to Immediately Deal with Bin Laden Is Denied

On this date, CIA Director George Tenet and CIA counterterrorism chief Cofer Black give the White House an urgent al-Qaeda briefing that, if heeded, Black later believes could have stopped bin Laden. Tenet and Black strongly suggest that both an overall strategy and immediate covert or military action against bin Laden are needed (see [July 10, 2001](#)). According to a 2006 book by journalist Bob Woodward that is likely

paraphrasing Black, one of Woodward's sources for his book, "Black calculated that if [the White House] had given him \$500 million of covert action funds right then and reasonable authorizations from the president to go kill bin Laden, he would have been able to make great strides if not do away with him.... Over the last two years—and as recently as March 2001—the CIA had deployed paramilitary teams five times into Afghanistan to work with the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, a loose federation of militias and tribes in the north. The CIA had about 100 sources and subsources operating throughout Afghanistan. Just give him the money and the authority and he might be able to bring bin Laden's head back in a box." ([Woodward 2006, pp. 77-78](#); [Hutchinson 9/29/2006](#))

July 10-11, 2001: Conference Held in Washington on Preparing the US for Domestic Terrorism



Anthony Williams. [Source: Manuel Balce Ceneta / Associated Press] The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the National Emergency Management Association co-sponsor a two-day event held in Washington called *Preparing the Nation: A National Policy Summit on Domestic Terrorism*. Federal officials, state teams of governors' key policy advisors, and state leaders in law enforcement, public health, fire, and emergency management attend. Speakers include Attorney General John Ashcroft, Representative Christopher Shays (R), and West Virginia Governor Robert Wise. ([National Governors Association 6/25/2001](#); [Kriner 7/11/2001](#); [National Governors Association 7/13/2001](#)) The agenda of the event is structured around a tabletop exercise, based on a hypothetical bioterrorist attack. The scenario involves a neo-nazi terrorist releasing six liters of plague slurry in a fictional city resembling New York, called Gotham. ([National Governors Association 6/25/2001](#); [National Governors Association 7/10/2001](#); [National Governors Association 7/10/2001, pp. 7](#)) In his speech at the event, Anthony Williams, the mayor of the District of Columbia, says it is especially appropriate that the summit is being held in DC, because "our city has been called ground zero for a potential terrorism incident. 'It's only a matter of time,' they say, 'before Washington, DC is the site of a terrorist attack.'" ([Williams 7/10/2001](#)) Assistant FBI Director Dale Watson tells the summit that a significant terrorist attack is likely on US soil (see [July 11, 2001](#)). ([Stein 7/12/2001](#)) In his speech,

John Ashcroft says, “Our number one priority is the prevention of terrorist attacks” (see [July 11, 2001](#)). ([Ashcroft 7/11/2001](#)) Charles DeVita, the vice president for global safety and security for the Red Cross, says, “Conferences like these are starting to take place because even the federal government is realizing that [acts of terrorism are a major] threat. It’s not a matter of if, but when this is going to happen.” ([Kriner 7/11/2001](#))

July 10, 2001: CIA Director Tenet Briefed about Al-Qaeda; Urgent White House Meeting Results

CIA Counterterrorism chief Cofer Black meets with CIA Director Tenet and reviews the latest intelligence about al-Qaeda. Black lays out a case based on communications intercepts and other intelligence suggesting a growing chance that al-Qaeda will attack the US soon. There is no smoking gun *per se*, but there is a huge volume of data indicating an attack is coming. The case is so compelling that Tenet decides he needs to brief the White House on it that same day, and he does so (see [July 10, 2001](#)). ([Woodward 10/1/2006](#))

July 10, 2001: CIA Director Gives Urgent Warning to White House of Imminent, Multiple, Simultaneous Al-Qaeda Attacks, Possibly Within US

CIA Director Tenet finds the briefing Cofer Black just gave him (see [July 10, 2001](#)) so alarming that he calls National Security Adviser Rice from his car as he heads to the White House and says he needs to see her right away, even though he has regular weekly meetings with her. ([Woodward 10/1/2006](#)) Tenet, Black, and an unnamed third CIA official brief Rice on the latest intelligence. Deputy National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley and counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke are also present. ([Landay, Strobel, and Walcott 10/2/2006](#)) According to a later account in the Washington Post, they told her, “First, al-Qaeda was going to attack American interests, possibly in the United States itself. Black emphasized that this amounted to a strategic warning, meaning the problem was so serious that it required an overall plan and strategy. Second, this was a major foreign policy problem that needed to be addressed immediately. They needed to take action that moment—covert, military, whatever—to thwart bin Laden. The United States had human and technical sources, and all the intelligence was consistent...” However, “Tenet and Black felt they were not getting through to Rice. She was polite, but they felt the brush-off.” They leave the meeting frustrated, seeing little prospect for immediate action. Tenet and Black will both later recall the meeting as the starkest warning they gave the White House on al-Qaeda before 9/11 and one that could have potentially stopped the 9/11 attacks if Rice had acted on it (see [July 10, 2001](#)) and conveyed their urgency to President Bush (Tenet was briefing Bush on a daily basis at this time, but he will later claim that Rice had a much better rapport with Bush). Black will say, “The only thing we didn’t do was pull the trigger to the gun we were holding to her head.” ([Woodward 2006, pp. 80](#); [Woodward 10/1/2006](#)) Clarke will recall in 2006 that Rice focused on the possible threat to President Bush at an upcoming summit meeting in

Genoa, Italy (see [June 13, 2001](#) and [July 20-22, 2001](#)). Rice and Bush had already been briefed about the Genoa warning by this time (see [July 5, 2001](#)). Rice also promised to quickly schedule a high-level White House meeting on al-Qaeda. However, that meeting does not take place until September 4, 2001 (see [September 4, 2001](#)). ([Landay, Strobel, and Walcott 10/2/2006](#)) Rice also directs that Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Attorney General Ashcroft be given the same briefing (see [July 11-17, 2001](#)). There will be a brief description of the meeting in a Time magazine article in 2002 that goes largely unnoticed at the time: “In mid-July, Tenet sat down for a special meeting with Rice and aides. ‘George briefed Condi that there was going to be a major attack,’ says an official; another, who was present at the meeting, says Tenet broke out a huge wall chart... with dozens of threats. Tenet couldn’t rule out a domestic attack but thought it more likely that al-Qaeda would strike overseas.” ([Elliot 8/4/2002](#)) Tenet will privately brief the 9/11 Commission about the meeting in early 2004 (see [January 28, 2004](#)). According to a transcript of his briefing, he tells Rice there could be an al-Qaeda attack in weeks or perhaps months, that there would be multiple and simultaneous attacks causing major human casualties, and that the focus would be US targets, facilities, or interests. As Time reported, Tenet says the intelligence focuses on an overseas attack, but a domestic attack could not be ruled out. ([Eggen and Wright 10/3/2006](#)) However, this meeting will go unmentioned by the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry and the 9/11 Commission and commission members will later deny they were told about it. After the transcript is shared with reporters, the commission members will reverse their denials (see [September 30-October 3, 2006](#)). Rice will also deny the meeting took place, only to reverse her position as well (see [October 1-2, 2006](#)).

July 11, 2001: Assistant FBI Director Predicts Terrorist Attack in the US



Dale Watson. [*Source: FBI*] At a conference on domestic terrorism held in Washington, DC (see [July 10-11, 2001](#)), Assistant FBI Director Dale Watson, the head of the Counterterrorism Division, warns that a significant terrorist attack is likely on US soil. He says, “I’m not a gloom-and-doom-type person. But I will tell you this. [We are] headed for an incident inside the United States.” This quote appears in a Reuters news story about the conference, entitled, “Terrorist Attack on US Soil Predicted.” Apparently paraphrasing Watson, the Reuters article reports, “The FBI predicts terrorists will launch a major attack on American interests abroad every year for the next five years and thinks an attack using a weapon of mass destruction is likely at home.” The article also says that the number one threat is “from exiled Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden.” Attorney

General John Ashcroft also speaks at the conference about security measures for upcoming public events such as the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City (see [July 11, 2001](#)). ([National Governors Association 7/10/2001](#); [Stein 7/12/2001](#); [Royce and Brune 4/10/2004](#))

July 11-17, 2001: Rumsfeld and Ashcroft Receive Urgent Al-Qaeda Warning Recently Given to White House

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Attorney General Ashcroft receive the same CIA briefing about a likely imminent, multiple, and simultaneous al-Qaeda strike that was given to the White House on July 10, 2001 (see [July 10, 2001](#)). In 2006, the State Department will reveal the two were briefed within a week of the White House briefing, at the request of National Security Adviser Rice. One official who helped prepare the briefing later describes it as a “ten on a scale of one to ten” that “connected the dots” to present a stark warning that al-Qaeda is ready to launch a new attack. A Pentagon spokesman says he has no information “about what may or may not have been briefed” to Rumsfeld, and Rumsfeld does not answer questions about it. Ashcroft says he was not given any briefing and calls it “disappointing” that he was not briefed. After it is confirmed that Ashcroft was briefed, apparently on July 17, Ashcroft will still claim not to remember the briefing, and will say he only recalls another CIA briefing earlier in the month (see [July 5, 2001](#)). Journalist Andrew Cockburn later reports that, “according to several intelligence sources,” Rumsfeld’s reaction to the briefing at the time “was one of vehement dismissal, complete with cutting observations about the CIA falling victim to ‘vast doses of al-Qaeda disinformation’ and ‘mortal doses of gullibility.’” McClatchy Newspapers will comment that these briefings raise “new questions about what the Bush administration did in response, and about why so many officials have claimed they never received or don’t remember the warning.” ([Landay, Strobel, and Walcott 10/2/2006](#); [Cockburn 2007, pp. 9](#)) On July 26, 2001, it will be reported that Ashcroft has stopped flying on commercial airlines within the US (see [July 26, 2001](#)).

July 11, 2001: John Ashcroft: ‘Our Number One Priority is the Prevention of Terrorist Attacks’



John Ashcroft speaking at the National Governors Association summit on domestic terrorism. [Source: *Red Cross*] Attorney General John Ashcroft gives a speech at a summit on preparing the US for domestic terrorism, held in Washington, DC (see [July 10-11, 2001](#)). He says, “[W]e must be vigilant about the prevention of attacks utilizing weapons of mass destruction. And we must be prepared to mitigate the damage to human life and property should our worst fears come true.” He also says, “Our number one priority is the prevention of terrorist attacks,” but cautions, “We will not always be able to prevent terrorist attacks. When an incident occurs, we must react and react quickly.” ([Newton 7/11/2001](#); [Ashcroft 7/11/2001](#)). Yet despite his claim that preventing terrorism is a priority, one day after this speech Ashcroft reportedly tells the acting FBI director that he does not want to hear about terrorism anymore (see [July 12, 2001](#)). In a letter he’d sent out to department heads two months previously, describing the agenda of the new administration and citing seven goals, he’d made no mention of terrorism (see [May 10, 2001](#)). And the day before 9/11, Ashcroft will refuse to endorse the FBI’s request for a \$58 million increase in counterterrorism funding (see [September 10, 2001](#)).

July 12, 2001: Ashcroft Reputedly Uninterested in Terrorism

On July 5, the CIA briefed Attorney General Ashcroft on the al-Qaeda threat, warning that a significant overseas terrorist attack is imminent, and a strike could occur at any time (see [July 5, 2001](#)). On this day, acting FBI Director Tom Pickard briefs Ashcroft about the terror threat inside the US. Pickard later swears under oath that Ashcroft tells him, “[I do] not want to hear about this anymore.” Ashcroft, also under oath, later categorically denies the allegation, saying, “I did never speak to him saying that I didn’t want to hear about terrorism.” However, Ruben Garcia, head of the Criminal Division, and another senior FBI official corroborate Pickard’s account. Ashcroft’s account is supported by his top aide, but another official in Ashcroft’s office who could also support Ashcroft’s account says he cannot remember what happened. Pickard briefs Ashcroft on terrorism four more times that summer, but he never mentions al-Qaeda to Ashcroft again before 9/11. ([Myers 6/22/2004](#)) Pickard later makes an appeal to Ashcroft for more counterterrorism funding; Ashcroft rejects the appeal on September 10, 2001 (see [September 10, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#)) Pickard later says, “Before

September 11th, I couldn't get half an hour on terrorism with Ashcroft. He was only interested in three things: guns, drugs, and civil rights." ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 293](#))

July 13, 2001: CIA Reexamines Al-Qaeda Malaysia Summit but 'Major League Killer' Is Not Put on Watch List

Tom Wilshire, a CIA manager assigned to the FBI who expressed interest two months earlier in surveillance photos from the al-Qaeda Malaysia summit (see January 5-8, 2000), now finds a cable he had been looking for regarding that same summit. The cable, from January 2001, discusses al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash's presence at the summit. Wilshire explains later that bin Attash's presence there had been troubling him. He writes an e-mail to the CIA's Counterterrorist Center (CTC), stating, "[Khallad] is a major league killer, who orchestrated the *Cole* attack (see [October 12, 2000](#)) and possibly the Africa bombings (see [August 7, 1998](#))." Yet Khallad is still not put on a terrorist watch list. Wilshire asks that the FBI be passed this information, but the FBI will not actually be given the information until August 30, a week after it learns hijacker Khalid Almihdhar is in the US. An FBI analyst assigned to the CTC is given the task of reviewing all other CIA cables about the Malaysian summit. It takes this analyst until August 21—over five weeks later—to put together that Khalid Almihdhar had a US visa and that Nawaf Alhazmi had traveled to the US. Yet other CIA agents are already very aware of these facts but are not sharing the information. Working with immigration officials, this analyst then learns that Almihdhar entered and left the US in 2000, and entered again on July 4, 2001, and that Alhazmi appears to still be in the US. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 157](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 298](#))

July 13, 2001: White House Warned Al-Qaeda Attack Plans Delayed but Not Abandoned

By mid-July 2001, new intelligence indicates that the new al-Qaeda attack has been delayed, maybe for as long as two months, but not abandoned. So on this day, a Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB) sent to top White House officials is entitled, "Bin Laden Plans Delayed but Not Abandoned." On July 25, a similar SEIB will be titled, "One Bin Laden Operation Delayed, Others Ongoing." The SEIB is usually released one day after the corresponding President Daily Briefing and contains similar content (see [January 20-September 10, 2001](#)), so it is probable Bush receives this information. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 259, 534](#)) After 9/11, it will be discovered that in fact the 9/11 attack was originally planned to take place in the early summer but was delayed (see [May-July 2001](#)).

July 13, 2001: Bush Administration Again Denies CIA Expanded Authority to Assassinate Bin Laden

The Bush administration again denies the CIA expanded authorities to go on the offensive against bin Laden. These authorities would include permission to assassinate bin Laden without making an attempt to capture him alive first. In March 2001, the CIA wanted to give a draft request about this to the Bush administration, but officials weren't ready so the draft was withdrawn (see [Early March 2001](#)). On July 13, three days after a dramatic CIA presentation about a likely upcoming al-Qaeda attack (see [July 10, 2001](#)), a meeting of deputy cabinet officials is held to discuss the CIA's expanded authorities request. However, no decisions are made. Tenet will later comment, "the bureaucracy moved slowly." The Bush administration will grant these authorities a few days after 9/11. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 154](#))

July 13, 2001: CIA Manager Says Extra Person to be Allocated to Malaysia Summit Re-evaluation, Unclear If this Happens

A CIA manager says that an additional intelligence officer, Doug Miller, will be assigned to help an ongoing low-key review of al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit when he returns from holiday (see January 5-8, 2000 and [Mid-May 2001](#)). The statement is made in response to an e-mail by CIA manager Tom Wilshire (see [July 13, 2001](#)), who pointed out that al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash attended the summit, meaning it was important (see [January 4, 2001](#)). The review is currently only being conducted by one intelligence officer, Margaret Gillespie, who is only told to do it in her spare time and whom it takes over three months to find CIA cables indicating two of the 9/11 hijackers have entered the US (see [August 21-22, 2001](#)). Miller's help would certainly benefit the review, as he is already aware one of the hijackers, Khalid Almihdhar, has a US visa, but a cable he drafted to notify the FBI about this was blocked by Wilshire (see [January 4-6, 2000](#)). However, there is no mention of Miller actually being given the assignment on his return and no sign he does any work on this. Wilshire also asked that the FBI be officially told bin Attash attended the summit in Malaysia, but this information is again withheld (see [January 5, 2001 and After](#)) ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 298-9](#))

Mid-July 2001: More G-8 Summit Warnings Describe Plane as Flying Bomb

US intelligence reports another spike in warnings related to the July 20-22 G-8 summit in Genoa, Italy. The reports include specific threats discovered by the head of Russia's Federal Bodyguard Service that al-Qaeda will try to kill Bush as he attends the summit. ([CNN 3/2002](#)) Two days before the summit begins, the BBC reports: "The huge force of officers and equipment which has been assembled to deal with unrest has been spurred on by a warning that supporters of Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden might attempt an air attack on some of the world leaders present." ([BBC 7/18/2001](#)) The attack is called off.

Mid-July 2001: John O'Neill Rails Against White House and Saudi Obstructionism

FBI counterterrorism expert John O'Neill privately discusses White House obstruction in his bin Laden investigation. O'Neill says, "The main obstacles to investigate Islamic terrorism were US oil corporate interests and the role played by Saudi Arabia in it." He adds, "All the answers, everything needed to dismantle Osama bin Laden's organization, can be found in Saudi Arabia." O'Neill also believes the White House is obstructing his investigation of bin Laden because they are still keeping the idea of a pipeline deal with the Taliban open (see [July 21, 2001](#)). ([Marlow 11/19/2001](#); [Brisard and Dasquie 2002, pp. xxix](#); [CNN 1/8/2002](#); [CNN 1/9/2002](#))

Mid-July 2001: Tenet Warns Rice About Major Attack

CIA Director Tenet has a special meeting with National Security Adviser Rice and her aides about al-Qaeda. Says one official at the meeting, "[Tenet] briefed [Rice] that there was going to be a major attack." Another at the meeting says Tenet displays a huge wall chart showing dozens of threats. Tenet does not rule out a domestic attack but says an overseas attack is more likely. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#))

July 15, 2001: The KLA Begins Ethnic Cleansing of Tetovo-Kosovo Corridor in Macedonia

By mid-July the Macedonian police and military are no longer able to contain the KLA in the Tetovo-Kosovo corridor. The fighting intensifies and the KLA establishes secure bases in this region. On the evening of July 15, local KLA commanders notify Macedonian residents that they must flee or face execution. It is estimated that over 30,000 Macedonians are forced to flee their homes and become refugees. ([Taylor 2002, pp. 121-122](#))

Mid-July 2001: Wolfowitz Doubts Attack Warnings

Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley tells CIA Director George Tenet that Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz questions the significance of the recent surge in al-Qaeda warnings. Wolfowitz apparently suggests that bin Laden may merely be trying to study US reactions to an attack threat. Tenet replies that he has already addressed these questions and that the reporting is convincing. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 259](#)) Tenet is likely referring to a report delivered to the White House on June 30 entitled "Bin Laden Threats Are Real" (see [June 30, 2001](#)) that was prepared to deal with nearly identical doubts from Defense Secretary Rumsfeld (see [Summer 2001](#)). In April 2001, Wolfowitz said in a meeting that the main terrorist threat to the US was from Iraq, not bin Laden (see [April 30, 2001](#)).

Mid-July 2001: Pentagon Official Suggests to CIA Director that Al-Qaeda is Just ‘Phantom Enemy’

Shortly after a pivotal al-Qaeda warning given by the CIA to top officials (see [July 10, 2001](#)), Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence Steve Cambone expresses doubts. He speaks to CIA Director George Tenet, and, as Tenet will later recall, he “asked if I had considered the possibility that al-Qaeda threats were just a grand deception, a clever ploy to tie up our resources and expend our energies on a phantom enemy that lacked both the power and the will to carry the battle to us.” Tenet claims he replied, “No, this is not a deception, and, no, I do not need a second opinion.... We are going to get hit. It’s only a matter of time.” After 9/11, Cambone will reportedly apologize to Tenet for being wrong. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 154](#)) Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz raises similar doubts around the same time (see [Mid-July 2001](#)), and Tenet believes Defense Secretary Rumsfeld is blocking efforts to develop a strategy to fight bin Laden (see [Summer 2001](#)).

Mid-July - Mid-August 2001: Mohamed Atta Seen Shopping and Purchasing Money Orders near Venice, Florida

Jean Waldorf, the owner of the Shipping Post, a mail service business in Punta Gorda, Florida, will later report seeing Mohamed Atta and an unidentified associate visiting her store some four to six times. According to Waldorf, Atta purchases US postal money orders in denominations of \$100 to \$200, paying for them with cash, but she does not know how they are spent. Waldorf says that the money orders, which can only be cashed in the US, are “not traceable.” The owner of a local childcare center, Anna Brookbank, later says she recognizes Atta, having seen him shopping at a Punta Gorda supermarket during this period. ([CNN 10/1/2001](#); [Margasak 10/2/2001](#); [Arnold 10/2/2001](#); [Arnold and Martin 10/3/2001](#)) Punta Gorda is about 30 miles south of Venice, where Atta, along with Marwan Alshehhi, previously attended flight school in 2000 (see [July 6-December 19, 2000](#)). According to official accounts, the only time Atta was in this area was during his time at the flight school. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 223-253](#))

July 16, 2001: British Spy Agencies Warn Al-Qaeda Is in The Final Stages of Attack in the West

British spy agencies send a report to British Prime Minister Tony Blair and other top officials warning that al-Qaeda is in “the final stages” of preparing an attack in the West. The prediction is “based on intelligence gleaned not just from [British intelligence] but also from US agencies, including the CIA and the National Security Agency,” which cooperate with the British. “The contents of the July 16 warning would have been passed to the Americans, Whitehall sources confirmed.” The report states there is “an acute awareness” that the attack is “a very serious threat.” ([Evans 6/14/2002](#))

July 16, 2001: New York Taxi Driver Tells of E-mails Warning Imminent al-Qaeda Attack on New York and Washington

A Village Voice reporter is told by a New York taxi driver, “You know, I am leaving the country and going home to Egypt sometime in late August or September. I have gotten e-mails from people I know saying that Osama bin Laden has planned big terrorist attacks for New York and Washington for that time. It will not be safe here then.” He does in fact return to Egypt for that time. The FBI, which is not told about this lead until after 9/11, interrogates and then releases him. He claims that many others knew what he knew prior to 9/11. ([Goodyear 9/25/2002](#))

July 18, 2001: FBI, FAA, and State Department Issue Warnings

The FBI issues another warning to domestic law enforcement agencies about threats stemming from the convictions in the millennium bomb plot trial. The FAA also issues a warning to the airlines, telling them to “use the highest level of caution.” ([CNN 3/2002](#)) This is another one of 15 general warnings issued to airlines in 2001 before 9/11 (see [January-August 2001](#)), but it is more specific than usual. ([CNN 3/2002](#); [Lewandowski and Davis 5/17/2002](#)) Also on this day, the State Department issues a public warning of a possible terrorist threat in the Saudi Arabia region. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 259, 534](#))

July 19, 2001: FBI Director Tells Field Offices to Be Ready to Respond to New Attack but Not to Prevent It

Acting FBI Director Thomas Pickard holds a periodic conference call with the heads of all FBI field offices. According to a later account by Pickard, one item he discusses is the need to have evidence response teams ready to move quickly in case of a new attack. This is brought up in light of all the increased threat reporting. However, he does not task the field offices to look into whether any plots are being considered within the US; nor does he tell them to take any action to disrupt any such plots. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 259](#))

July 20, 2001: Hanjour and Possibly Nawaf Alhazmi Fly Near Washington

Hani Hanjour rents an aircraft from Caldwell Flight Academy in New Jersey and flies to Montgomery Airpark in Maryland. The route he takes means that he flies near to Washington. He is accompanied by another man the 9/11 Commission will suggest is Nawaf Alhazmi, whose credit card is used to pay for the aircraft rental, as well as fuel in

Maryland. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 242](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 67](#).)

July 20-22, 2001: During G-8 Summit, Italian Military Prepare Against Attack from the Sky



Anti-aircraft stationed around the G8 Summit in Genoa, Italy. *[Source: BBC]* The G8 summit is held in Genoa, Italy. Acting on previous warnings that al-Qaeda would attempt to kill President Bush and other leaders, Italian authorities surround the summit with anti-aircraft guns. They keep fighters in the air and close off local airspace to all planes. ([Los Angeles Times 9/27/2001](#)) The warnings are taken so seriously that Bush stays overnight on an aircraft carrier offshore, and other world leaders stay on a luxury ship. ([CNN 7/18/2001](#)) No attack occurs. US officials at the time state that the warnings were “unsubstantiated” but after 9/11, they will claim success in preventing an attack. ([Los Angeles Times 9/27/2001](#))

July 21, 2001: US Official Threatens Possible Military Action Against Taliban by October if Pipeline Is Not Pursued



Niaz Naik. *[Source: Calcutta Telegraph (left)]* Three former American officials, Tom Simons (former US Ambassador to Pakistan), Karl Inderfurth (former Deputy Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs), and Lee Coldren (former State Department expert on South Asia) meet with Pakistani and Russian intelligence

officers in a Berlin hotel. ([Cave 8/16/2002](#)) This is the third of a series of back-channel conferences called “brainstorming on Afghanistan.” Taliban representatives sat in on previous meetings, but boycotted this one due to worsening tensions. However, the Pakistani ISI relays information from the meeting to the Taliban. ([Steele et al. 9/22/2001](#)) At the meeting, Coldren passes on a message from Bush officials. He later says, “I think there was some discussion of the fact that the United States was so disgusted with the Taliban that they might be considering some military action.” ([Leigh 9/26/2001](#)) Accounts vary, but former Pakistani Foreign Secretary Niaz Naik later says he is told by senior American officials at the meeting that military action to overthrow the Taliban in Afghanistan is planned to “take place before the snows started falling in Afghanistan, by the middle of October at the latest.” The goal is to kill or capture both bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar, topple the Taliban regime, and install a transitional government of moderate Afghans in its place. Uzbekistan and Russia would also participate. Naik also says, “It was doubtful that Washington would drop its plan even if bin Laden were to be surrendered immediately by the Taliban.” ([Arney 9/18/2001](#)) One specific threat made at this meeting is that the Taliban can choose between “carpets of bombs” —an invasion—or “carpets of gold” —the pipeline. ([Brisard and Dasquie 2002, pp. 43](#)) Naik contends that Tom Simons made the “carpets” statement. Simons claims, “It’s possible that a mischievous American participant, after several drinks, may have thought it smart to evoke gold carpets and carpet bombs. Even Americans can’t resist the temptation to be mischievous.” Naik and the other American participants deny that the pipeline was an issue at the meeting. ([Cave 8/16/2002](#))

July 23, 2001: KSM, Using False Name but Real Photo, Is Given US Visa



The photograph of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed on his 2001 US visa application. [*Source: 9/11 Commission*]Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) is granted a visa to enter the US, despite being under a federal terrorism indictment, having a \$2 million reward on his head, and being one of only a dozen people in the world on a US domestic no-fly list (see [April 24, 2000](#)). There is no evidence that he actually uses his visa to travel to the US. Investigators speculate that he may have considered a trip to shepherd some aspect of the 9/11 plot. He applied for the visa using a Saudi passport and an alias (Abdulrahman al Ghamdi), but the photo he submitted is really of him. He uses the new, controversial Visa Express program that allows Saudis to

apply for US visas without having to appear in person at any point during the application process (see [May 2001](#)). ([Miller and Meyer 1/27/2004](#)) Just a month earlier, the CIA passed a warning to all US intelligence agencies, certain military commanders, and parts of the Justice and Treasury Departments saying that Mohammed may be attempting to enter the US (see [June 12, 2001](#)). However, either this warning isn't given to immigration officials or else they fail to notice his application. ([Miller and Meyer 1/27/2004](#))

(Before July 24, 2001): Risk Assessment Identifies Aircraft Striking WTC as One of the 'Maximum Foreseeable Losses'

A property risk assessment report is prepared for Silverstein Properties before it acquires the lease for the World Trade Center (see [July 24, 2001](#)). It identifies the scenario of an aircraft hitting one of the WTC towers as one of the "maximum foreseeable losses." The report says, "This scenario is within the realm of the possible, but highly unlikely." Further details of the assessment, such as who prepared it, are unreported. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 5/2003, pp. 16](#); [Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 189](#); [Barrett and Collins 9/1/2006](#))

July 23, 2001: CIA Officer Says Al-Qaeda Leader's Associates like Almihdhar Are of 'Very High Interest', Mentions Mysterious Almihdhar Connection

Due to a lack of response to a previous request that information about the *Cole* bombing and the Malaysia summit be passed to the FBI (see [July 13, 2001](#)), CIA officer Tom Wilshire e-mails another CIA manager asking about the request's status. He writes: "When the next big op is carried out by [bin Laden's] hardcore cadre, [Khallad bin Attash] will be at or near the top of the command food chain—and probably nowhere near either the attack site or Afghanistan. That makes people who are available and who have direct access to him of very high interest. Khalid [Almihdhar] should be very high interest anyway, given his connection to the [redacted]." The name of the redacted event or entity is unclear, ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) but one logical possibility is the *Cole* bombing, since Wilshire registered a concern between Almihdhar and the *Cole* bombers earlier in the month (see [July 5, 2001](#)) and Almihdhar was likely directly involved in the bombing (see [Around October 12, 2000](#)).

July 24, 2001: World Trade Center Ownership Changes Hands For the First Time



Larry Silverstein. [Source: *Silverstein Properties publicity photo*] Real estate development and investment firm Silverstein Properties and real estate investment trust Westfield America finalize a deal worth \$3.2 billion to purchase a 99-year lease on the World Trade Center. The agreement covers the Twin Towers, World Trade Center Buildings 4 and 5 (two nine-story office buildings), and about 425,000 square feet of retail space. ([Bagli 4/27/2001](#); [Port Authority of New York and New Jersey 7/24/2001](#); [IREIzine 7/26/2001](#)) Westfield America will be responsible for the retail space, known as the Mall. Silverstein Properties' lease will cover the roughly 10 million square feet of office space of the Twin Towers and Buildings 4 and 5. Silverstein Properties already owns Building 7 of the WTC, which it built in 1987. This is the only time the WTC has ever changed hands since it was opened in 1973. ([International Council of Shopping Centers 4/27/2001](#); [Westfield Group 7/24/2001](#); [Daily Telegraph 9/11/2001](#); [Glanz 11/29/2001](#); [CNN 8/31/2002](#)) It was previously controlled by the New York Port Authority, a bi-state government agency. ([Malanga 5/12/2007](#)) Larry Silverstein, the president of Silverstein Properties, only uses \$14 million of his own money for the deal. His partners put up a further \$111 million, and banks provide \$563 million in loans. ([Brill 2003, pp. 156](#)) The Port Authority had carried only \$1.5 billion in insurance coverage on all its buildings, including the WTC, but Silverstein's lenders insist on more, eventually demanding \$3.55 billion in cover. ([Frankel 9/3/2002](#)) After 9/11, Larry Silverstein will claim the attacks on the World Trade Center constituted two separate events, thereby entitling him to a double payout totaling over \$7 billion. ([English 10/9/2001](#); [Vuillamy 8/18/2002](#)) Eventually, after several years of legal wrangling, a total of \$4.55 billion of insurance money will be paid out for the destruction of the WTC (see [May 23, 2007](#)). Most of this appears to go to Silverstein Properties. How much goes to Westfield America is unclear. ([Topousis 5/24/2007](#))

July 24, 2001: King of Jordan Offers to Send Troops to Eliminate Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan



King Abdullah II. [Source: David Bohrer/ White House]CIA

Director George Tenet will later reveal that on this day, he learns in a briefing that King Abdullah II of Jordan is offering to help the US with troops to defeat bin Laden in a decisive military manner. He offers to send two battalions (roughly between 1,000 and 2,000 soldiers) of “Jordanian Special Forces to go door to door in Afghanistan, if necessary, to deal with al-Qaeda. The offer was a wonderful gesture but would have to have been part of a larger overall strategy in order to succeed. To King Abdullah, bin Laden was the greatest threat in the world to his nation’s security....” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 156](#)) There is a claim that al-Qaeda plotted an assassination of King Abdullah II, which was aborted when he learned of the plot in the summer of 2000. ([Gunaratna 2003, pp. 133](#)) After 9/11, it will be reported that in July 2001, Jordan warned the US that al-Qaeda was planning an attack inside the US (see [July 2001](#)). It will also be reported that in the late summer of 2001, Jordan warned the US of a major al-Qaeda attack inside the US using aircraft. They say it is codenamed “The Big Wedding,” which is al-Qaeda’s codename for the 9/11 attacks (see [Late Summer 2001](#)).

July 26, 2001: Ashcroft Stops Flying Commercial Airlines; Refuses to Explain Why



Dan Rather in July 2001 presenting the story about John Ashcroft. [Source: CBS via Banded Artists Productions]CBS News reports that Attorney General Ashcroft has stopped flying commercial airlines due to a threat assessment, but “neither the FBI nor the Justice Department... would identify [to CBS] what the threat was, when it was detected or who made it.” ([CBS News 7/26/2001](#)) One newspaper reports, “Ashcroft demonstrated an amazing lack of curiosity when asked if he knew anything about the threat. ‘Frankly, I don’t,’ he told reporters.” ([Sorensen 6/3/2002](#))

It is later reported that he stopped flying in July based on threat assessments made on May 8 and June 19. In May 2002, it is claimed the threat assessment had nothing to do with al-Qaeda, but Ashcroft walked out of his office rather than answer questions about it. ([Associated Press 5/16/2002](#)) The San Francisco Chronicle will later conclude, “The FBI obviously knew something was in the wind.... The FBI did advise Ashcroft to stay off commercial aircraft. The rest of us just had to take our chances.” ([Sorensen 6/3/2002](#)) CBS’s Dan Rather will later ask of this warning: “Why wasn’t it shared with the public at large?” ([Kurtz 5/27/2002](#)) On July 5, the CIA had warned Ashcroft to expect multiple, imminent al-Qaeda attacks overseas (see [July 5, 2001](#)) and on July 12 the FBI warned him about the al-Qaeda threat within the US (see [July 12, 2001](#)).

July 27, 2001: Rice Briefed on Terrorist Threats, Advised to Keep Ready

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke reports to National Security Adviser Rice and her deputy Steve Hadley that the spike in intelligence indicating a near-term attack appears to have ceased, but he urges them to keep readiness high. Intelligence indicates that an attack has been postponed for a few months. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) In early August, CIA Director Tenet also reports that intelligence suggests that whatever terrorist activity might have been originally planned has been delayed. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#))

July 27, 2001: Clarke Says Immediate Threat Is Over but Attacks Still Going Forward

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke informs National Security Advisor Rice and her deputy Stephen Hadley that the spike in intelligence about a near-term al-Qaeda attack has stopped. However, he urges keeping readiness at a high level during August, when President Bush and many other top US leaders go on vacation. He warns that another recent report suggests that an attack has just been postponed for a few months “but will still happen.” Similarly, on August 3, the CIA sends a cable to the US intelligence community warning that the threat of impending al-Qaeda attacks is likely to continue indefinitely. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 260, 534](#))

(July 27, 2001): CIA Checks Out Radicals Mentioned in Phoenix Memo, Also Receives Memo?

The FBI sends a request to the CIA, asking the agency to check for information on eight Islamist radicals mentioned in the Phoenix memo (see [July 10, 2001](#)). However, the CIA apparently does not find any additional information about them. ([Johnson and Locy 5/20/2002](#); [Seper 5/23/2002](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 350-1](#)) Had the CIA investigated these men closely they might have turned up ties connecting them to al-Qaeda. For instance, in 2000, two friends of the main target of the Phoenix memo were detained and deported

after twice attempting to enter a US airplane cockpit in what may have been practice for the 9/11 attacks. That same year it was learned by US intelligence that one of these men had received explosives and car bombing training in Afghanistan (see [November 1999-August 2001](#)). Other ties between the men in the memo go undiscovered; for instance, another person targeted in the memo had trained in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan and will later be arrested with a top al-Qaeda leader (see [July 10, 2001](#)). Around this time, the Phoenix memo is sent to FBI headquarters and its I-49 squad in New York (see [July 27, 2001 and after](#) and [July 27, 2001 or shortly after](#)). After 9/11, the CIA will say it did not receive the memo and its Office of Inspector General will agree with this. ([Central Intelligence Agency's Office of Inspector General 6/2005](#).) However, in a 2006 book journalist Lawrence Wright will report that the memo was also sent to the CIA's bin Laden unit. One of the sources Wright cites for this passage is Mark Rossini. Rossini is an FBI agent who at one time worked in the unit's I-49 squad in New York, but was detailed to the bin Laden station in the summer of 2001. ([Wright 2006, pp. 316, 350, 381, 426](#) Sources: [Mark Rossini](#))

July 27, 2001 or shortly after: FBI's New York Office Receives Phoenix Memo, Takes Little Action

The FBI's New York field office, which specializes in international terrorism, receives Ken Williams' Phoenix Memo, but only briefly checks the named radicals and does not respond to Williams. In the memo, Williams noted that there is a suspiciously large number of Islamic extremists learning to fly in Arizona. Some of them will turn out to be connected to 9/11 hijacker Hani Hanjour (see [July 10, 2001](#)). Williams sent the memo to FBI headquarters (see [July 27, 2001 and after](#)) and the I-49 squad in the New York FBI field office. In New York, the memo is read by FBI agent Jack Cloonan, a member of the I-49 squad. Cloonan believes that the memo has a "glaring deficiency," as he thinks bin Laden does not have a support operation in Arizona any more. He forms the opinion that William's theory and conclusions are "faulty." However, two of the hijackers were in Arizona in early 2001 (see [December 12, 2000-March 2001](#)) and some of the people named in the memo will later be linked to bin Laden (see [October 1996-Late April 1999](#)). In August 2001, Cloonan will ask, "Who's going to conduct the thirty thousand interviews? When the f_ck do we have time for this?" Nonetheless, he checks out the eight names mentioned in the memo. He will apparently find nothing, although several individuals associated with the Phoenix cell are Sunni extremists (see [November 1999-August 2001](#)). The memo is also read by an analyst and an auditor in New York while they are researching other matters, and Cloonan will tell the Department of Justice's Office of Inspector General (OIG) he may have discussed the memo with some of his colleagues. The OIG's report will say Cloonan told investigators that "he did not contact Williams or anyone else in Phoenix to discuss the [memo]." However, in a 2006 book author Lawrence Wright, citing an interview with Cloonan, will say that Cloonan spoke to Williams' supervisor in Phoenix about it. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 77-9](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 350, 426](#)) The I-49 squad possibly forwards the memo to the Alec Station bin Laden unit at the CIA's Counterterrorism Center (see [July 27, 2001](#)).

July 27, 2001 and after: Phoenix Memo Received by FBI Headquarters; Little Action Taken in Response



FBI headquarters. [Source:

GlobeXplorer] FBI headquarters receives the Phoenix Memo, but does not act on it. The memo was drafted by Arizona FBI agent Ken Williams and warns that a large number of Islamic extremists are learning to fly in the US. It is dated 17 days earlier, but is not uploaded until this date (see [July 10, 2001](#)). Although the memo is addressed to eight specific agents, it is apparently not received by all of them. The Department of Justice's Office of Inspector General will later say that the memo was not delivered directly to the addressees, but uploaded to a central dispatching point, from where it was assigned to Radical Fundamentalist Unit agent Elizabeth Matson on July 30. Before sending the memo, Williams called both Matson and her colleague Fred Stremmel to talk to them about it. Matson pulls up the memo, which has "routine" precedence, and prints and reads it. However, she thinks it should go to the bin Laden unit. A week later she discusses the matter with bin Laden unit agent Jennifer Maitner and they agree that Maitner will do some research and then they will talk again. Matson will later tell the Office of Inspector General she may have mentioned the memo to her superior, but is not sure. Her superior will say he was not consulted. Maitner discusses the memo with bin Laden unit chief Rod Middleton and also sends it to the FBI's Portland, Oregon, field office, which was previously interested in one of the men named in the memo. However, she does not do anything else with it before 9/11, apparently due to her high workload. The FBI will later acknowledge the memo did not receive the sufficient or timely analysis that it deserved. (US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 65-77, 80.) The memo is also seen by the FBI's New York field office (see [July 27, 2001 or shortly after](#)), another RFU agent researching the Moussaoui case (see [August 22, 2001](#)) and possibly the CIA's bin Laden unit (see [July 27, 2001](#)).

July 28, 2001: Captured Operative Had Links That Could Have Led to Moussaoui, 9/11 Plot



Djamel Beghal. [Source: Public domain] High-level al-Qaeda operative Djamel Beghal is arrested in Dubai on his way back from Afghanistan. Earlier in the month the CIA sent friendly intelligence agencies a list of al-Qaeda agents they wanted to be immediately apprehended, and Beghal was on the list (see [July 3, 2001](#)). Beghal quickly starts to talk, and tells French investigators about a plot to attack the American embassy in Paris. Crucially, he provides new details about the international-operations role of top al-Qaeda deputy Abu Zubaida, whom he had been with a short time before. ([Erlanger and Hedges 12/28/2001](#); [Elliott 8/4/2002](#)) One European official says Beghal talks about “very important figures in the al-Qaeda structure, right up to bin Laden’s inner circle. [He] mention[s] names, responsibilities and functions—people we weren’t even aware of before. This is important stuff.” ([Elliott 11/12/2001](#)) One French official says of Beghal’s interrogations, “We shared everything we knew with the Americans.” ([Elliott 5/19/2002](#)) The New York Times later will report that, “Enough time and work could have led investigators from Mr. Beghal to an address in Hamburg where Mohamed Atta and his cohorts had developed and planned the Sept. 11 attacks.” Beghal had frequently associated with Zacarias Moussaoui. However, although Moussaoui is arrested (see [August 16, 2001](#)) around the same time that Beghal is revealing the names and details of all his fellow operatives, Beghal is apparently not asked about Moussaoui. ([Erlanger and Hedges 12/28/2001](#); [Elliott 8/4/2002](#))

Late July 2001: FBI Agent Possibly Confused by Error in CIA Cable, Fails to Tell FBI Hijacker Almihdhar Has US Visa

An FBI agent assigned to the CIA’s bin Laden unit locates a CIA cable that says hijacker Khalid Almihdhar has a US visa, but fails to disseminate the information to the FBI. It is not clear why the agent, Margaret Gillespie, fails to do this. However, at the same time she locates another CIA cable which mistakenly states that the information about the visa has already been passed to the FBI (see [January 4-6, 2000](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 299](#))

July 29, 2001-August 3, 2001: Bin Al-Shibh Forwards Money to Moussaoui

www.westernunion.com		Do not write in shaded area	
Please print information on this portion of form and present with valid I.D. Escriba esta parte de la forma y presente una identificación válida.		No escriba en el área sombreada.	
My first name is Nombre primero	ZACARIAS	Agent Agente	Operator Operador
My last name is Apellido	MOUSSAOUI	Date Fecha	Time Hora
Amount expected \$ Cantidad esperada \$		I.D. Type Tipo de identificación	Number Número
My home telephone no. is Número de teléfono en casa	(909) 325 9886	State Estado	Expires Expira
My home address is Dirección en casa	P.O. BOX 73070-6378	Serial Número de serie	Security No. Número de seguridad
City/state/country Ciudad/estado/país	NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, 73070	Physical description Descripción física	Eye color Color de ojos
Sender's first name Nombre del remitente	AHAD	Height Altura	Hair color Color de pelo
Sender's last name Apellido del remitente	SABET	Money Transfer Control Number Número de control de transferencia de dinero	
Sender's telephone no. Número de teléfono del remitente	()	Check number Número de cheque	Amount Cantidad \$
City/state/country money sent from Ciudad/estado/país desde el que se envía el dinero	Germany	Date Fecha de depósito	Cashed check Cheque cobrado
Money Transfer Control No. (if available) Número de control de transferencia de dinero (si está disponible)	5.2.2.1.0.9.5.7.6.6	Originating city/state/country Ciudad/estado/país de origen	Expected payment Cantidad de dinero esperada
Test question (if applicable) Pregunta de identificación	Answer Respuesta	Test question Pregunta de identificación	Answer Respuesta
Signature Firma		Agent's Signature Firma del agente	

A Western Union

money transfer between Ahad Sabet (Ramzi bin al-Shibh's alias) and Moussaoui in Norman, Oklahoma. [Source: FBI] According to the Justice Department indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui, Moussaoui and Ramzi bin al-Shibh are in communication for several days. Moussaoui makes several calls from Norman, Oklahoma, to Dusseldorf, Germany. Then, around July 31 someone using the name "Hashim Abdulrahman" in the United Arab Emirates sends two wire transfers totaling about \$15,000 to an "Ahad Sabet" in Hamburg, Germany. Sabet is claimed to be an alias for bin al-Shibh. Then bin al-Shibh, again using the Sabet name, wires about \$14,000 to Moussaoui in Oklahoma. (MSNBC 12/11/2001) Moussaoui immediately moves to Minnesota and begins studying at a flight school there (see August 10-11, 2001). The passport with the name Ahad Sabet that bin al-Shibh used appears to belong to an innocent US doctor who had his passport stolen in Spain several years earlier. (Hirschorn 8/7/2002)

Late July 2001: Taliban Foreign Minister Tries to Warn US and UN of Huge Attack Inside the US



Taliban Foreign Minister Wakil Muttawakil. [Source: *Reuters*] Taliban Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil learns that bin Laden is planning a “huge attack” on targets inside America. The attack is imminent, and will kill thousands. He learns this from Tahir Yildash, leader of the rebel Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which is allied with al-Qaeda at the time. Muttawakil sends an emissary to pass this information on to the US consul general, and another US official, “possibly from the intelligence services,” also attends the meeting. The message is not taken very seriously; one source blames this on “warning fatigue” from too many warnings. In addition, the emissary supposedly is from the Foreign Ministry, but did not say the message came from Muttawakil himself. The emissary then takes the message to the Kabul offices of UNSMA, the political wing of the UN. They also fail to take the warning seriously. ([Clark 9/7/2002](#); [Reuters 9/7/2002](#))

Late July 2001: Argentina Relays Warning to the US

Argentina’s Jewish community receives warnings of a major attack against the United States, Argentina, or France from “a foreign intelligence source.” The warning is then relayed to the Argentine security authorities. It is agreed to keep the warning secret in order to avoid panic while reinforcing security at Jewish sites in the country. Says a Jewish leader, “It was a concrete warning that an attack of major proportion would take place, and it came from a reliable intelligence source. And I understand the Americans were told about it.” Argentina has a large Jewish community that has been bombed in the past, and has been an area of al-Qaeda activity. ([Perelman 5/31/2002](#))

Late July 2001: Egypt Warns CIA of 20 Al-Qaeda Operatives in US; Four Training to Fly; CIA Is Not Interested

CBS later reports, in a long story on another topic: “Just days after [Mohamed] Atta return[s] to the US from Spain, Egyptian intelligence in Cairo says it received a report from one of its operatives in Afghanistan that 20 al-Qaeda members had slipped into the US and four of them had received flight training on Cessnas. To the Egyptians, pilots of small planes didn’t sound terribly alarming, but they [pass] on the message to the CIA

anyway, fully expecting Washington to request information. The request never [comes].” ([CBS News 10/9/2002](#)) This appears to be just one of several accurate Egyptian warnings from their informants inside al-Qaeda.

Late July 2001: CIA Director Believes Warnings Could Not ‘Get Any Worse’

CIA Director George Tenet has been alarmed all summer about the rise in attack warnings (see [Summer 2001](#)). As Tenet later tells the 9/11 Commission, in his world “the system was blinking red.” By late July, Tenet believes that the level of alarm could not “get any worse.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 259](#))

Late July or Early August 2001: US Authorities Look into Theory that Iraq Had Role in 1993 WTC Bombing



Laurie Mylroie. [*Source: Publicity photo*] US authorities re-open the files on Ramzi Yousef, the convicted mastermind of the WTC bombing in 1993, and begin looking into the theory that Yousef may have actually been an Iraqi agent. Presumably this is in response to requests by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz the month before to look into the matter (see [June 2001](#)). Yousef was convicted in 1996 (see [September 5, 1996](#)) and has been in custody since 1995 (see [February 7, 1995](#)). According to the official version of events, Yousef’s real name is Abdul Basit, a 27-year-old Pakistani who until 1989 was a computer student studying in South Wales. In late 2000, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) published *Study of Revenge: Saddam Hussein’s Unfinished War Against America* arguing in support of the theory that Yousef was actually an Iraqi agent (see [Late 2000](#)). The book, written by AEI scholar Laurie Mylroie, says that Basit was living with his parents in Kuwait in 1990 when Iraq invaded the country (see [November 8, 1990](#)). During the occupation, Iraqis presumably murdered him and his family and then altered police files so Iraqi intelligence could use his identity. ([Woolsey 9/13/2001](#); [McGrory 9/22/2001](#)) In February 2001, former CIA Director James Woolsey traveled to Britain in an attempt to find evidence to support this theory (see [February 2001](#)). But Mylroie’s theory is debunked by authorities who match the fingerprints of Yousef to those of Basit. ([Bergen 12/2003](#); [Isikoff and Corn 2006, pp. 81](#))

Late July 2001: CIA Official Says of Al-Qaeda, ‘They’re Coming Here’

CIA Director George Tenet will recall in his 2007 that “during one of my updates in late July when, as we speculated about the kind of [al-Qaeda] attacks we could face, Rich B. suddenly said, with complete conviction, ‘They’re coming here.’ I’ll never forget the silence that followed.” Rich B.’s full last name is not known, nor is his position in the CIA, but he appears to have a leadership role in al-Qaeda related efforts. It is also not known who else is at the meeting. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 145](#))

Late July 2001: Taliban Intelligence Chief Wants Secret Contact with US to ‘Save Afghanistan’

In his 2007 book, CIA Director George Tenet will write that on this day, “From Afghanistan came word that the Taliban intelligence chief, Qari Amadullah, was interested in establishing secret contact, outside the country and without Mullah Omar’s knowledge, “to save Afghanistan.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 156](#)) However, it is unclear if the offer was acted upon because Tenet has nothing more to say about it. The 9/11 Commission will later report that in July a deep schism developed in the Taliban and even al-Qaeda leadership over the wisdom of going through with the 9/11 attacks. Apparently, even top Taliban leader Mullah Omar was ideologically opposed to the attacks at this time, though he may have changed his mind before 9/11. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 251-252](#))

Late July-August 2001: US Fails to Capture or Kill Al-Zawahiri



Ayman al-Zawahiri. [*Source: FBI*]The US receives intelligence that bin Laden’s right-hand man, Ayman al-Zawahiri, is receiving medical treatment at a clinic in Sana’a, Yemen. However, the Bush administration rejects a plan to capture him, as officials are not 100 percent sure the patient is al-Zawahiri. Officials later

regret the missed opportunity. ([ABC News 2/20/2002](#)) In another account, an anonymous CIA source claims that the “Egyptian intelligence service briefed us that he was in a hospital in Sana’a. We sent a few people over there, and they made a colossal screwup. While our guys were conducting a surveillance of the hospital, the guards caught them with their videocameras.” ([Wright 9/9/2002](#)) CIA Director Tenet will touch on this incident in his 2007 book, saying that only that on July 24, 2001, “we had reporting that al-Zawahiri was in Yemen and we were pursuing confirmation and a plan to exfiltrate him to the United States. Although we doubted this information, it was our intention to play this hand out.” He doesn’t mention what happened after that. ([Tenet 2007](#)) Al-Zawahiri also appears to have spent time in Yemen in 1998 (see [Spring-Summer 1998](#)).

July 31, 2001: FAA Issues Hijacking Warning; No Specific Domestic Threat

The FAA issues another alert to US airlines. It mentions “reports of possible near-term terrorist operations... particularly on the Arabian Peninsula and/or Israel.” It states the FAA has no credible evidence of specific plans to attack US civil aviation, but notes that some “currently active” terrorist groups are known to “plan and train for hijackings” and are able to build and conceal sophisticated explosive devices in luggage and consumer products. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 259](#)) This alert will expire by 9/11. Note that pilots and flight attendants later claim they were never told about warnings such as these. The airlines also disagree about the content of pre-9/11 warnings generally. ([CNN 3/2002](#); [Ananova 5/17/2002](#)) For instance, American Airlines states these warnings were “extremely general in nature and did not identify a specific threat or recommend any specific security enhancements.” ([Ananova 5/17/2002](#) Sources: [American Airlines](#))

July-Late August 2001: Clinton Impeachment Lawyer Tries to Warn about Al-Qaeda Attack on Lower Manhattan



David Schippers. [*Source: Publicity photo*] David Schippers, the House Judiciary Committee’s chief investigator in the Clinton impeachment trial and the lawyer for FBI agent Robert Wright since September 1999, will later claim that he was warned about an upcoming al-Qaeda attack on lower Manhattan in May 2001 (see [May 2001](#)). After May, Schippers continues to get increasingly precise information about this

attack from FBI agents in Chicago and Minnesota, and around July he renews efforts to pass the warning to politicians. He will claim, "I tried to see if I could get a Congressman to go to bat for me and at least bring these people [to Washington] and listen to them. I sent them information and nobody cared. It was always, 'We'll get back to you,' 'We'll get back to you,' 'We'll get back to you.'" At the same time he is attempting to pass on this warning, he will claim he is also attempting to pass on the work of reporter Jayna Davis and her theory that Middle Easterners were involved in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing (see [April 19, 1995](#)), and also Wright's claim that Hamas operatives were operating freely inside the US (see [February-March 2001](#)). The three claims put together seem to lead to a bad response; Schippers later comments, "People thought I was crazy." Around July 15, he attempts to contact Attorney General John Ashcroft. Conservative activist "Phyllis Schlafly finally apparently made some calls. She called me one day and said, 'I've talked to John Ashcroft, and he'll call you tomorrow.'" The next day, one of Ashcroft's underlings in the Justice Department calls him back and says, "We don't start our investigations with the Attorney General. Let me look into this, and I'll have somebody get back to you right away." Schippers will say he never did hear back from anyone in the Justice Department. Perhaps coincidentally, on July 26 it will be reported that Ashcroft has stopped flying commercial aircraft due to an unnamed threat (see [July 26, 2001](#)). In late August, his FBI agent sources again confirm that an al-Qaeda attack on lower Manhattan is imminent. ([Metcalf 10/21/2001](#); [Patterson 5/18/2002](#); [Ahmed 2004, pp. 258-260](#)) In 2003, Wright will say, "In 2000 and in 2001, [Schippers] contacted several US congressmen well before the September 11th attacks. Unfortunately, these congressmen failed to follow through with Mr. Schippers' request that they investigate my concerns." It is not clear if Wright was one of the Chicago FBI agents that Schippers claims gave warnings about a Manhattan attack, or if Wright is only referring to Wright's investigation into funding for Hamas and other groups that Schippers was also warning politicians about (see [February-March 2001](#)). ([Federal News Service 6/2/2003](#))

Late Summer 2001: Jordan Warns US That Aircraft Will Be Used in Major Attack Inside the US

Jordanian intelligence (the GID) makes a communications intercept deemed so important that King Abdullah's men relay it to Washington, probably through the CIA station in Amman. To make doubly sure the message gets through it is passed through an Arab intermediary to a German intelligence agent. The message states that a major attack, code named "The Big Wedding," is planned inside the US and that aircraft will be used. "When it became clear that the information was embarrassing to Bush administration officials and congressmen who at first denied that there had been any such warnings before September 11, senior Jordanian officials backed away from their earlier confirmations." The Christian Science Monitor will call the story "confidently authenticated" even though Jordan has backed away from it. ([Cooley 5/21/2002](#); [Cooley 5/23/2002](#)) It has been reported elsewhere that in July 2001, Jordan warns the US that al-Qaeda is planning an attack inside the US, but it is unknown if this is referring to the same warning or a separate one (see [July 2001](#)). In late July 2001, the king of Jordan will

offer the US to send two battalions of Jordanian special forces to Afghanistan to eliminate al-Qaeda havens there (see [July 24, 2001](#)).

August 2001: FAA Told to Warn Airlines of Hijacking or Airliner Bombing in New York, Atlanta, and Other Locations

The CIA sends a message to the FAA asking the FAA to advise corporate security directors of US airlines, “A group of six Pakistanis currently based in La Paz, Bolivia may be planning to conduct a hijacking, or possibly a bombing or an act of sabotage against a commercial airliner. While we have no details of the carrier, the date, or the location of this or these possibly planned action(s), we have learned the group has had discussions in which Canada, England, Malaysia, Cuba, South Africa, Mexico, Atlanta, New York, Madrid, Moscow, and Dubai have come up, and India and Islamabad have been described as possible travel destinations.” ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) In late July, the government of Bolivia arrested six Pakistanis, though it is not clear if they are the same six or an additional six. One of them appeared to be related to Mir Aimal Kasi, a militant who killed two CIA employees in front of CIA headquarters in 1993 (see [January 25, 1993](#)). ([Tenet 2007, pp. 156](#)) The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will later note, “While this information was not related to an attack planned by al-Qaeda, it did alert the aviation community to the possibility that a hijacking plot might occur in the US shortly before the September 11 attacks occurred.” ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) It has not been reported if the FAA actually passed this message on to the US airlines or not. There have been no reports of any extra security measures taken by the airlines, airports, or the FAA in the month before 9/11 in places such as New York City and Atlanta.

August 2001: Moroccan Informant Warns US of Large Scale, Imminent Attack in New York

In 1999, a Moroccan named Hassan Dabou infiltrated al-Qaeda for the Moroccan intelligence agency. He was sent to Afghanistan, posing as an Islamic radical on the run from the Moroccan government. While there, he was able to grow close to bin Laden. He heard bin Laden repeatedly vent his anger at the failure of the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 (see [February 26, 1993](#)). Bin Laden was “very disappointed” that the towers did not fall. Dabou heard that bin Laden had planned “something spectacular” involving “large scale operations in New York in the summer or fall of 2001.” Moroccan intelligence passed this information to US. Around this time, US intelligence is so interested that they call Dabou to Washington to report on this information in person. Dabou makes the trip in secret, but apparently his cover is blown and he is unable to go back and gather more intelligence. Dabou is still in Washington cooperating with US intelligence agents when 9/11 occurs. After 9/11 he will remain in Washington, get a new identity, and continue to work with US intelligence. ([Agence France-Presse 11/22/2001](#); [Cooley 5/21/2002](#); [McGrory 6/12/2002](#))

August 2001: Russia Warns US of Suicide Pilots

Russian President Vladimir Putin warns the US that suicide pilots are training for attacks on US targets. ([Cameron 5/17/2002](#)) The head of Russian intelligence Nikolai Patrushev also later states, “We had clearly warned them” on several occasions, but they “did not pay the necessary attention.” ([Agence France-Presse 9/16/2001](#)) A Russian newspaper on September 12, 2001, will claim, “Russian Intelligence agents know the organizers and executors of these terrorist attacks. More than that, Moscow warned Washington about preparation to these actions a couple of weeks before they happened.” Interestingly, the article will claim that at least two of the militants were Muslim radicals from Uzbekistan. ([Izvestia 9/12/2001](#))

August 2001: US Learns of Plot to Crash Airplane into US Embassy in Nairobi

US intelligence learns of a plot to either bomb the US embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, from an airplane or crash an airplane into it. Two people who were reportedly acting on instructions from bin Laden met in October 2000 to discuss this plot. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

August 2001: FEMA Warns of Likely Terrorist Attack on New York

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) issues a report warning of the three most likely catastrophes facing America. One of these is a terrorist attack on New York City. (The other two scenarios are a massive San Francisco earthquake and a hurricane hitting New Orleans.) FEMA managers compiled the list of potential disasters at a training session. ([Berger 12/1/2001](#); [Blumenthal 8/31/2005](#); [Lean 9/4/2005](#); [McGray 9/26/2005](#))

August 2001: Persian Gulf Informant Gives Ex-CIA Agent Information About ‘Spectacular Terrorist Operation’

Former CIA agent Robert Baer is advising a prince in a Persian Gulf royal family, when a military associate of this prince passes information to him about a “spectacular terrorist operation” that will take place shortly. He is given a computer record of around 600 secret al-Qaeda operatives in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The list includes ten names that will be placed on the FBI’s most wanted terrorists list after 9/11. He is also given evidence that a Saudi merchant family had funded the USS *Cole* bombing on October 12, 2000, and that the Yemeni government is covering up information related to that bombing. At the military officer’s request, he offers all this information to the Saudi

Arabian government. However, an aide to the Saudi defense minister, Prince Sultan, refuses to look at the list or to pass the names on (Sultan is later sued for his complicity in the 9/11 plot in August 2002). Baer also passes the information on to a senior CIA official and the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center, but there is no response or action. Portions of Baer's book describing his experience will be blacked out, having been censored by the CIA. ([Baer 2002, pp. 55-58](#); [Robinson 1/12/2002](#))

August 2001: Six 9/11 Hijackers Live Near Entrance to NSA

At least six 9/11 hijackers, including all of those who boarded Flight 77, live in Laurel, Maryland, from about this time. They reportedly include Hani Hanjour, Majed Moqed, Khalid Almihdhar, Nawaf Alhazmi, and Salem Alhazmi. Laurel, Maryland, is home to a Muslim imam named Moataz Al-Hallak who teaches at a local Islamic school and has been linked to bin Laden. He has testified three times before a grand jury investigating bin Laden. NSA expert James Bamford later states, "The terrorist cell that eventually took over the airliner that crashed into the Pentagon ended up living, working, planning and developing all their activities in Laurel, Maryland, which happens to be the home of the NSA. So they were actually living alongside NSA employees as they were plotting all these things." ([Masters, Smith, and Shear 9/19/2001](#); [Bamford 6/21/2002](#))

August 2001: Crown Prince Abdullah Warns Bush Against Pro-Israeli Stance in Letter

Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah writes to President Bush saying that the administration's increasingly pro-Israel stance with regard to the Palestinians and other issues is putting the Saudis in a very difficult position. The prince warns that Saudi Arabia may need to reassess its relations with the United States. Bush immediately responds by promising a new, more balanced initiative for peace in the Middle East, including support for a Palestinian state. But the new American initiative will be derailed by the events of September 11. ([BBC 11/9/2001](#); [Teitelbaum 5/7/2002](#))

August 2001: 9/11 Hijacker Possibly Seen Near Facility Where 'Blind Sheikh' Is Being Held



Mohand Alshehri. [Source: FBI] Hijacker Mohand Alshehri is apparently seen in a bar in Rochester, Minnesota, and is engaged in conversation with a woman there. Rochester is home to the Federal Medical Center prison, where the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, is held from 1998 to 2002. The hijackers have a number of tangential links to him (see [Early 2000-September 10, 2001](#)). The woman, Nancy Hanlon, often runs into Arabs at the bar, which is popular with Saudis receiving medical treatment nearby. Hanlon will later describe Alshehri as “young, dishevelled—and utterly despondent. He was slumped over a glass of beer... It was overwhelming—the despair that a person can give out! Out of every part of him. His face.” During their three-hour conversation Alshehri, who claims to be a pilot and produces a pilot’s ID, insists, “You are talking to a dead man. I don’t exist. I’m a ghost. I’m not even here, I’m dead... I’ve got myself into something there is no way out. There is no way out... It has been decided. He has decided it. It is done. It is finished.” However, he does brighten up a few times and says, “We are really going to show your country something. Something big. It’s going to be really big.” After 9/11, Hanlon apparently remains unaware of pictures showing Alshehri as one of the 9/11 hijackers. She goes to the FBI in 2002 and identifies Alshehri from a series of photographs. However, the FBI will say there is no reason to believe Alshehri ever visited Rochester. ([McGill 6/30/2004](#))

(August 2001): NSA Intercepts Another Call to Hijackers in US

The NSA has been intercepting calls between at least two hijackers, Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, in the US and an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana’a, Yemen, run by al-Qaeda operative Ahmed al-Hada over an approximately 18-month period before 9/11 (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). According to MSNBC, the final intercepted call comes “only weeks” before 9/11. ([Myers 7/21/2004](#)) Around the same time there is great alarm in the US intelligence community over a communications intercept in Yemen indicating there was going to be a major al-Qaeda attack against US interests (see [June 30-July 1, 2001](#)). Further, the investigation of the USS *Cole* bombing has reignited interest in Almihdhar and Alhazmi on the part of the US intelligence community since at least June 2001 (see [June 11, 2001](#) and [July 13, 2001](#)). The two of them are placed on an international no-fly list in late August (see August 23, 2001).

August-October 2001: Britain Seeks Indian Assistance in Catching Saeed Sheikh

British intelligence asks India for legal assistance in catching Saeed Sheikh sometime during August 2001. Saeed has been openly living in Pakistan since 1999 and has even traveled to Britain at least twice during that time, despite having kidnapped Britons and Americans in 1993 and 1994. ([Fielding 4/21/2002](#); [Anson 8/2002](#)) According to the Indian media, informants in Germany tell the internal security service there that Saeed helped fund hijacker Mohamed Atta. ([Swami 10/13/2001](#)) On September 23, it is revealed, without explanation, that the British have asked India for help in finding Saeed. ([Fielding 9/23/2001](#)) Saeed Sheikh's role in training the hijackers and financing the 9/11 attacks soon becomes public knowledge, though some elements are disputed. ([Bamber, Hastings, and Syal 9/30/2001](#); [CNN 10/6/2001](#); [Ressa 10/8/2001](#)) The Gulf News claims that the US freezes the assets of Pakistani militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed on October 12, 2001, because it has established links between Saeed Sheikh and 9/11. ([Gulf News 10/11/2001](#)) However, in October, an Indian magazine notes, "Curiously, there seems to have been little international pressure on Pakistan to hand [Saeed] over" ([Swami 10/13/2001](#)), and the US does not formally ask Pakistan for help to find Saeed until January 2002.

Early August 2001: Government Informant Warns Congressmen of Plan to Attack the WTC



Randy Glass. [*Source: Banded Artists Productions*] Randy Glass, a former con artist turned government informant, later will claim that he contacts the staff of Senator Bob Graham [D] and Representative Robert Wexler [D] at this time and warns them of a plan to attack the WTC, but his warnings are ignored. ([Pacenti 10/17/2002](#)) Glass also tells the media at this time that his recently concluded informant work has "far greater ramifications than have so far been revealed," and, "potentially, thousands of lives [are] at risk." ([Burstein 8/7/2001](#)) Glass was a key informant in a sting operation involving ISI agents who were illegally trying to purchase sophisticated US military weaponry in return for cash and heroin. He later claims that in July 1999, one ISI agent named Rajaa Gulum Abbas pointed to the WTC and said, "Those towers are coming down." ([Pacenti 10/17/2002](#)) Most details apparently remain sealed. For instance Glass will claim that his sealed sentencing document dated June 15, 2001, lists threats against

the WTC and Americans. ([WPBF 25 \(West Palm Beach\) 8/5/2002](#)) Florida State Senator Ron Klein, who had dealings with Glass before 9/11, later will say he is surprised it took so many months for the US to listen to Glass: “Shame on us.” ([Pacenti 10/17/2002](#)) Klein will recall getting a warning from Glass, though he cannot recall if it mentions the WTC specifically. He will say he was told US intelligence agencies would look into it. ([Walter 10/7/2002](#)) Senator Graham later will acknowledge that his office had contact with Glass before 9/11, and was told about a WTC attack: “I was concerned about that and a dozen other pieces of information which emanated from the summer of 2001.” However, Graham will say that he personally was unaware of Glass’s information until after 9/11. ([Pacenti 10/17/2002](#)) In October 2002, Glass will testify under oath before a private session of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry, stating, “I told [the inquiry] I have specific evidence, and I can document it.” ([Pacenti 10/17/2002](#))

Early August 2001: CIA’s Concern over Planned Bin Laden Strikes Inside US Are Heightened

The Associated Press later reports that the “CIA had developed general information a month before the attacks that heightened concerns that bin Laden and his followers were increasingly determined to strike on US soil.” A CIA official will affirm, “[t]here was something specific in early August that said to us that [bin Laden] was determined in striking on US soil.” ([Solomon 10/3/2001](#))

Early August 2001: Britain Warns US Again; Specifies Multiple Airplane Hijackings

Britain gives the US another warning about an al-Qaeda attack. The previous British warning on July 16, 2001 (see [July 16, 2001](#)), was vague as to method, but this warning specifies multiple airplane hijackings. This warning is said to reach President Bush. ([Crichton 5/19/2002](#))

Early August 2001: Saeed Sheikh Receives Ransom Money; Sends \$100,000 to Hijacker Atta

The ransom for a wealthy Indian shoe manufacturer kidnapped in Calcutta, India, two weeks earlier is paid to an Indian gangster named Aftab Ansari. Ansari is based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and has ties to the ISI and Saeed Sheikh. Ansari gives some of the about \$830,000 in ransom money to Saeed, who sends about \$100,000 of it to hijacker Mohamed Atta. ([Watson 1/23/2002](#); [Popham 1/24/2002](#)) According to some accounts, the money is moved through a charity, the Al Rashid Trust. Some of the money is also channelled to the Taliban, as well as to Pakistani and Kashmiri militant groups. ([NewsInsight 1/4/2002](#); [Press Trust of India 4/3/2002](#)) The money is apparently paid into two of Atta’s accounts in Florida (see [Summer 2001 and before](#)). The Al Rashid Trust is one of the first al-Qaeda funding vehicles to have its assets frozen after 9/11 (see

[September 24, 2001](#)). A series of recovered e-mails shows the money is sent just after August 11. This appears to be one of a series of Indian kidnappings this gang carries out in 2001. ([Mitra, Chakravarty, and Ghosh 2/14/2002](#); [Srivastava 2/14/2002](#)) Saeed provides training and weapons to the kidnappers in return for a percentage of the profits. ([Swami 2/2/2002](#); [India Today 2/25/2002](#)) This account is frequently mentioned in the Indian press, but appears in the US media as well. For instance, veteran Associated Press reporter Kathy Gannon will write, “Western intelligence sources believe Saeed sent \$100,000 to Mohamed Atta, the suspected ringleader of the Sept. 11 terrorist hijackings,” although they apparently think the hawala system was used for this. ([Gannon 2/9/2002](#)) Some evidence suggests Saeed may also have sent Atta a similar amount in 2000 (see [July-August 2000](#)) and [Summer 2000](#)).

Early August 2001: Mass Casualty Exercise at the Pentagon Includes a Plane Hitting the Building

A mass casualty exercise, involving a practice evacuation, is held at the Pentagon. General Lance Lord of US Air Force Space Command, one of the participants in the exercises, later recalls: “[It was] purely a coincidence, the scenario for that exercise included a plane hitting the building.” Lord will also say that on 9/11, “our assembly points were fresh in our minds” thanks to this practice. ([Lord 9/5/2002](#))

Early August 2001: Alleged Informant with 9/11 Foreknowledge Arrested in Turkey and Let Go

Al-Qaeda operative Luai Sakra is reportedly arrested by Turkish intelligence in Turkey and then let go. It will later appear that Sakra was an informant for the CIA, Turkish intelligence, and Syrian intelligence before 9/11. He appears to have begun working for the CIA and Turkish intelligence in 2000 (see [2000](#)). Sakra will later claim to have been arrested and quickly released twice by Turkish intelligence. It seems the first time was in 2000 and this was the second time. ([Stark 8/24/2005](#)) It would make sense that he was released at this time if he was a secret informant for Turkey. It will later come to light that Sakra had some foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks and warned Syrian intelligence about them one day before the attacks (see [September 10, 2001](#)). But it is not known if he used this arrest to warn Turkish intelligence and/or the CIA as well.

Early August-August 22, 2001: 9/11 Paymaster Skims Money for Hijackers?

An unnamed Sudanese national living in Saudi Arabia makes two wire transfers totaling about \$6,500 from the National Commercial Bank in Saudi Arabia to 9/11 plot facilitator Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi’s Standard Chartered Bank account in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The 9/11 Commission will later report that a “foreign security agency” learned from the sender that he had been asked to wire the funds by Uthman Alshehri, a

brother of hijackers Waleed and Wail Alshehri. According to the commission, \$4,900 of this is deposited in a UAE account of hijacker Fayeze Ahmed Banihammad. What happens to the other \$1,600 is unclear. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 138, 143](#)) After the money is deposited in his UAE account, Banihammad receives a call from an associate in Germany on August 18 and withdraws \$3,000 on August 20 and \$4,800 on August 22 from the account. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 6/2002](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) Court documents suggest that more money was sent to the hijackers by al-Hawsawi. “[Khalid] Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) explained that Alshehhi was sent \$81,000 (US) via al-Baluchi for Alshehhi’s, Atta’s, and Jarrah’s flight training... Most of these types of transfers were made by al-Hawsawi who was located in the UAE.” However, doubts have been expressed about the reliability of this document, which was based on KSM’s testimony, obtained through the use of torture (see [June 16, 2004](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia 7/31/2006](#)) For some time after 9/11, Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi is described in the media as the hijackers’ paymaster, even though this is the only confirmed transfer associated with him. Moreover, there are questions about his identity and whether or not “Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi” is his real name. ([CNN 3/4/2003](#))

August 1, 2001: Actor Communicates Concerns to Stewardess That Airplane Will Be Hijacked; Warning Forwarded to the FAA



James Woods. [*Source: Disney Enterprises/ Publicity photo*] Actor James Woods, flying first class on an airplane, notices four Arabic-looking men, the only other people in the first class section. He concludes they are Islamic militants intent on hijacking the plane, acting very strangely (for instance, only talking in whispers). ([Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) He tells a flight attendant, “I think this plane is going to be hijacked,” adding, “I know how serious it is to say this.” He conveys his worries to the pilots, and they assure him that the cockpit would be locked. ([Hersh 5/27/2002](#)) The flight staff later notifies the FAA about these suspicious individuals. Though the government will not discuss this event, it is highly unlikely that any action is taken regarding the flight staff’s worries ([Hersh 5/27/2002](#)) Woods will not be interviewed by the FBI until after 9/11. Woods will say the FBI believes that all four men took part in the

9/11 attacks, and the flight he was on was a practice flight for them. ([Woods 2/14/2002](#)) Woods believes one was Khalid Almihdhar and another was Hamza Alghamdi. ([Hersh 5/27/2002](#)) The FBI later will report that this may have been one of a dozen test run flights starting as early as January (see [May 24-August 14, 2001](#)). Flight attendants and passengers on other flights later recall men looking like the hijackers who took pictures of the cockpit aboard flights and/or took notes. ([Associated Press 5/29/2002](#)) The FBI has not been able to find any evidence of hijackers on the flight manifest for Woods' flight. ([Hersh 5/27/2002](#))

August 1, 2001: FBI Reissues Warning That Overseas Law Enforcement Agencies May Be Targets

With the approaching third anniversary of the US embassy bombings in Africa (see [August 7, 1998](#)), the FBI reissues a warning that overseas law enforcement agencies may be targets. It notes that although most reporting indicates a potential for attacks on US interests abroad, the possibility of an attack in the US cannot be discounted. ([CNN 3/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 260, 534](#))

August 1, 2001: Moussaoui Supposedly Seen With Hijackers in Oklahoma

A hotel owner in Oklahoma City will later claim that he saw Zacarias Moussaoui, Mohamed Atta, and Marwan Alshehhi together on or around this day. He will claim they come to his hotel late at night and ask for a room, but end up staying elsewhere. At the time, Moussaoui is living 28 miles away in Norman, Oklahoma (see [February 23-June 2001](#)). However, even though the US government will later struggle to find evidence directly connecting Moussaoui to any of the 9/11 hijackers, this account will not be cited by any US government officials or prosecutors. An article later will suggest this may be because of numerous reports and eyewitnesses claiming Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols stayed at the same hotel with a group of Middle Easterners in the weeks before the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing (see [April 19, 1995](#)). By highlighting this encounter, it might draw renewed attention to controversial Oklahoma City bombing theories. Atta and Alshehhi briefly visited an Oklahoma flight school in July 2000 (see [July 2-3, 2000](#)), before Moussaoui arrived in the US. On April 1, 2001, hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi received a speeding ticket in Oklahoma, but there have been no citations of him with Moussaoui. ([Crogan 8/2/2002](#))

August 1, 2001: Hanjour Pulled Over for Speeding

Hijacker pilot Hani Hanjour is pulled over for speeding on South George Mason Drive in Arlington, Virginia, for going 50-55 miles per hour in a 30 mph zone. He is driving a Chevrolet Van rented two days before from Borough Jeep Chrysler in Wayne, New Jersey. He has a Florida driver's license that gives his address as Miramar, Florida, where he lived in the mid-1990s (see [Spring 1996](#)). ([Feyerick and Hirschhorn 9/26/2001](#); [CNN](#)

[1/9/2002](#); [Roig-Franzia and Davis 1/9/2002](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#).) However, according to the 9/11 Commission, he did not have a Florida driver's license, although he did have a Florida ID card. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 32](#).) Three weeks after the stop, Hanjour sends Arlington General District Court a money order for the \$70 and \$30 court costs. ([Roig-Franzia and Davis 1/9/2002](#)) Three other plot leaders are also stopped for speeding in the US (see [April 1, 2001](#)).

August 1, 2001: 9/11 Hijacker Fails in Test to Get in Airplane Cockpit During Flight



Abdulaziz Alomari. [*Source: FBI*]9/11 hijacker Abdulaziz Alomari tests airline security while flying across the US. He boards USAir flight 608 from Las Vegas to New York City. Before the flight takes off, he tells a flight attendant that he is a pilot and wants to sit in the jumpseat (a spare seat in the cockpit) to observe the pilots for the whole flight. When asked for his pilot credentials, he says he is just a student pilot. Alomari is allowed in the cockpit, but only for a short while before take-off. The pilots get the impression he doesn't know much about flying. Half way through the flight, he tries to get back into the cockpit by claiming that he'd lost a valuable pen while in there earlier, but he is not allowed back in. ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 296-297](#)) Although this story is not confirmed by other sources, several of the hijackers do fly to and from Las Vegas at this time (see [May 24-August 14, 2001](#) and [August 1, 2001](#)). Apparently the hijackers repeatedly attempt to ride on jumpseats in the summer of 2001 and are sometimes successful, sometimes not (see [Summer 2001](#)). Some news stories after 9/11 will allege that the hijackers did use jumpseats on 9/11 (see [November 23, 2001](#)).

Summer 2001: IAEA Scientist: US 'Wants to Attack' Iraq

After CIA analyst Joe Turner's presentation to UN atomic energy scientists (see [Late July 2001](#)), one of the scientists calls David Albright, a nuclear physicist who runs the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security, and warns him that the "people across the river [i.e., the CIA] are trying to start a war. They are really beating the drum. They want to attack." ([Isikoff and Corn 2006, pp. 37](#))

August 1-2, 2001: Hijackers Illegally Purchase Virginia Identity Cards



This Amhed Al-Ghamdi photo comes from his Virginia ID card, the only one publicly released by the 9/11 Commission. *[Source: 9/11 Commission]* Hijackers Hani Hanjour and Khalid Almihdhar meet Luis Martinez-Flores, an illegal immigrant from El Salvador, in a 7-Eleven parking lot in Falls Church, Virginia. Martinez-Flores is paid \$100 cash to accompany the two to a local Department of Motor Vehicles office and sign forms attesting to their permanent residence in Virginia. Given new state identity cards, the cards are used the next day to get Virginia identity cards for several (five to seven) additional hijackers, including Abdulaziz Alomari, Ahmed Alghamdi, Majed Moqed, and Salem Alhazmi. ([Arizona Daily Star 9/28/2001](#); [Goldstein 9/30/2001](#); [Wall Street Journal 10/16/2001](#))

August 2, 2001: US Official Secretly Meets Taliban Ambassador in Last Attempt to Secure Pipeline Deal

Christina Rocca, Director of Asian Affairs at the State Department, secretly meets the Taliban ambassador in Islamabad, apparently in a last ditch attempt to secure a pipeline deal. Rocca was previously in charge of contacts with Islamic guerrilla groups at the CIA, and oversaw the delivery of Stinger missiles to Afghan mujaheddin in the 1980s. ([Marlow 11/19/2001](#); [Brisard and Dasquie 2002, pp. 45](#); [Burleigh 2/8/2002](#))

August 2, 2001: Alleged Hijacker Pilot Fails Driving Test

After being fined for speeding the day before (see [August 1, 2001](#)), Hani Hanjour fails a test to obtain a Virginia driver's license. Hanjour already has an Arizona driving license and an international driving license. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 32, 44](#)) According to the Virginia police, Hanjour also has a Florida driver's license, although the 9/11 Commission will dispute this (see [August 1, 2001](#)).

August 2-3, 2001: Taliban Official Predicts US Will Invade Afghanistan by Mid-October, Possibly in Response to Major Attack Inside US

A senior official in the Taliban's defense ministry tells journalist Hamid Mir that the US will soon invade Afghanistan. Mir will later recall that he is told, "[W]e believe Americans are going to invade Afghanistan and they will do this before October 15, 2001, and justification for this would be either one of two options: Taliban got control of Afghanistan or a big major attack against American interests either inside America or elsewhere in the world." Mir reports this information before 9/11, presumably in the newspaper in Pakistan that he works for. ([Bergen 2006, pp. 287](#)) Interestingly, Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar made a similar prediction to Mir several months before (see [April 2001](#)). Also, several weeks earlier, US officials reportedly passed word to Taliban officials in a back channel meeting that the US may soon attack Afghanistan if the Taliban do not cooperate on building an oil and gas pipeline running through the country. According to one participant in the meeting, the US attack would take place "by the middle of October at the latest" (see [July 21, 2001](#)).

August 4, 2001: Nothing New in Bush Letter to Pakistani President

President Bush sends a letter to Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, warning him about supporting the Taliban. However, the tone is similar to past requests dating to the Clinton administration. There had been some discussion that US policy toward Pakistan should change. For instance, at the end of June, counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke "urged that the United States [should] think about what it would do after the next attack, and then take that position with Pakistan now, before the attack." ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage later acknowledges that a new approach to Pakistan is not yet implemented by 9/11. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)
Sources: [Richard Armitage](#))

August 4, 2001: Possible 20th Hijacker Denied Entry to US



Customs agent Jose Melendez-Perez. *[Source: US Senate]* A Saudi named Mohamed al-Khatani is stopped at the Orlando, Florida, airport and denied entry to the US. Jose Melendez-Perez, the customs official who stops him, later says he was suspicious of al-Khatani because he had arrived with no return ticket, no hotel reservations, spoke little English, behaved menacingly, and offered conflicting information on the purpose of his travel. At one point, al-Khatani said that someone was waiting for him elsewhere at the airport. After 9/11, surveillance cameras show that Mohamed Atta was at the Orlando airport that day. 9/11 Commissioner Richard Ben-Veniste says: "It is extremely possible and perhaps probable that [al-Khatani] was to be the 20th hijacker." al-Khatani boards a return flight to Saudi Arabia. He is later captured in Afghanistan and sent to a US military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (see [December 2001](#)). Melendez-Perez says that before 9/11, customs officials were discouraged by their superiors from hassling Saudi travelers, who were seen as big spenders. ([Miller and Meyer 1/27/2004](#)) Al-Khatani will later confess to being sent to the US by 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) (see [July 2002](#)), and in June 2001 US intelligence was warned that KSM was sending operatives to the US to meet up with those already there (see [June 12, 2001](#)).

August 4-30, 2001: Bush Nearly Sets Record for Longest Presidential Vacation

President Bush spends most of August 2001 at his Crawford, Texas, ranch, nearly setting a record for the longest presidential vacation. While it is billed a "working vacation," news organizations report that Bush is doing "nothing much" aside from his regular daily intelligence briefings. ([ABC News 8/3/2001](#); [Allen 8/7/2001](#); [Salon 8/29/2001](#)) One such unusually long briefing at the start of his trip is a warning that bin Laden is planning to attack in the US (see [August 6, 2001](#)), but Bush spends the rest of that day fishing. By the end of his trip, Bush has spent 42 percent of his presidency at vacation spots or en route. ([Allen 8/7/2001](#)) At the time, a poll shows that 55 percent of Americans say Bush is taking too much time off. ([Hall 8/7/2001](#)) Vice President Cheney also spends the entire month in a remote location in Wyoming. ([Thuerner 8/15/2001](#))

(August 4-5, 2001): Phoenix Memo Agent Vets Bush PDB, Fails to Add Relevant Information, Does Not Contact Phoenix Office

The CIA officers who draft a presidential daily briefing (PDB) item given to George Bush on August 6 (see [August 6, 2001](#)) ask an FBI agent for additional information and also to review a draft of the memo, but she does not provide all the additional information she could. The 9/11 Commission will refer to the FBI agent as “Jen M,” so she is presumably Jennifer Maitner, an agent with the Osama bin Laden unit at FBI headquarters. The purpose of the memo is to communicate to the president the intelligence community’s view that the threat of attacks by bin Laden is both current and serious. But Maitner fails to add some important information that she has: around the end of July, she was informed of the Phoenix memo, which suggests that an inordinate number of bin Laden-related Arabs are taking flying lessons in the US (see [July 10, 2001](#)). She does not link this to the portion of the memo discussing aircraft hijackings. Responsibility for dealing with the Phoenix memo is formally transferred to her on August 7, when she reads the full text. The finished PDB item discusses the possibility bin Laden operatives may hijack an airliner and says that there are “patterns of suspicious activity in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings.” It is unclear whether the draft PDB item Maitner reviews contains this information. However, if it does, it apparently does not inspire her to take any significant action on the memo before 9/11, such as contacting the agents in Phoenix to notify them of the preparations for hijackings (see [July 27, 2001 and after](#)). The PDB will contain an error, saying that the FBI was conducting 70 full field investigations of bin Laden-related individuals (see [August 6, 2001](#)), but this error is added after Maitner reviews the draft, so she does not have the opportunity to remove it. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 260-2, 535](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 69-77](#) ³)

August 6, 2001: Suspicious Trading of Companies Affected by 9/11 May Begin by This Date

Insider trading based on advanced knowledge of the 9/11 attacks may have begun on this date, if not earlier. Investigators later discover a large number of put option purchases (a speculation that the stock will go down) that expire on September 30 at the Chicago Board Options Exchange are bought on this date. If exercised, these options would have led to large profits. One analyst later says, “From what I’m hearing, it’s more than coincidence.” ([Jacobs and Atkins 9/20/2001](#))

August 6, 2001: Justice Department Reaffirms Wall Policy

In testimony before the 9/11 Commission, Attorney General Ashcroft complains, “[T]he single greatest structural cause for September 11 was the wall that segregated criminal investigators and intelligence agents.” However, on this day, Ashcroft’s Assistant Attorney General, Larry Thompson, writes a memo reaffirming the policy that is later criticized as this “wall.” ([9/11 Commission 12/8/2003](#); [O’Hara 4/18/2004](#))

August 6, 2001: Perle's Concern About Iraq, North Korea, and Iran Before 9/11 Becomes Axis of Evil Afterward

Richard Perle, head of the Defense Policy Board and foreign policy adviser to Bush, is asked about new challenges now that the Cold War is over. He cites three: "We're concerned about Saddam Hussein, We're concerned about the North Koreans, about some future Iranian government that may have the weapon they're now trying so hard to acquire..." ([Australian Broadcasting Corporation 8/6/2001](#)) Note that these three nations are the same three named in Bush's famous January 2002 "axis of evil" speech (see [January 29, 2002](#)). ([US President 2/4/2002](#))

August 6, 2001: Bush Tells CIA Regarding Bin Laden Warning, 'You've Covered Your Ass, Now'

Supposedly, just after a CIA briefer presents President Bush the later infamous PDB (Presidential Daily Briefing) entitled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US" (see [August 6, 2001](#)), Bush tells the briefer, "You've covered your ass, now." This account is according to journalist Ron Suskind, whose 2006 book "The One Percent Doctrine" And, at an eyeball-to-eyeball intelligence briefing during this urgent summer, George W. Bush seems to have made the wrong choice. He looked hard at the panicked CIA briefer. 'All right,' he said. 'You've covered your ass, now.' ([Suskind 2006, pp. 2](#); [Gellman 6/20/2006](#))

August 6-September 9, 2001: Mohamed Atta Drives Over 3,000 Miles in Rental Cars



Warrick's Rent-a-Car. [Source: Corbis] On three occasions Mohamed Atta rents cars from Warrick's Rent-a-Car in Pompano Beach, Florida. ([Reza, Halper, and Getter 9/15/2001](#)) According to the company's owner Brad Warrick, "a lot of criminals come here because we're a little guy, out of the way... We don't have software in our computer system that checks the background of drivers like the major companies do." Atta, always accompanied by Marwan Alshehhi, appears like a businessman, yet doesn't "rent the best car we had, he rented the cheapest, a white Escort,

then a blue Chevy Corsair, then back to the Escort.” From August 15-29, he travels 1,915 miles in the Corsair. Another time he tells Warrick he is going up to New York State. He always leaves the cars scrupulously clean after using them. ([Vulliamy et al. 9/16/2001](#); [Corbin 2003, pp. 212-213](#)) However, Warrick later discovers a small amount of an unidentified white powder in the trunk of the Escort rented by Atta (see October 29, 2001). When, two days before 9/11, Alshehhi returns the car rented by Atta the final time, he asks that the charge be removed from Atta’s credit card and placed on his. Says Warrick, “If you’re going on a suicide mission, who cares who pays for what?” ([Tobin 9/1/2002](#)) Warrick comments, “I mean, if you’re going on a suicide mission, why not leave the car at the airport?” ([Levings 9/18/2001](#)) Atta has his own car, a red Pontiac, but sells this about a week before 9/11. ([CNN 10/26/2001](#))

August 6, 2001: Bush Briefing Titled ‘Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US’



President Bush at his Crawford, Texas, ranch on August 6, 2001. Advisors wait with classified briefings. [*Source: White House*] President Bush receives a classified presidential daily briefing (PDB) at his Crawford, Texas ranch indicating that bin Laden might be planning to hijack commercial airliners. The PDB provided to him is entitled, “bin Laden Determined to Strike in US” The entire briefing focuses on the possibility of terrorist attacks inside the US. ([Sanger 5/15/2002](#); [Hirsh and Isikoff 5/27/2002](#)) In 2004, Bush will state that he requested a briefing on a topic after threats relating to a conference in Genoa, Italy in July 2001, where Western intelligence agencies believed bin Laden was planning a plot to crash an airplane into a building to kill Bush and other leaders (see [April 13, 2004](#)). Two CIA analysts prepared the briefing; they will later explain that they saw it as an opportunity to convey that the threat of an al-Qaeda attack in the US was both current and serious. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 260](#)) The existence of this briefing is kept secret, until it is leaked in May 2002, causing a storm of controversy (see [May 15, 2002](#)). While National Security Adviser Rice claims the memo is only one and a half pages long, other accounts state it is 11 1/2 pages instead of the usual two or three. ([Sanger 5/15/2002](#); [Hirsh and Isikoff 5/27/2002](#); [Schrom 10/1/2002](#)) A page and a half of the contents will be released on April 10, 2004; this reportedly is the full content of the briefing. ([Pincus and Eggen 4/10/2004](#)) The briefing, as released, states as follows (note that the spelling of certain words are corrected and links have been added):

- Clandestine, foreign government, and media reports indicate bin Laden since 1997 has

wanted to conduct terrorist attacks in the US (see [December 1, 1998](#)). Bin Laden implied in US television interviews in 1997 and 1998 that his followers would follow the example of World Trade Center bomber Ramzi Yousef and “bring the fighting to America” (see [May 26, 1998](#)).

- After US missile strikes on his base in Afghanistan in 1998, bin Laden told followers he wanted to retaliate in Washington, according to a -REDACTED- service (see [December 21, 1998](#)).

- An Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) operative told -REDACTED- service at the same time that bin Laden was planning to exploit the operative’s access to the US to mount a terrorist strike.

- The millennium plotting in Canada in 1999 may have been part of bin Laden’s first serious attempt to implement a terrorist strike in the US. Convicted plotter Ahmed Ressam has told the FBI that he conceived the idea to attack Los Angeles International Airport himself (see [December 14, 1999](#)), but that bin Laden lieutenant Abu Zubaida encouraged him and helped facilitate the operation. Ressam also said that in 1998 Abu Zubaida was planning his own US attack (see [Late March-Early April 2001](#) and [May 30, 2001](#)).

- Ressam says bin Laden was aware of the Los Angeles operation.

- Although bin Laden has not succeeded, his attacks against the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 (see [August 7, 1998](#)) demonstrate that he prepares operations years in advance and is not deterred by setbacks. Bin Laden associates surveyed our embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam as early as 1993 (see [Late 1993-Late 1994](#)), and some members of the Nairobi cell planning the bombings were arrested and deported in 1997.

- Al-Qaeda members—including some who are US citizens—have resided in or traveled to the US for years, and the group apparently maintains a support structure that could aid attacks (see [January 25, 2001](#)). Two al-Qaeda members found guilty in the conspiracy to bomb our embassies in East Africa were US citizens (see [September 15, 1998](#)), and a senior EIJ member lived in California in the mid-1990s (see [November 1989](#) and [September 10, 1998](#)).

- A clandestine source said in 1998 that a bin Laden cell in New York was recruiting Muslim-American youth for attacks (see [October-November 1998](#)).

- We have not been able to corroborate some of the more sensational threat reporting, such as that from a -REDACTED- service in 1998 saying that bin Laden wanted to hijack a US aircraft to gain the release of “Blind Sheikh” Omar Abdul-Rahman and other US-held extremists (see [1998](#), [December 4, 1998](#), and [May 23, 2001](#)).

- Nevertheless, FBI information since that time indicates patterns of suspicious activity in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks, including recent surveillance of federal buildings in New York (see [May 30, 2001](#)).

- The FBI is conducting approximately 70 full-field investigations throughout the US that it considers bin Laden-related (see [August 6, 2001](#)). CIA and the FBI are investigating a call to our embassy in the UAE in May saying that a group or bin Laden supporters was in the US planning attacks with explosives (see [May 16-17, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 223](#))

In retrospect, the briefing is remarkable for the many warnings that apparently were not included (see for instance, from the summer of 2001 prior to August alone: [May 2001](#), [June 2001](#), [June 12, 2001](#), [June 19, 2001](#), [Late Summer 2001](#), [July 2001](#), [July 16, 2001](#),

[Late July 2001](#), [Late July 2001](#), [Summer 2001](#), [June 30-July 1, 2001](#), [July 10, 2001](#), and [Early August 2001](#)). According to one account, after the PDB has been given to him, Bush tells the CIA briefer, “You’ve covered your ass, now” (see [August 6, 2001](#)). Incredibly, the New York Times later reports that after being given the briefing, Bush “[breaks] off from work early and [spends] most of the day fishing.” ([Rich 5/25/2002](#)) In 2002 and again in 2004, National Security Adviser Rice will incorrectly claim under oath that the briefing only contained historical information from 1998 and before (see [May 16, 2002](#) and [April 8, 2004](#)).

August 6, 2001: Bush Misled on Number and Extent of FBI’s Bin Laden Investigations

The CIA’s Presidential Daily Briefing (PDB) given to President Bush on this day (see [August 6, 2001](#)) contains the important line, “The FBI is conducting approximately 70 full field investigations throughout the US that it considers bin Laden-related.” Bush will state in 2004 that, based on this, “I was satisfied that some of the matters were being looked into.” National Security Adviser Rice will explain that since the FBI had 70 “full-field investigations under way of cells” in the US, “there was no recommendation [coming from the White House] that we do something about” the large number of warnings coming in. However, the number and content of the FBI investigations appears grossly exaggerated. The FBI later will reveal that the investigations are not limited to al-Qaeda and do not focus on al-Qaeda cells. Many were criminal investigations, which typically are not likely to help prevent future terrorist acts. An FBI spokesman will say the FBI does not know how that number got into Bush’s PDB. The 9/11 Commission will later conclude, “The 70 full-field investigations number was a generous calculation that included fund-raising investigations. It also counted each individual connected to an investigation as a separate full-field investigation. Many of these investigations should not have been included, such as the one that related to a dead person, four that concerned people who had been in long-term custody, and eight that had been closed well before August 6, 2001.” ([Royce and Brune 4/10/2004](#); [Associated Press 4/11/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 262, 535](#))

August 6, 2001: Bush Later Recalls His Reaction to ‘Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US’ Memo



Bush being briefed at his ranch on August 6, 2001.

[Source: Associated Press] On April 29, 2004, President Bush will testify before the 9/11 Commission, but almost no details of what he said will be publicly released. He testifies with Vice President Cheney, in private, not under oath, is not recorded, and the notes that the commissioners take are censored by the White House (see [April 29, 2004](#)). However, the 9/11 Commission will release a one paragraph summary of how Bush claims he responded to the Presidential Daily Briefing of August 6, 2001, entitled, “Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US” (see [August 6, 2001](#)). The Commission recalls, “The President told us the August 6 report was historical in nature. President Bush said the article told him that al-Qaeda was dangerous, which he said he had known since he had become President. The President said bin Laden had long been talking about his desire to attack America. He recalled some operational data on the FBI, and remembered thinking it was heartening that 70 investigations were under way (see [August 6, 2001](#)). As best he could recollect, [National Security Adviser] Rice had mentioned that the Yemenis’ surveillance of a federal building in New York had been looked into in May and June, but there was no actionable intelligence (see [May 30, 2001](#)). He did not recall discussing the August 6 report with the Attorney General or whether Rice had done so. He said that if his advisers had told him there was a cell in the United States, they would have moved to take care of it. That never happened.” The 9/11 Commission will conclude that they could find no evidence of any further discussions or actions taken by Bush and his top advisers in response to the briefing (see [Between August 6 and September 10, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 260](#))

Between August 6 and September 10, 2001: ‘Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US’ Memo Is Not Acted Upon

The 9/11 Commission will later state that after the now famous “bin Laden Determined to Strike in US” memo is given to President Bush on August 6, 2001 (see [August 6, 2001](#)), “We have found no indication of any further discussion before September 11 among the president and his top advisers of the possibility of a threat of an al-Qaeda attack in the United States.” ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/28/2005](#)) 9/11 Commissioner Bob Kerrey will later state to CNN, “[B]y the way, there’s a credible case that the president’s own negligence prior to 9/11 at least in part contributed to the disaster in the first place.... [I]n the summer of 2001, the government ignored repeated warnings by the CIA, ignored, and didn’t do anything to harden our border security, didn’t do anything to harden airport

country, didn't do anything to engage local law enforcement, didn't do anything to round up INS and consular offices and say we have to shut this down, and didn't warn the American people. The famous presidential daily briefing on August 6, we say in the report that the briefing officers believed that there was a considerable sense of urgency and it was current. So there was a case to be made that wasn't made.... The president says, if I had only known that 19 Islamic men would come into the United States of America and on the morning of 11 September hijack four American aircraft, fly two into the World Trade Center, one into the Pentagon, and one into an unknown Pennsylvania that crashed in Shanksville, I would have moved heaven and earth. That's what he said. Mr. President, you don't need to know that. This is an Islamic Jihadist movement that has been organized since the early 1990s, declared war on the United States twice, in '96 and '98. You knew they were in the United States. You were warned by the CIA. You knew in July they were inside the United States. You were told again by briefing officers in August that it was a dire threat. And what did you do? Nothing, so far as we could see on the 9/11 Commission." ([CNN 11/8/2004](#))

August 7, 2001: Version of Bush's Al-Qaeda Briefing Is Incomplete, Poorly Distributed

One day after Bush receives a Presidential Daily Briefing entitled, "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US," a version of the same material is given to other top government officials. However, this Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB) does not contain the most important information from Bush's briefing. It does not mention that there are 70 FBI investigations into possible al-Qaeda activity, does not mention a May 2001 threat of US-based explosives attacks, and does not mention FBI concerns about recent surveillance of buildings in New York City. The Associated Press will report that this type of memo "goes to scores of Cabinet-agency officials from the assistant secretary level up and does not include raw intelligence or sensitive information about ongoing law enforcement matters" due to fear of media leaks. SEIBs were sent to many more officials during the Clinton administration. The Associated Press will also state that "some who saw the memo said they feared it gave policy-makers and members of the congressional intelligence committees a picture of the domestic threat so stale and incomplete that it didn't provide the necessary sense of urgency one month before the Sept. 11 attacks." ([Solomon 4/13/2004](#)) Attorney General John Ashcroft will later say he does not recall seeing the SEIB before 9/11 (see [Between August 7 and September 10, 2001](#)).

Between August 7 and September 10, 2001: Ashcroft Supposedly Does Not See 'Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US' Memo before 9/11

On August 7, 2001, a version of the Presidential Daily Briefing (PDB) entitled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US" given to President Bush the day before is sent to other top US officials (see [August 7, 2001](#)). This version, called an SEIB, has the same title as the PDB but contains less classified information. Attorney General John Ashcroft - the

head of law enforcement in the US - will later claim that he does not remember seeing this SEIB before 9/11. He will say he was at a conference in Chicago at the time and he does not remember his staff briefing him about it later. In the Clinton administration, the attorney general was a regular recipient of the same PDB given to the president. ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#))

Between August 6 and September 11, 2001: No High-Level Meetings to Discuss 'Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US' Memo

The Bush administration holds no high-level meetings prior to 9/11 to discuss the 'Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US' Presidential Daily Briefing (PDB) given to President Bush on August 6, 2001 (see [August 6, 2001](#)). Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke will later suggest that 9/11 might have been stopped "if [National Security Adviser] Rice and the president had acted personally, gotten involved, shaken the trees, gotten the Cabinet members involved when they had ample warning in June and July and August that something was about to happen.... [Rice] said that the president received 40 warnings face to face from the director of central intelligence that a major al-Qaeda attack was going to take place and she admitted that the president did not have a meeting on the subject, did not convene the Cabinet. She admitted that she didn't convene the Cabinet. And as some of the [9/11 Commissioners] pointed out, this was in marked contrast to the way the government operated in December of 1999, when it had similar information and it successfully thwarted attacks." ([Clarke 4/8/2004](#)) Former CIA official Larry Johnson will similarly comment, "At a minimum, the details in the 6 August PDB should have motivated Rice to convene a principals' meeting. Such a meeting would have ensured that all members of the president's national security team were aware of the information that had been shared with the president. George Bush should have directed the different department heads to report back within one week on any information relevant to the al-Qaeda threat. Had he done this there is a high probability that the FBI field agents concerns about Arabs taking flight training would have rung some bells. There is also a high probability that the operations folks at CIA would have shared the information they had in hand about the presence of al-Qaeda operators in the United States." ([Johnson 4/12/2004](#)) There will be one cabinet-level principals meeting to discuss terrorism on September 4, 2001, but no evidence has been released suggesting the PDB or the possibility of al-Qaeda attacking the US was discussed (see [September 4, 2001](#)).

August 7-September 10, 2001: Fire and Evacuation at CIA Headquarters Helps Prepare for Response on 9/11



CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. [Source: *GlobeXplorer*] A fire lasting several hours leads to the forced evacuation of the CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. ([Reuters 8/8/2001](#)) The fire is discovered on August 7 at around 5:45 p.m., in the northeast section of the agency's older headquarters building, and more than 60 firefighters are involved in putting it out. It was reportedly caused by a workman at the top of an elevator shaft dropping a welder, which ignited wood at the bottom of the shaft. Both the older headquarters building and the agency's new headquarters building nearby are evacuated. Following this fire, A. B. "Buzzy" Krongard—the executive director of the CIA since March this year—is dismayed to find that plans for an evacuation of the headquarters are patchy, and that some of the fire alarms do not work. In the ensuing month he therefore initiates regular fire drills and equips key agency officials with tiny walkie-talkies, meaning communication will still be possible should cell phones ever go out. Krongard declares that evacuating safely is to be more important than storing classified material, and has the agency's computer network reprogrammed so an evacuation warning could be flashed on all computer screens. Journalist and author Ronald Kessler will describe the August 7 fire as being "fortuitous," as little over a month later, on the morning of September 11, CIA Director George Tenet will order the evacuation of the headquarters building due to fears that it might be targeted (see [\(9:50 a.m.-10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). On that day, Tenet and other top officials will reconvene at an alternate location on the CIA campus, "[f]ollowing procedures laid out by Krongard after the fire." ([Central Intelligence Agency 3/16/2001](#); [Associated Press 8/7/2001](#); [Weil 8/8/2001](#); [Kessler 2003](#), pp. 222-223)

August 8-15, 2001: Israel Reportedly Warns of Major Assault on the US



Ephraim Halevy was head of the Israeli Mossad from 1998 to 2002. [Source: *Associated Press*] At some point between these dates, Israel warns the US that an al-Qaeda attack is imminent. ([Cameron 5/17/2002](#)) Reportedly, two high-ranking agents from the Mossad come to Washington and warn the FBI and CIA that from 50 to 200 terrorists have slipped into the US and are planning “a major assault on the United States.” They say indications point to a “large scale target,” and that Americans would be “very vulnerable.” They add there could be Iraqi connections to the al-Qaeda attack. ([Wastell and Jacobson 9/16/2001](#); [Hunter 9/17/2001](#); [Serrano and Dahlburg 9/20/2001](#)) The Los Angeles Times later retracts its story after a CIA spokesperson says, “There was no such warning. Allegations that there was are complete and utter nonsense.” ([Los Angeles Times 9/21/2001](#)) Other newspapers do not retract it.

August 10-11, 2001: Moussaoui Moves to Minnesota; Apartment Vandalized



Zacarias Moussaoui. [Source: *US Justice Department*] Zacarias Moussaoui moves from Oklahoma to Minnesota, in order to attend flight school training there. Moussaoui drives there with Hussein al-Attas, a friend who will stay with him in Minnesota. Curiously, on August 11, someone breaks into the Norman, Oklahoma, apartment that remained unoccupied since Moussaoui moved out of it at the end of May 2001. A neighbor’s bicycle is used to break through the door of the vacant apartment and a bloodstain is left on the wall. A neighbor “[tells] reporters that

furniture was overturned as if someone was looking for something.” ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#); [Linsk 9/10/2002](#); [US Congress 10/17/2002](#))

August 11-15, 2001: Flight School Staff Become Suspicious of Moussaoui, Fear He May Be Hijacker



Hugh Sims (left) and Tim Nelson (right). [Source: *Flysouth and Andy King / Associated Press*] Flight engineer Tim Nelson and pilot Hugh Sims, who work at the Pan Am International Flight School where Zacarias Moussaoui trains to fly a Boeing 747-400, are immediately suspicious of Moussaoui, and their suspicions continue to grow after his arrival because:

- He sends unusual emails that are signed “zuluman tangotango” and laced with grammatical errors, even though he says he is a British businessman; ([CNN 3/2/2006](#)) His e-mails also include abnormal comments such as, “E[mail] is not secure;” ([Thomas 10/1/2001](#))
- He pays most of his \$8,300 fee in hundred dollar bills. This makes Nelson suspicious, because he thinks cash is hard to track; ([Yardley 2/8/2002](#); [Gordon 4/24/2005](#); [CNN 3/2/2006](#))
- He is alone, whereas most trainees arrive in groups; ([Gordon 4/24/2005](#))
- He says he wants to fly a 747 not because he plans to be a pilot, but as an “ego boosting thing.” However, within hours of his arrival, it is clear he is “not some affluent joyrider,” as he is shabbily dressed; ([Yardley 2/8/2002](#); [Shenon 10/18/2002](#); [Gordon 4/24/2005](#))
- In addition, it is unusual that he has no aviation background, very little experience, and no pilot’s license. All other pilots at the center, even “vanity pilots”—wealthy individuals who just want the thrill of flying a large jet—have many times more flying hours than Moussaoui and are all licensed; ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#); [Gordon 4/24/2005](#); [Rake 5/2005](#))
- He has flown for 57 hours at flight school in Oklahoma, but not yet flown solo, which is unusual. The school’s manager of pilot training, Alan McHale, will later comment, “My worst student was a grandma, and I got her to solo after 21 hours;” ([Gordon 4/24/2005](#))
- He is not just buying a one-period joyride, but a whole course; ([Gordon 4/24/2005](#))
- He seems determined to pack a large amount of training in a short period for no apparent reason; ([Yardley 2/8/2002](#))
- He is “extremely” interested in the operation of the plane’s doors and control panel. ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#)) He also is very keen to learn the protocol for communicating with the flight tower, despite claiming to have no plans to become an actual pilot; ([Yardley](#)

[2/8/2002](#))

■He talks to some Syrian airline pilots training at the facility, and the pilots tell Nelson that Moussaoui is fluent in Arabic. Nelson, who is already worried Moussaoui might be up to no good, thinks, “One more red flag;” ([Gordon 4/24/2005](#); [CNN 3/2/2006](#))

■The school’s accountant complains that Moussaoui’s payment is a couple of hundred dollars short, but that he does not have a credit card with him, even though he says he is an international businessman; ([Gordon 4/24/2005](#)) and Nelson thinks back to an incident in Japan when the captain was stabbed to death and the killer then flew the plane for 45 minutes before the co-captain regained control. He is concerned Moussaoui might perform a suicide hijacking, “Here’s the problem: You’ve got an aircraft that weighs upwards of 900,000 pounds fully loaded and carries between 50,000 and 57,000 gallons of jet fuel. If you fly it at 350 knots [about 400 miles per hour] into a heavily populated area, you’re going to kill a boatload of people.” After talking to instructor Clancy Prevost, who is also suspicious of Moussaoui (see [August 13-15, 2001](#)), both Sims and Nelson independently decide to call the FBI and Moussaoui is arrested soon after the calls are made (see [August 16, 2001](#)). ([Gordon 4/24/2005](#))

[August 13-15, 2001: Flight Instructor Becomes Suspicious of Moussaoui](#)



Pan Am International Flight School. [*Source: FBI*] (click image to enlarge) Although some staff at the Pan Am International Flight School become a little suspicious of Zacarias Moussaoui before he arrives (see [August 11-15, 2001](#)), within two days of Moussaoui’s arrival at the school, his behaviour makes his assigned instructor Clancy Prevost highly suspicious, because: ■Moussaoui has only flown for under 60 hours, whereas the second least experienced student Prevost ever had had ten times as many hours. This lack of experience means that Moussaoui does not really understand the instruction; ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#))

■When Moussaoui is asked what his goal is, he tells Prevost he wants to fly a 747 from London to New York, the same goal he gave in his original e-mail to the flight school. ([Rake 5/2005](#)) This raises fears he has plans to hijack such a flight; ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#))

■When Prevost relates a story about a charter flight in the Middle East where getting the doors open was a problem, the story causes Prevost to ask Moussaoui whether he is a Muslim and Moussaoui replies in a strange tone “I am nothing.” This makes Prevost worry so much that he ends the session, goes back to his motel, and calls the flight school to express his reservations about Moussaoui. He talks to his manager in the morning and says, “We’ll care [about having trained Moussaoui] when there’s a hijacking and he knows how to throw the switches and put them in the right position and all the lawsuits

start coming in when they figure out we taught him how to do this;”

■Prevost then goes into a supervisors’ meeting and recommends calling the FBI, but becomes even more upset when he is told Moussaoui paid for his training in \$100 bills. As Moussaoui does not learn much during the day, Prevost invites him to observe a simulator session that evening, which Moussaoui does with interest. The following day Prevost meets the FBI, which has now been alerted by the school, and shares his feeling it would be a good idea to do a background check on Moussaoui. The FBI subsequently arrests Moussaoui (see [August 16, 2001](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#)) Some claims later made about Moussaoui in the media may be inaccurate:

■He is said to mostly practice flying in the air, not taking off or landing. ([Gordon 12/21/2001](#); [Yardley 2/8/2002](#); [Taylor 5/21/2002](#); [Wald 5/22/2002](#)) However, he is arrested after ground instruction and never flies the simulator, so it is unclear how this could happen. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#)) 9/11 Congressional Inquiry staff director Eleanor Hill will also later say that the reports saying he only wanted to pilot a plane in the air are not true. ([US Congress 9/24/2002](#)) In addition, the 9/11 Commission will comment, “Contrary to popular belief, Moussaoui did not say he was not interested in learning how to take off or land;” ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#))

■It is reported he appears not to understand French, despite being from France, and does not specify the Middle Eastern country he says he comes from. ([Gordon 12/21/2001](#); [Eggen 1/2/2002](#)) However, at the trial Prevost will recall that Moussaoui spoke good French and that Moussaoui told him he had both French and Moroccan passports. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#))

August 13-14, 2001: 9/11 Hijackers Meet in Las Vegas for Summit



Mohamed Atta stayed at the Las Vegas Econolodge. *[Source: Chris Farina/Corbis]* The lead hijackers meet in Las Vegas for a summit a few weeks before 9/11. Investigators will believe that this is the “most crucial planning in the United States,” but will not understand why the hijackers choose Vegas, since they are all living on the East Coast at this time (see [March 2001-September 1, 2001](#) and [August 6-September 9, 2001](#)). One senior official will speculate, “Perhaps they figured it would be easy to blend in.” ([van Natta, and Zernike 11/4/2001](#)) At least three of the plot leaders are in Las Vegas at this time. Hani Hanjour and Nawaf Alhazmi fly from Dulles Airport to Los Angeles on an American Airlines Boeing 757, the same sort of plane they hijack on 9/11, and then continue to Las Vegas. Mohamed Atta also flies to Las Vegas from Washington National Airport. This is his second trip to Vegas, which was also previously visited by some of the other hijackers (see [May 24-August 14, 2001](#)). A few weeks earlier, Atta had traveled to Spain, possibly with some of the other hijackers, to finalize the plans for the attack with their associate Ramzi bin al-Shibh (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 1, 17, 21](#)); ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 57-8](#)) Alhazmi will later be recalled by a hotel employee, who will say she ran into him at the Days Inn. According to her later account, he is “cold and abrupt,” in Vegas on “important business,” and will soon be traveling to Los Angeles. He asks for a list of Days Inns in Los Angeles, but does not want a reservation to be made. He also claims to be from Florida, although he is only thought to have spent a week there (see [June 19-25, 2001](#)). ([Puit and Kalil 10/26/2001](#)) A close associate of the hijackers, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, will later say in a 2002 interview that Ziad Jarrah, Marwan Alshehhi, and Khalid Almihdhar are also present in Vegas at this time. ([Fouda and Fielding 2003, pp. 137](#)) Newsweek calls Vegas an “odd location” and comments: “They stayed in cheap hotels on a dreary stretch of the Strip frequented by dope dealers and \$10 street hookers. Perhaps they wished to be fortified for their mission by visiting a shrine to American decadence. Or maybe they just wanted a city that was easy to reach by air from their various cells in Florida, New Jersey and San Diego.” ([Thomas 10/15/2001](#))

August 14, 2001: Atta's Hamburg Associates Purchase Tickets to Pakistan

Two apparent associates of Mohamed Atta's Hamburg al-Qaeda cell, Ismail Ben Mrabete and Ahmed Taleb, purchase tickets to fly to Pakistan on September 3, 2001. They will be joined on that flight by cell member Said Bahaji. All three will disappear into Afghanistan thereafter. It is later discovered that Taleb had been in e-mail contact with al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida. ([Crewdson, Swanson, and Simpson 2/25/2003](#)) Note that these purchases occur one day before Zacarias Moussaoui's arrest in Minnesota, suggesting the date for the 9/11 attacks was set before his arrest (see [August 16, 2001](#)).

Mid-August 2001: Afghan Leader Organizes Taliban Resistance Without US Support

Abdul Haq, a famous Afghan leader of the mujaheddin, returns to Peshawar, Pakistan, from the US. Having failed to gain US support, except for that of some private individuals such as former National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane, Haq begins organizing subversive operations in Afghanistan. ([Marshall 10/28/2001](#); [McFarlane 11/2/2001](#)) He is later killed entering Afghanistan in October 2001, after his position is reportedly betrayed to the Taliban by the ISI.

August 15, 2001: CIA Counterterrorism Head: We Are Going to Be Struck Soon



Cofer Black. [*Source: US State Department*] Cofer Black, head of the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center, says in a speech to the Department of Defense's annual Convention of Counterterrorism, "We are going to be struck soon, many Americans are going to die, and it could be in the US." Black later complains that top leaders are unwilling to act at this time unless they are given "such things as the attack is coming within the next few days and here is what they are going to hit." ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#))

August 15, 2001: Army to Limit Public Access to Bases Around Washington

The US Army is preparing to severely restrict public access to its posts in the Washington, DC area. For decades, visitors have been able to enter these bases freely. But now, as a probably permanent change, barriers will be erected across many roads leading into them, funneling traffic to a few roads staffed by guards. Drivers entering without proper registration will be sent to a visitor's center to obtain a guest pass. ([Vogel 8/15/2001](#)) The new measures will mean commanders know who is entering their installations 24 hours a day, and give them the capability to adjust security measures immediately if required. ([Wamble 8/3/2001](#)) The changes will occur at all installations belonging to the Military District of Washington (MDW). ([MDW News Service 7/2001](#)) These include forts Hamilton, Meade, Belvoir, Ritchie, Myer, and McNair. Several of these bases will be reported as having implemented the changes in the following weeks, prior to September 11 (see [August 20, 2001](#))(see [September 4, 2001](#))(see [September 5, 2001](#)). Whether the changes take place at the other MDW installations prior to 9/11 is unknown. Part of MDW's stated mission is to "respond to crisis, disaster or security requirements in the National Capital Region through implementation of various contingency plans." ([Military District of Washington 8/2000](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 11/28/2001](#)) It will therefore be much involved with the rescue and recovery efforts following the 9/11 Pentagon attack. ([Jackman 10/2004](#)) The restriction of access to MDW posts stems from guidance from Army leadership and specifically from MDW Commander Maj. Gen. James Jackson. ([MDW News Service 7/2001](#)) It is reportedly part of a nationwide security clampdown due to concerns about terrorism, following such attacks as the Oklahoma City bombing and the attack on the USS *Cole*. ([Vogel 8/15/2001](#))

August 15, 2001: CIA Told of Moussaoui's Forthcoming Arrest, Searches for Information

The FBI's Minneapolis field office tells the CIA that Zacarias Moussaoui will be arrested the next day (see [August 16, 2001](#)). The information is communicated to a CIA field office, which then informs the Counterterrorist Center (CTC) at CIA headquarters. The CTC searches for information on Moussaoui, but does not find anything. The CIA has information on Moussaoui at this point, but the information is related to one of Moussaoui's aliases and the CIA apparently does not understand that the alias is used by Moussaoui (see [April 2001](#)). ([Tenet 2007, pp. 200-201](#))

Before August 16, 2001: Moussaoui Writes Number of Spanish Militant in Address Book

Zacarias Moussaoui writes the phone number of Amer el-Azizi in his notebook. El-Azizi is a Spain-based militant who is linked to 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed

(see [November 2001](#)) and is thought to have helped set up a meeting between Mohamed Atta and Ramzi bin al-Shibh in Spain in July 2001 (see [Before July 8, 2001](#) and [July 8-19, 2001](#)). It is unclear when the number is written in Moussaoui's notebook or what type of contact there is between Moussaoui and el-Azizi, if any. ([Johnson and Crawford 4/7/2004](#)) However, the connection to el-Azizi does not appear to be mentioned at Moussaoui's trial (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)), even though it would be one of very few pieces of evidence potentially tying Moussaoui to the 9/11 plot. The reason for this is unclear. El-Azizi's arrest shortly after 9/11 will be frustrated by Spanish intelligence (see [October 2001](#) and [Shortly After November 21, 2001](#)) and he will go on to be involved in the 2004 Madrid bombings (see [Before March 11, 2004](#) and [March 11, 2004](#)).

August 15-September 10, 2001: Minneapolis Agent Warns Superiors of Moussaoui Seventy Times, Obstructed by Headquarters

After Zacarias Moussaoui is arrested (see [August 16, 2001](#)), the FBI's Minneapolis field office becomes very concerned that he may be part of a larger operation involving hijacked aircraft and that he represents a real threat to US national security. One of the agents, Harry Samit, will later say that he and his colleagues are "obsessed" with Moussaoui. Samit sends over 70 communications warning about Moussaoui to the following:

- The Hezbollah, bin Laden, and Radical Fundamentalist Units at FBI headquarters (see [August 20-September 11, 2001](#));
- Another FBI field office (see [August 23, 2001](#));
- The CIA (see [August 24, 2001](#));
- The FBI's offices in Paris and London;
- The FAA;
- The Secret Service;
- The Immigration and Naturalization Service; and
- Another intelligence agency (possibly the National Security Agency).

While some of these bodies are responsive (see [August 22, 2001](#) and [August 24, 2001](#)), Samit and his colleagues in Minnesota are forced to engage in a running battle with the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters, which obstructs their attempts to obtain a warrant to search Moussaoui's belongings. Samit will later accuse the RFU of "criminal negligence" because they were trying to "run out the clock" to deport Moussaoui, instead of prosecuting him. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 101-221](#) ³; [Johnson 3/9/2006](#); [Markon and Dwyer 3/21/2006](#))

August 15-20, 2001: Minneapolis FBI Immediately Suspects Wider Airline Hijacking Plot

Immediately after learning of Zacarias Moussaoui's suspicious behavior, Minneapolis FBI agent Harry Samit, one of the agents who arrests Moussaoui (see [August 16, 2001](#)), suspects he is preparing to hijack an airliner. He writes to a colleague, "That's pretty

ominous and obviously suggests some sort of hijacking plan.” ([Linsk 4/4/2006](#)) Interviews with Moussaoui after his arrest will reinforce the Minneapolis FBI’s suspicions that he is involved in a wider terrorist plot against airliners (see [August 16-17, 2001](#)). And after interviewing Moussaoui’s associate Hussein al-Attas as well (see [August 16, 2001](#)), Samit is unequivocally “convinced... a hundred percent that Moussaoui [is] a bad actor, [is] probably a professional mujaheddin and this [is] not a joyride, that he [is] completely bent on the use of this aircraft for destructive purposes.” ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 114-5, 120-2](#)) In the main initial memo from Samit to other FBI units, Samit describes Moussaoui as “extremely evasive” and “extremely agitated.” Samit also writes that Moussaoui appeared to be lying when he denied he had weapons training. Samit says, “Minneapolis believes that Moussaoui is an Islamic extremist preparing for some future act in furtherance of radical fundamentalist goals.” Samit expresses his belief Moussaoui is planning something with a 747-400. He is aware Moussaoui’s plan probably involves co-conspirators and writes “Moussaoui, al-Attas, and others yet unknown are conspiring to commit violations of [Federal anti-terrorism statutes],” and “there is reason to believe that Moussaoui and al-Attas are part of a larger international radical fundamentalist group.” Samit even suspects Moussaoui of two of the offenses he will eventually be charged with and plead guilty to (see [April 22, 2005](#)). The e-mail accompanying the main memo concludes, “[p]lease let me know as soon as [the Department] gives the go-ahead. We’re all counting on you!” ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 120-2](#); [Gordon 6/4/2006](#))

Mid-August 2001: FBI Fails to Act When Known Al-Qaeda Sniper Moves to Minneapolis

Mohamad Kamal Elzahabi moves to Minneapolis, Minnesota. Elzahabi has a long association with al-Qaeda, and has just returned from Chechnya where he fought as a sniper (see [April 16, 2004-June 25, 2004](#)). His “name was known to the FBI well before the Sept. 11 attacks, according to law enforcement officials who declined to be identified. He also was on a list of possible or suspected terrorists” circulated to foreign airlines and banks shortly after 9/11. He was connected to al-Qaeda operatives Raed Hijazi, Nabil al-Marabh, and Bassam Kanj, working as a Boston taxi driver just as they all did. Fox News will later note that Elzahabi has a “potential link to Zacarias Moussaoui” since Moussaoui moved to Minneapolis in early August 2001 and is arrested on August 15, but no firm connection between the two has been shown. It has not been reported exactly when Elzahabi arrives in Minneapolis, but he applies for a commercial driver’s license on August 23, 2001. He is fingerprinted for a criminal background check at that time, which presumably would alert the FBI that he is living in Minneapolis if they do not know already. But it is not known if Minneapolis FBI agents, desperately trying to get a warrant for Moussaoui, are told about Elzahabi before 9/11. In January 2002, the FBI will run his name through a database. Despite the FBI’s knowledge of his al-Qaeda ties, he is cleared to get the license. This allows him to haul hazardous materials. His friend and al-Qaeda operative Nabil al-Marabh received a similar license the year before (see [August 2000-January 2001](#)). Elzahabi will apply for a license allowing him to carry general freight in September 2003 and he will get insurance clearance to start work in April 2004.

However, he will be arrested by FBI that same month (see [April 16, 2004-June 25, 2004](#)). ([Herridge and Stolley 6/26/2004](#); [Gordon and Chanen 6/30/2004](#))

Mid-August 2001: Hanjour Still Not Skilled Enough to Fly Solo

Hani Hanjour goes to the Freeway Airport in Bowie, Maryland, about 20 miles west of Washington. He wants to rent a single engine Cessna airplane. However, when two instructors take him on three test runs, they find he has trouble controlling and landing the plane. One instructor has to help him land. Due to his poor skills, therefore, he is not allowed to rent one of their planes without more lessons. Further, while Hanjour appears to have logged over 600 hours of flying experience and possesses a valid pilot's license (though it has in fact expired), he refuses to provide contact information: He gives no phone number and only gives his address as being a hotel in Laurel. In spite of Hanjour's lack of flying skills, chief instructor Marcel Bernard later claims, "There's no doubt in my mind that once [Flight 77] got going, he could have pointed that plane at a building and hit it." ([Paprocki 9/19/2001](#); [Furfari 9/21/2001](#); [Frank 9/23/2001](#); [Goldstein, Sun, and Lardner 10/15/2001](#)) However, on 9/11, in piloting Flight 77 into the Pentagon, Hanjour would have needed to do much more than simply point the plane at a target. Because Flight 77 at first seemed to overshoot its target, the Washington Post will note that "the unidentified pilot executed a pivot so tight that it reminded observers of a fighter jet maneuver. The plane circled 270 degrees to the right to approach the Pentagon from the west, whereupon Flight 77 fell below radar level... Aviation sources said the plane was flown with extraordinary skill, making it highly likely that a trained pilot was at the helm..." ([Fisher and Phillips 9/12/2001](#)) One Washington flight controller will later comment, "The speed, the maneuverability, the way that he turned, we all thought in the radar room, all of us experienced air traffic controllers, that that was a military plane." ([News 10/24/2001](#)) One law enforcement official who will study Flight 77's descent after 9/11 will call it the work of "a great talent... virtually a textbook turn and landing." ([Fainaru and Ibrahim 9/10/2002](#)) Remarkably, the 9/11 Commission will overlook the numerous accounts of Hanjour's terrible piloting skills (see [April 15, 1999](#); [January-February 2001](#)) and state that 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed assigned the Pentagon target specifically to Hanjour because he was "the operation's most experienced pilot." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 530](#))

Mid-August-September 11, 2001: New York Air National Guard Unit in Saudi Arabia as Part of Operation Southern Watch

About 100 members of the 174th Fighter Wing, part of the New York Air National Guard, are deployed to Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia, to patrol the no-fly zone over southern Iraq, as part of the ongoing Operation Southern Watch. This is the unit's second deployment there, its first having been in March 2001. ([Ramirez and Wasilewski 9/11/2001](#); [Wasilewski 9/12/2001](#); [US Congress 3/1/2005](#); [174th Fighter Wing](#)

[12/9/2005](#)) The 174th FW is located at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, five miles north of Syracuse, in Central New York State. It is currently equipped with 17 F-16 fighters. These are kept in a six-bay shelter where they are, reportedly, “ready to fly in any weather, at a moment’s notice.” ([Airman 1/2001](#); [Wasilewski 9/25/2001](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 4/26/2005](#)) However, Hancock Field is not one of NORAD’s two “alert” sites in the northeast US. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) The unit has 350 full-time staff and 650 part-timers, who work one weekend each month plus two full weeks a year. ([Wasilewski 9/25/2001](#); [Ramirez 10/24/2001](#)) The 100 members of the unit who go to Saudi Arabia are due to arrive back at Hancock Field at around 3 p.m. on 9/11, but as a consequence of the day’s events are diverted to Canada. ([Wasilewski 9/14/2001](#)) They will eventually arrive back at the base on September 14. ([Wasilewski 9/15/2001](#)) In the months after 9/11, 174th FW fighters are involved in flying combat air patrols over New York City. ([Ramirez 12/8/2001](#); [New York State 3/26/2003](#))

August 16, 2001: FAA Issues Warning; Airlines Say Warning Not Received

The FAA issues a warning to airlines concerning disguised weapons. According to later testimony by National Security Adviser Rice, the FAA is concerned about reports that the terrorists have made breakthroughs in disguising weapons as cell phones, key chains, and pens. ([CNN 3/2002](#); [Reuters 5/16/2002](#) Sources: [Condoleezza Rice](#)) However, the major airlines later deny receiving such notification. For instance, a Delta spokesperson states: “We were not aware of any warnings or notifications of any specific threats.” ([Park and Press 5/16/2002](#))

August 16, 2001: Zacarias Moussaoui Arrested



Zacarias Moussaoui after his arrest. [*Source: FBI*] After being warned that Zacarias Moussaoui has raised suspicions at flight school (see [August 11-15, 2001](#) and [August 13-15, 2001](#)), the FBI learns they can arrest him because he is in the US illegally. Four agents, Harry Samit, John Weess, Dave Rapp (all FBI) and Steve Nordmann (INS), drive to the Residence Inn, where Moussaoui and his associate Hussein al-Attas are staying. At the hotel Samit speaks on the phone to Joe Manarang from FBI headquarters; Manarang appeals for them to take the “cautious route” and not arrest Moussaoui. However, Samit refuses, as he has already notified the hotel clerk of their

interest. Moussaoui is arrested around 4:00 p.m. on an immigration violation. At first Moussaoui shows the agents some documents, but then he becomes upset at missing his flight training. The FBI confiscates his belongings, including a computer laptop, but Moussaoui refuses permission for the belongings to be searched. A search of Moussaoui's person yields a dagger with a two-inch blade, and another knife with a three-inch blade belonging to Moussaoui is found in the car. He also has boxing gloves and shin guards, and the arresting agents note he has prepared "through physical training for violent confrontation." Al-Attas allows the agents to search his belongings and they believe al-Attas is in the US legally, so he is not arrested. However, al-Attas tells the FBI that Moussaoui is a radical religious Muslim and later makes several statements indicating Moussaoui may be a terrorist (see [August 16, 2001](#)). ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#); [US Congress 10/17/2002](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#); [Gordon 6/4/2006](#)) Al-Attas is arrested the next day (see [August 17, 2001](#)).

August 16, 2001: Roommate Interview Strengthens Case against Moussaoui



Hussein al-Attas. [Source: Public domain] Hours after Zacarias Moussaoui is taken into custody in Minnesota, his friend and roommate Hussein al-Attas is interviewed by the FBI. The two men had recently driven together to Minnesota from Oklahoma (see [August 10-11, 2001](#)).

- According to a summary of the interview written at the time, "Al-Attas indicated that Moussaoui believes that it is acceptable to kill civilians who harm Muslims and that he approves of martyrs."
- Al-Attas says Moussaoui talked about holy war every day when they roomed together.
- When asked if he had ever heard Moussaoui make a plan to kill those who harm Muslims, "Al-Attas admit[s] that he may have heard him do so, but that because it is not in [al-Attas'] own heart to carry out acts of this nature, he claimed that he kept himself from actually hearing and understanding."
- Al-Attas says Moussaoui holds strong anti-American views and might be willing to act on his beliefs.
- Al-Attas describes Moussaoui as so secretive that he refuses to give his full name, identifying himself only as "Shaqil."
- He also says that Moussaoui told him "true" Muslims must prepare themselves to fight and they should understand the suffering of Muslims in places like Palestine and Kosovo.
- He mentions that he and Moussaoui are carrying fighting gloves and shin guards to

practice martial arts as part of Moussaoui's philosophy that Muslims should be ready to fight nonbelievers.

■He has not heard Moussaoui mention any specific terrorist plot, but says that Moussaoui "is suspicious to me, too."

FBI agents interview al-Attas again the following day, then charge him with violating the terms of his student visa by working at a mosque in Oklahoma, and arrest him. During the second interview, al-Attas says that Moussaoui follows the teachings of a sheikh whose name he would not disclose to him (see [August 17, 2001](#)). The agents contact FBI supervisors in Washington to seek approval to get a warrant to search Moussaoui's computer. The supervisors are aware of what al-Attas said in the interview, but nevertheless they tell the Minnesota FBI agents that they do not want to attempt to get the warrant because it has not been shown that Moussaoui is an agent of a foreign power. The New York Times will note that the content of al-Attas' interview "raise[s] new questions about whether top [FBI] officials... were aggressive enough in responding to that information." ([Woodward and Balz 1/31/2002](#); [Yardley 5/24/2002](#); [Barakat 3/21/2006](#))

Al-Attas will be arrested shortly after 9/11 and held as a material witness. He will later plead guilty to lying about Moussaoui. He lied in claiming that he did not know Moussaoui's real name, lied about plans to go with Moussaoui to New York City in late August 2001, lied about Moussaoui's desire to participate in holy war, and lied about a planned trip to speak to religious scholars who would encourage al-Attas to participate in holy war. He will be sentenced to time served, but will be kept imprisoned until the conclusion of Moussaoui's trial in 2006 (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)). ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 7/22/2002](#); [Associated Press 10/22/2002](#)) It is also later revealed that Moussaoui had recently convinced al-Attas to fight in Chechnya in order to prepare for holy war. ([Cohen, Carreyrou, and Gauthier-Villars 2/4/2002](#)) Furthermore, the person who attempts to post bond for al-Attas had been the subject of a full-field FBI international terrorism investigation in Oklahoma. This unnamed person was a recruiter for a radical Palestinian group and a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) In post-9/11 media accounts, al-Attas is generally portrayed as someone who had been innocently and accidentally caught up with Moussaoui. But it appears that in the weeks before 9/11, US intelligence will consider the possibility that al-Attas may have been plotting with Moussaoui. For instance, a CIA cable that will be sent on August 24 is titled "Subjects Involved in Suspicious 747 Flight Training," (see [August 24, 2001](#)) one that will be sent on August 28 has Moussaoui and al-Attas' names as the title. ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 7/22/2002](#); [Associated Press 10/22/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 540)

August 16, 2001: Moussaoui's Belongings Possess Information Sufficient to Roll Up 9/11 Plot

5th October, 2000
Our Ref : ITSB/G056/1000

Mr. Moussaoui Zacarias

Dear Sir,

APPOINTMENT AS A MARKETING CONSULTANT IN EUROPE

We are glad to learn from your letter dated 23rd August that you are willing to act as our marketing consultant for Europe. The arrangement requires that you represent our interests throughout the whole Europe, and to appoint sub-agents as may be necessary to do this effectively.

For our part, we shall provide any technical assistance when the need arises. All business in Europe shall be transacted through you, and initially we will pay you the sum of USD25,000.00 to establish an administrative communication office in Europe and as from beginning of November, an allowance of USD2,500.00 a month towards its maintenance in addition to the advance of USD10,000.00 that have been given to you in cash. In the near future, we will directly transfer the money into your account.

Please let us know when to send you our first batch of software. We ask you to exercise special care in granting credit and when you submit orders, to inform us of customers' financial position and business reputation.

All sales on our behalf are to be made against drafts drawn and accepted at 60 days term. For further details as to terms please refer to the enclosed form of contract.

We wish you best of luck.

Yours faithfully
INFOCUS TECH(M) SDN BHD


Yazid Sufaat
Managing Director

A letter that Zacarias Moussaoui had in his possession when he was arrested. It is signed by Yazid Sufaat, whose apartment was used for a 9/11 planning meeting in January 2000 that was monitored by the authorities. [Source: *US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division*] (click image to enlarge) After Zacarias Moussaoui is arrested, the FBI wishes to search his possessions (see [August 16, 2001](#) and [August 23-27, 2001](#)). According to a presentation made by FBI agent Aaron Zebley at Moussaoui's trial, the belongings are sufficient to potentially connect Moussaoui to eleven of the 9/11 hijackers: Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, Ziad Jarrah, Hani Hanjour, Khalid Almihdhar, Nawaf Alhazmi, Fayez Banihammad, Ahmed Alhaznawi, Hamza Alghamdi, Satam Al Suqami, and Waleed Alshehri. The connections would be made, for example, through Ramzi bin al-Shibh, who spoke with Moussaoui on the telephone and wired him money (see [July 29, 2001-August 3, 2001](#)), and who was linked to three of the hijacker pilots from their time in Germany together (see [November 1, 1998-February 2001](#)). Bin al-Shibh also received money from Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi, who was connected to hijacker Fayez Ahmed Banihammad (see [June 25, 2001](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) However, the discovery of these hijackers could potentially have led to the discovery of some or all of the remaining eight plot members, as they were brothers (Wail and Waleed Alshehri, Nawaf and Salem Alhazmi), opened bank accounts together (see [May 1-July 18, 2001](#) and [June 27-August](#)

[23, 2001](#)), lived together (see [March 2001-September 1, 2001](#)), obtained identity documents together (see [April 12-September 7, 2001](#) and [August 1-2, 2001](#)), arrived in the US together (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#)), and booked tickets on the same four flights on 9/11 (see [August 25-September 5, 2001](#)).

August 16-19, 2001: Atta Rents Plane at Southeast Florida Airport; Accompanied by Unknown Passengers

On August 16, Mohamed Atta arrives at Palm Beach Flight Training, located at an airport in the town of Lantana, southeast Florida. According to Marian Smith, the flight school's owner, Atta says he wants to get in 100 hours in the air. ([de Vise, Morgan, and Garcia 9/13/2001](#)) He already accumulated about 300 hours of flying time during his earlier training. ([Williams, Dahlburg, and Reza 9/27/2001](#); [Cloud 9/30/2001](#)) Smith describes him as being "well-spoken, well-dressed," and says, "He seemed normal to me." ([Local 10 News \(Miami\) 9/13/2001](#); [de Vise, Morgan, and Garcia 9/13/2001](#)) Atta rents a single-engine Piper Archer. He makes his first flight accompanied by an instructor. Having demonstrated his competence, he returns the following day and again two days later. Each time he has a different companion who flies with him. The identities of these men are unknown, but Smith will later recollect that none of them was among the men identified as 9/11 hijackers. ([de Vise, Morgan, and Garcia 9/13/2001](#); [Bendavid 9/14/2001](#); [Goldstein and Finn 9/14/2001](#)) On his final day at the school, Atta is heard speaking in Arabic over the plane's radio. An instructor who speaks Arabic himself hears him happily exclaim, "God is great!" ([Ferguson 12/23/2001](#)) Workers at the school suspect nothing criminal about Atta, though. ([Goldstein and Finn 9/14/2001](#))

August 16-September 10, 2001: Hijackers Make Series of Deposits to Bank Accounts

Several deposits are made to the hijackers' accounts. Details are available for some of the deposits for eleven of the nineteen hijackers: Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, Ziad Jarrah, Hani Hanjour, Nawaf Alhazmi, Khalid Almihdhar, Ahmed Alhazmawi, Fayeز Ahmed Banihammad, Hamza Alghamdi, Waleed Alshehri, and Satam Al Suqami. Over \$40,000 is deposited in their accounts, much in cash. The largest amounts deposited in one day occur on August 24, when \$8,000 is split equally between Hamza Alghamdi's account and a joint account of Atta and Alshehhi, and September 5, when a total of \$9,650 is split between Banihammad's and Hamza Alghamdi's accounts, and the joint Atta/Alshehhi account. The smallest deposit is \$120, paid into Khalid Almihdhar's First Union National Bank account on September 9. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ³¹; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ³²; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ³³; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ³⁴; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ³⁵; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ³⁶; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ³⁷; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ³⁸;

[Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) Although it is impossible to trace the exact origins of the deposits, possible sources include withdrawals from other hijackers' bank accounts, cash and traveler's checks brought in by the hijackers in the spring/early summer (see [January 15, 2000-August 2001](#)), car sales, and money distributed by Atta, who reportedly received around \$100,000 in early August (see [Early August 2001, Summer 2001 and before](#), and [Mid-July - Mid-August 2001](#)).

August 16-17, 2001: Moussaoui Interviews Raise Concerns for FBI Agents

After Zacarias Moussaoui is arrested, he consents to be interviewed on the day of the arrest and the next day by FBI agent Harry Samit. However, the interviews only alarm the FBI more, as Moussaoui makes a number of suspicious statements and his answers are extremely evasive: ([Hirschorn 9/28/2002](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#))

- Moussaoui says he does not want the French consul to be informed of his arrest, which makes the FBI think he is a criminal or an Islamic militant;

- Although Moussaoui says he works for a British company called NOP, he cannot remember what the letters stand for, neither can he recall his salary, job description, or any details of the business; ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#))

- He says he works as a "marketing consultant" for Infocus Tech, a Southeast Asian technology company, but also fails to provide information about that company; ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#); [US Congress 10/17/2002](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#))

- When asked about his \$32,000 bank balance, he initially says it is his savings, but then admits it was given to him by friends and associates, most of whose names he cannot remember (see [August 17, 2001](#));

- Moussaoui's passport, which indicates he spent two months in Pakistan shortly before arriving in the US, is new and he tells the FBI his old one was destroyed in the washing machine, which the agents know is a common lie for international criminals.

When Samit asks Moussaoui about his trips to Pakistan and tells Moussaoui his story does not add up and they are suspicious, Moussaoui requests an attorney and the interview ends. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#)) Moussaoui's associate Hussein al-Attas is also interviewed around this time and makes several statements indicating Moussaoui may be linked with a militant group (see [August 16, 2001](#)).

August 16-September 10, 2001: FBI Fails to Inform Own Director of Moussaoui Case

The FBI fails to inform its own head of the arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui. It is unclear how this failure occurs. The highest FBI official to be informed of Moussaoui's arrest is apparently Michael Rolince, head of the FBI's International Terrorism Operations Section (see [Late August 2001](#)), but it seems he fails to pass the information on. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 275](#)) Thomas Pickard, who is acting FBI director at this time, will later blame CIA director George Tenet, who was briefed repeatedly on the case (see [August 23, 2001](#)), for not informing him of Moussaoui's arrest, but Tenet will comment: "I was stunned to hear [Pickard's comments] suggesting that *I* had somehow failed to notify *him* about Moussaoui. Failed to tell him? Hell, it was the FBI's case, their arrest. I had no idea that the Bureau wasn't aware of what its own people were doing." ([Tenet 2007, pp. 200-201](#))

August 16-September 10, 2001: FBI Fails to Brief NSC on Moussaoui, although this Is Standard Practice

Following the arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui, the FBI fails to brief the Counterterrorism and Security Group (CSG) chaired by counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke at the National Security Council (NSC) on the case. CIA director George Tenet will later say that briefing the CSG on such an arrest is "standard practice." ([Tenet 2007, pp. 200](#)) In July 2001, Clarke had told the FBI he wanted to be informed of anything unusual, even if a sparrow fell from a tree (see [Shortly After July 5, 2001](#)).

After August 16, 2001: INS Agent Presses for Moussaoui Warrant



INS agent Steve Nordmann. [*Source: INS*]Immigration and Naturalization Service agent Steve Nordmann, one of the officers who arrested Zacarias Moussaoui (see [August 16, 2001](#)), presses for a warrant so that law enforcement bodies can search Moussaoui's computer files. He will later write of his regret that they were not allowed to access Moussaoui's laptop. More details are not known as Nordmann will die in a motorcycle accident in 2003 and will not testify at Moussaoui's trial. ([Gordon 6/28/2003](#); [Ratnayake 9/7/2003](#)) FBI agents also press for a warrant to search Moussaoui's belongings (see [August 21, 2001](#) and [August 23-27, 2001](#)), which contain potentially enough information to prevent 9/11 (see [August 16, 2001](#)). However, the

warrant is blocked by the Radical Fundamentalist Unit at FBI headquarters (see [August 20-September 11, 2001](#)).

August 17 and 31, 2001: Tenet Briefs President Bush; Fails to Mention Moussaoui

CIA records show that CIA Director George Tenet briefed President Bush twice in August—once in Crawford, Texas, on August 17, and once in Washington, on August 31. ([Priest 4/15/2004](#)) In Tenet's 2007 book, he will briefly mention that "A few weeks after the August 6 PDB [titled 'Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US' (see [August 6, 2001](#))] was delivered, I followed it to Crawford to make sure the president stayed current on events. That was my first visit to the ranch." ([Tenet 2007, pp. 145](#)) Later asked about what he told Bush at this meeting, Tenet will only say, "I held nothing back from the president. He understood our concerns about threats. He understood what we were doing around the world at the time." ([MSNBC 5/7/2007](#)) By the time of the second briefing, Tenet has been briefed about Zacarias Moussaoui's arrest (see [August 23, 2001](#)), but, apparently, he fails to tell Bush about it. ([Priest 4/15/2004](#)) In April 2004, Tenet will testify under oath before the 9/11 Commission that he had no direct communication with President Bush during the month of August. ([Jehl 4/15/2004](#)) This is quickly discovered to be untrue. A CIA spokesperson will then claim, "He momentarily forgot [about the briefings]." ([Priest 4/15/2004](#)) Tenet will personally brief Bush six more times before 9/11 and will still apparently fail to mention Moussaoui to him (see [September 1-8, 2001](#)).

Summer 2001 and before: Hijacker Atta Receives \$100,000 from Pakistan

Mohamed Atta receives \$100,000 from accounts in Pakistan. The money is transferred to two of his accounts in Florida. ([Fox News 10/2/2001](#); [Margasak 10/2/2001](#); [US Congress 10/3/2001](#); [CNN 10/6/2001](#); [Ressa 10/8/2001](#)) This will later be reported in various media, for example, ABC News will say that federal authorities track "more than \$100,000 from banks in Pakistan to two banks in Florida to accounts held by suspected hijack ringleader Mohamed Atta." ([ABC News 9/30/2001](#)) Law enforcement sources will tell CNN, "[T]he wire transfers from Pakistan were sent to Atta through two banks in Florida." ([CNN 10/1/2001](#)) One of the hijackers' financiers, the Pakistan-based Omar Saeed Sheikh, is said to wire Atta around \$100,000 in August (see [Early August 2001](#)). The transfers from Pakistan will be disclosed a few weeks after 9/11 but will then fade from view (see [September 30-October 7, 2001](#)), until 2003 when John S. Pistole, deputy assistant director of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division, tells the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs that the FBI has traced the origin of funding for 9/11 back to accounts in Pakistan (see [July 31, 2003](#)). However, in 2004 the 9/11 Commission will fail to mention any funding coming directly from Pakistan (see [Late-September 2001-August 2004](#)).

August 17, 2001: In Phone Call Recorded by FBI, Imam Says Moussaoui Wants to ‘Go on Jihad’

Zacarias Moussaoui's roommate, Hussein al-Attas, makes thirteen phone calls from jail to El Hadj Ndiaye, the imam of his local mosque in Norman, Oklahoma looking for assistance in raising money for his bond. Al-Attas was arrested and jailed shortly after Moussaoui was detained (see [August 16, 2001](#) and [August 16, 2001](#)). Ndiaye reportedly becomes "very upset" when he hears that Moussaoui is going to be deported. According to an FBI translation of one of these conversations, Ndiaye says, "I heard you guys wanted to go on jihad." Al-Attas responds, "Don't talk about that now." ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 134, 167-8, 201](#); [US Department of Justice 3/1/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) The Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters learns of the translated conversation on August 29 (see [August 29, 2001](#)), but the RFU chief downplays the significance of the reference to jihad. Two other people involved in posting the bond for al-Attas were the subject of counterterrorism investigations (see [August 20, 2001](#) and [August 23, 2001](#)).

August 17, 2001: Moussaoui's Roommate Arrested

Zacarias Moussaoui's roommate, Hussein Al-Attas, reports to the Immigration and Naturalization Service and is arrested when he admits he has worked despite only having a student visa. Al-Attas was with Moussaoui when he was arrested and was questioned the previous day (see [August 10-11, 2001](#), [August 16, 2001](#), and [August 16, 2001](#)). Al-Attas also says that Moussaoui follows the teachings of a sheikh, but that Moussaoui has not told him which sheikh because he does not think al-Attas would approve. When asked if the sheikh is Osama bin Laden, al-Attas says he does not think so and only remembers Moussaoui making one reference to bin Laden, when he appeared on television. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 77-9](#))

August 17, 2001: US Plan to Snatch Bin Laden Foiled After It Is Leaked to Media

A US plan to snatch Osama bin Laden inside Afghanistan (see [January 19, 2001](#)) is revealed in the Pakistan press, after the US asks Pakistan for assistance with the plot. An article that runs in the Pakistan newspaper The News also says that the US and Pakistan have discussed a sting operation in Afghanistan using US special forces, but that Pakistan has advised Washington against it. After a UN resolution tightening sanctions against the Taliban, General Tommy Franks, commander-in-chief of US Central Command, discussed the plan with his Pakistani counterparts and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf during a visit to Islamabad in January 2001 (see [January 19, 2001](#)). ([Roelofsma 8/17/2001](#)) There is some suggestion that the operation is attempted, but only partially successful, after 9/11 (see [September 26, 2001](#)).

August 17, 2001: Moussaoui Gives FBI Name of Alleged Accomplice

Towards the end of an interview with the FBI (see [August 16-17, 2001](#)), Zacarias Moussaoui discloses the name of one of his associates, Atif Ahmed. Moussaoui tells the FBI that Ahmed provided him with some money and that he associated with Ahmed's brother in Pakistan. However, he cannot remember any details, such as Ahmed's address or employment. The FBI's Minneapolis field office immediately sends a lead to its legal attach  in London, asking him to follow up. However, information about Ahmed does not arrive in the US until "months later," possibly November 2001, when Ahmed is arrested in Britain (see [Mid-November 2001](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#)) Moussaoui will later say that Ahmed is a spy working for the British, but the FBI and British authorities will deny this (see [July 25, 2002](#)).

August 17-November 11, 2001 and After: FBI Fails to Check Moussaoui Computer Lead

When Zacarias Moussaoui is arrested (see [August 16, 2001](#)), he has a receipt on him for a Kinko's store where he used a computer on August 12. The FBI does not go to this Kinko's store to collect information about Moussaoui immediately after the arrest, but only on September 19, after the rest of Moussaoui's belongings have been searched (see [September 11, 2001](#)). The FBI is told that the computers have been wiped and no information about Moussaoui's use can be obtained. Due to the frequency with which Kinko's computers are wiped, if the FBI visited the Kinko's store immediately after the arrest, it is possible information about Moussaoui could have been recovered. Although the FBI is initially aware of some of Moussaoui's e-mail addresses, in summer 2002 Moussaoui will reveal additional addresses he used and say he used them from this Kinko's outlet. Although the Kinko's computers have been wiped by 9/11, Microsoft, which operates the Hotmail service Moussaoui uses, can recover information up to 90 days after an account is last used, so the FBI could get the information it seeks from Microsoft until Mid-November 2001 (see [Late July-Early August, 2002](#)). However, the FBI does not know about the additional accounts at this point, partly because it was prevented from interviewing Moussaoui after 9/11 (see [September 11-12, 2001](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 1/1/2003](#))

August 18, 2001 or Shortly Before: Minneapolis FBI Contacts CIA Headquarters for Help with Moussaoui Case

Minneapolis FBI agent Harry Samit contacts Charles Frahm, an FBI agent who is working with the CIA's bin Laden unit as a deputy chief, to discuss the Moussaoui case. Frahm passes on information to other CIA officers. Frahm will also be contacted by FBI

headquarters about the case (see [August 20, 2001](#)) and will provide information linking the Chechen rebels, to which Moussaoui is connected, to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda (see [August 24, 2001](#)). ([Tenet 2007, pp. 201](#))

August 19, 2001: FBI's Best Al-Qaeda Expert Under Investigation for Trivial Issue, His Retirement Soon Follows



John O'Neill. [*Source: FBI*]The New York Times reports that counterterrorism expert John O'Neill is under investigation for an incident involving a missing briefcase. ([Johnston 8/19/2001](#)) In July 2000, he misplaced a briefcase containing important classified information, but it was found a couple of hours later still locked and untouched. Why such a trivial issue would come up over a year later and be published in the New York Times seems entirely due to politics. Says the New Yorker, "The leak seemed to be timed to destroy O'Neill's chance of being confirmed for [a National Security Council] job," and force him into retirement. A high-ranking colleague says the leak was "somebody being pretty vicious to John." ([Wright 1/14/2002](#)) John O'Neill suspects his enemy Tom Pickard, then interim director of the FBI, orchestrated the article. ([PBS Frontline 10/3/2002](#)) The New Yorker later speculates that with the retirement of FBI Director Freeh in June, it appears O'Neill lost his friends in high places, and the new FBI director wanted him replaced with a Bush ally. ([Wright 1/14/2002](#)) O'Neill retires a few days later.

August 20, 2001: Atta Announces Approximate Date of Attack in E-mail to Bin Al-Shibh

In a later interview, would-be hijacker Ramzi bin al-Shibh claims that roughly around this day, he receives a coded e-mail about the 9/11 plot from Mohamed Atta. It reads, “The first term starts in three weeks.... There are 19 certificates for private studies and four exams.” Bin al-Shibh learns the exact day of the attack on August 29. ([Tremlett 9/9/2002](#)) Hijacker Hani Hanjour also makes surveillance test flights near the Pentagon and WTC around this time, showing the targets have been confirmed as well. ([CBS News 10/9/2002](#)) Information in a notebook later found in Afghanistan suggests the 9/11 attack was planned for later, but was moved up at the last minute. ([Mendenhall 1/30/2002](#)) The FBI later notices spikes in cell phone use between the hijackers just after the arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui and just before the hijackers begin to buy tickets for the flights they would hijack. ([Bernstein et al. 9/10/2002](#)) CIA Director Tenet has hinted that Zacarias Moussaoui’s arrest a few days earlier (on August 15 (see [August 16, 2001](#))) may be connected to when the date of the attack was picked. ([US Congress 6/18/2002](#)) On the other hand, some terrorists appear to have made plans to flee Germany in advance of the 9/11 attacks one day before Moussaoui’s arrest (see [August 14, 2001](#)).

August 20, 2001: Hanjour Passes Check Ride, but Apparently Does Not Obtain Certification

According to the 9/11 Commission Report, alleged Flight 77 pilot Hani Hanjour successfully conducts “a challenging certification flight supervised by an instructor at Congressional Air Charters of Gaithersburg, Maryland, landing at a small airport with a difficult approach.” The instructor thinks that “Hanjour may have had training from a military pilot because he used a terrain recognition system for navigation.” However, it is unclear what certification the 9/11 Commission thinks Hanjour receives. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 248, 531](#)) A stipulation used as evidence at the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui mentions the flight, but fails to mention any certification Hanjour allegedly receives based on it, merely saying that it is a “check ride with a flight instructor.” Hanjour subsequently rents aircraft from the company on August 26 and 28. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 68^{AB}](#))

August 20, 2001: Fort Meade Increases Base Security

Fort Meade, a US Army installation located between Baltimore and Washington, DC, begins strict new entrance restrictions. For decades, visitors such as churchgoers and parents taking their children to schools on the base have been able to enter the post freely. But the Army is now closing seven access points, with only four points remaining open full time and four others part time. The restrictions, part of a security crackdown ordered by Army leaders concerned about terrorism, will require visitors to stop at a visitor’s center and obtain a day pass allowing them to enter and travel on the base. ([Vogel 8/15/2001](#); [Laurel Leader 8/23/2001](#); [Zline 8/23/2001](#)) Fort Meade is home to about 10,000 military personnel and 25,000 civilian employees. Its major tenant units include the National Security Agency (NSA), the US Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), and the US Air Force’s 694th Intelligence Group. ([Military District of](#)

[Washington 8/2000](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 4/9/2002](#)) All other installations in the Military District of Washington are currently implementing similar access restrictions (see [August 15, 2001](#)). ([MDW News Service 7/2001](#))

August 20, 2001: Moussaoui Associate Bailed Out of Custody by Subject of Counterterrorism Investigation

Hussein al-Attas, an associate of Zacarias Moussaoui, is released from an immigration detention center on bail. Al-Attas was questioned and detained shortly after Moussaoui's arrest (see [August 16, 2001](#) and [August 16, 2001](#)). His bail is paid by Mujahid Abdulqadir Menepta, who was investigated by the FBI over terrorism suspicions. When agents from the Minneapolis field office investigate Menepta, they find that he knows Moussaoui and attended the same mosque as him in Norman, Oklahoma. They also discover that he has an extensive criminal history and was the subject of a New York criminal-terrorism related investigation. Minneapolis agent Harry Samit writes in a memo to FBI headquarters that he thinks Menepta may be involved in whatever Moussaoui is plotting. Samit explains that he told immigration officers that he traveled to Pakistan in 1989 as part of a missionary effort. Samit says the international Islamic organization that sponsored the trip has been linked by the FBI to the recruitment of militants. Samit also reports that Menepta wasn't entirely truthful with the INS. Samit says Pakistan apparently issued him a visa in April 1990, something he failed to disclose to the INS. Additionally, Menepta told immigration officers that he is al-Attas' roommate, but al-Attas has been living with Moussaoui and another man for one month at an address different than the one indicated by Menepta. Samit says that the explanation that he flew to Minneapolis to post al-Attas' bond so that al-Attas can return to teach children at the Oklahoma mosque seems "farfetched." ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 135-6](#); [US Department of Justice 3/1/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))

Before August 22, 2001: Threat Information about 'Khalid' Increases Interest in Hijacker Almihdhar

The CIA receives some threat information about a man named "Khalid" and begins to examine data on everybody it knows whose first name is "Khalid". In an August 22 e-mail FBI agent Dina Corsi writes that this is one of the reasons for the interest in hijacker Khalid Almihdhar at this time: "the reason [the intelligence community] were looking at [Almihdhar] is relatively general—basically they were looking at all individuals using the name Khalid because of some threat information." ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 285](#)) The identity of the man named Khalid they are looking for is not revealed, however, there is threat reporting starting in June 2001 concerning someone an informant called Khalid, who is later revealed to be Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (see [June 12, 2001](#)).

(August 20, 2001): FBI Headquarters Opens Informal Communication Channel with CIA over Moussaoui

After the Zacarias Moussaoui case (see [August 16, 2001](#)) is transferred from the Iran unit to the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters (see [August 20-September 11, 2001](#)), RFU chief Dave Frasca contacts Charles Frahm, an FBI manager detailed to the CIA with responsibility for Alec Station, the CIA's bin Laden unit. According to Frahm, who has already been contacted by the FBI Minneapolis field office (see [August 18, 2001 or Shortly Before](#)), Frasca asks CIA headquarters to quickly share any information it has on Moussaoui with the FBI, but does not send the agency a formal request, even though FBI headquarters continues to coordinate the case with the CIA. In an e-mail sent around August 28, Frahm will indicate that the CIA has still not received a formal request from the bureau. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 123, 154-5, 231-2](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 313](#)) The CIA will tell FBI agent Harry Samit that it thinks there is enough information to firmly link Moussaoui to a terrorist group (see [August 24, 2001](#)).

August 20-September 11, 2001: FBI's Radical Fundamentalist Unit Unhelpful with Moussaoui Search Warrant

The FBI Minneapolis field office wishes to search Zacarias Moussaoui's belongings, which will later be found to contain enough information to potentially stop 9/11 (see [August 16, 2001](#)). To do so it must get the approval of the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters. However, the RFU throws obstacles in the warrant request's path:

- RFU chief Dave Frasca stops the Minneapolis office from pursuing a criminal warrant (see [August 21, 2001](#));
- When French authorities say that Moussaoui is connected to the Chechen rebels, RFU agent Mike Maltbie insists that the FBI representative in Paris go through all telephone directories in France to see how many Zacarias Moussaouis live there (see [August 22, 2001](#));
- Maltbie stops Minneapolis from informing the Justice Department's Criminal Division about the case (see [August 22, 2001](#));
- When RFU agent Rita Flack, who is working on the Moussaoui case, reads the Phoenix memo suggesting that bin Laden is sending pilots to the US for training, she apparently does not tell her colleagues about it, even though it was addressed to several of them, including Frasca (see [July 10, 2001](#) and [August 22, 2001](#));
- The RFU does not provide the relevant documentation to attorneys consulted about the request. In particular, Flack does not tell them about the Phoenix Memo, even though one of the attorneys will later say she asked Flack if anyone is sending radical Islamists to the US to learn to fly (see [August 22-28, 2001](#));
- When Minneapolis learns Moussaoui apparently wants to go on jihad, Frasca is not concerned and says jihad does not necessarily mean holy war. However, a top Department of Justice attorney will later say "he would have tied bells and whistles" to

this comment in a request for a search warrant had he known this (see [August 17, 2001](#) and [August 29, 2001](#));

- Maltbie tells the Minneapolis office that getting a warrant will “take a few months” (see [August 24, 2001](#)). He also tells Minneapolis, “We know what’s going on. You will not question us.” (see [August 27, 2001](#));

- Maltbie weakens the warrant request by editing it and removing a statement by a CIA officer that Chechen rebel leader Ibn Khattab was closely connected to Osama bin Laden, despite their being intelligence linking that leader to bin Laden (see [August 28, 2001](#));

- In a key meeting with an attorney about the request, Maltbie and Flack, who are submitting the warrant, are adamant that it is not sufficiently supported (see [August 28, 2001](#));

- Frasca opposes a plan to put an undercover officer in the jail cell with Moussaoui to find out more information about his connections to Islamic militants ([August 29, 2001 and shortly after](#));

- The RFU does not want a Minneapolis agent to accompany Moussaoui when he is deported (see [August 30-September 10, 2001](#));

- The RFU does not re-consider getting a criminal search warrant after a decision is taken not to seek a warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (see [After August 28, 2001](#));

- Frasca and Maltbie are said to oppose a search warrant after 9/11 (see [September 11, 2001](#)).

It is unclear why the RFU opposes the warrant so strongly. The Department of Justice’s Office of Inspector General will later criticize the RFU staff, but will conclude that they did not intentionally sabotage the warrant application. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 101-222](#).) A 2004 book by independent researcher Mike Ruppert will speculate that Frasca is actually a CIA agent. Ruppert suggests that the CIA placed Frasca in the FBI to prevent CIA operations from being compromised by FBI investigations. But he does not provide any direct evidence of ties between Frasca and the CIA (see [October 1, 2004](#)). The Minneapolis agents will offer a different interpretation of RFU actions. Coleen Rowley will say, “I feel that certain facts... have, up to now, been omitted, downplayed, glossed over and/or mischaracterized in an effort to avoid or minimize personal and/or institutional embarrassment on the part of the FBI and/or perhaps even for improper political reasons.” She asks, “Why would an FBI agent deliberately sabotage a case? The superiors acted so strangely that some agents in the Minneapolis office openly joked that these higher-ups ‘had to be spies or moles... working for Osama bin Laden.’... Our best real guess, however, is that, in most cases avoidance of all ‘unnecessary’ actions/decisions by FBI [headquarters] managers... has, in recent years, been seen as the safest FBI career course. Numerous high-ranking FBI officials who have made decisions or have taken actions which, in hindsight, turned out to be mistaken or just turned out badly... have seen their careers plummet and end. This has in turn resulted in a climate of fear which has chilled aggressive FBI law enforcement action/decisions.” ([Time 5/21/2002](#)) Minneapolis FBI agent Harry Samit will agree with explanation, telling the Department of Justice’s Office of Inspector General that the RFU is guilty of “obstructionism, criminal negligence, and careerism.” ([Sniffen 3/20/2006](#)) Samit will also say that Maltbie even told him he was acting this way to “preserve the existence of his advancement potential” in the FBI. ([Riley 3/21/2006](#))

Between August 20-September 10, 2001: FBI Headquarters Agent Apparently Worried Moussaoui Case Will Damage His Career

Mike Maltbie, a supervisory agent with the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters, tells Minneapolis agent Harry Samit, who has arrested Zacarias Moussaoui and wants to search his belongings, that getting an intelligence warrant can be bad for an agent's career if it gets fouled up. Maltbie comments that he wants to "preserve the existence of his advancement potential." The Minneapolis field office is in dispute with the RFU over whether a warrant should be granted to search Moussaoui's belongings, which contain enough information to potentially prevent 9/11 (see [August 16, 2001](#) and [August 20-September 11, 2001](#)). At a key meeting with an attorney about whether to go forward with the warrant request, Maltbie is adamant that the warrant should not be granted (see [August 28, 2001](#)). ([Riley 3/21/2006](#))

August 20, 2001 and After: Key Justice Department Unit Not Consulted about Moussaoui Warrant Request

To: All Field Offices From: Office of the General Counsel
Re: 66F-HQ-A1247863, 06/05/2001

Enclosure:

Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D.C. 20530

May 18, 2001

MEMORANDUM

TO: Louis J. Freeh
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation

FROM: The Attorney General /s/

SUBJECT: The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA)
Process

In light of recent events, and the FISA Court's memorandum to me of April 4, 2001, I have concluded that certain steps must be taken to ensure the accuracy of our FISA applications, and to improve the efficiency of our FISA process. In addition to the accuracy procedures that you submitted to the Court on April 6, 2001, I am directing that the following additional policies be implemented.

I. DIRECT CONTACT BETWEEN THE OFFICE OF
INTELLIGENCE POLICY AND REVIEW (OIPR) AND FBI
FIELD OFFICES

In its April 4 memorandum, the FISA Court stated that "direct communication between the OIPR attorney and the [FBI] field case agent [has] produced the most accurate pleadings" in at least one case, and that "such direct communication is the most efficient way to ensure accuracy in the FBI's FISA pleadings" in the future (emphasis in original). I agree. Accordingly, beginning July 1, 2001, appropriate FBI field office personnel shall be made available for direct contact with OIPR attorneys throughout the FISA process. All participants in the FISA process - OIPR, the FBI's National Security and Counterterrorism Divisions, the FBI's Office of General Counsel, and FBI field offices - should coordinate their activities in order to ensure effective management of the national FISA

5

FBI INFORMATION CONTAINS

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EC 416 6/5/2001 EncB

01P-4 A memo from Attorney

General John Ashcroft about the FISA process, obtained by the Center for Grassroots Oversight by FOIA request. [Source: *Office of the Attorney General*] (click image to enlarge) A key Justice Department unit, the Office of Intelligence and Policy Review (OIPR), is not consulted about a request to search Zacarias Moussaoui's belongings. Although it is this office that would submit an application for a search warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, the legal aspects of the application are discussed only with the National Security Law Unit, which is beneath the OIPR (see [August 22-28, 2001](#)). FBI officials discuss what they think the OIPR will want in a warrant application, but do not ask it directly. Sherry Sabol, an attorney in the lower National Security Law Unit, will later say that she would have contacted the OIPR to discuss a possible warrant application, if FBI headquarters agents had not withheld information from her (see [August 22-28, 2001](#)). When shown the relevant documentation for the Moussaoui case after 9/11, the OIPR's general counsel will say he would have considered the application and, if submitted, he "would have tied bells and whistles" to a comment by Moussaoui's imam that Moussaoui and an associate wanted to "go on jihad" (see [August 17, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 132-166, 182-4, 201](#)) However, a memo from Attorney General John Ashcroft issued in May to improve the efficiency of the FISA process recommended communications between field offices, FBI headquarters, and the

OIPR. In addition, the OIPR and the FBI should hold regular monthly meetings to discuss FISA warrants. It is unclear if such a meeting is held in the three weeks between Moussaoui's arrest and 9/11. However, one of the people supposed to attend such meetings is Spike Bowman, chief of the National Security Law Unit, who is involved in the Moussaoui case (see [August 28, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 5/18/2001](#))

(August 20, 2001 or after): Radical Fundamentalist Unit Delays Advising FAA of Moussaoui Case

At a meeting attended by Mike Maltbie of the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU), RFU chief Dave Frasca, FBI agent Rita Flack, and an FAA representative who is familiar with the Moussaoui case, a decision is made not to advise the FAA about the Moussaoui investigation at this point because Moussaoui and Al-Attas are presumably in custody. (Al-Attas is bailed out of custody on August 20) ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 134, 149-150](#)); [US Department of Justice 3/1/2006](#)) Al-Attas is suspected of involvement in terrorism at this point and investigators believe he and Moussaoui may be involved in a plot against the US that involves the hijacking of an airplane (see [August 17, 2001](#) and [August 24, 2001](#)). The FBI will eventually warn the FAA, but it will fail to mention that its Minneapolis office believes Moussaoui intends to hijack an airliner (see [September 4, 2001](#)).

August 21, 2001: Inmate Warns of Impending Attack in New York



Khalid al-Fawwaz, Adel Abdel Bary and Ibrahim Ediarous. [*Source: Orlando Sentinel/ Bureau of Prisons*] Walid Arkeh, a Jordanian serving time in a Florida prison, is interviewed by FBI agents after warning the government of an impending al-Qaeda attack. He had been in a British jail from September 2000 to July 2001, and while there had befriended three inmates, Khalid al-Fawwaz, Adel Abdel Bary, and Ibrahim Ediarous. US prosecutors charge, "The three men ran a London storefront that served as a cover for al-Qaeda operations and acted as a conduit for communications between bin Laden and his network." ([Bloodsworth 10/30/2002](#)) Al-Fawwaz was bin Laden's press agent in London, and bin Laden had called him over 200 times before al-Fawwaz was arrested in 1998. ([Huband 11/29/2001](#); [Fielding and Gadhery 3/24/2002](#)) The other two had worked in the same office as al-

Fawwaz (see [Early 1994-September 27, 1998](#)). All three had been indicted as co-conspirators with bin Laden in the August 1998 US embassy bombings. Arkeh tells the FBI that he had learned from these three that “something big [is] going to happen in New York City,” and that they call the 1993 attack on the WTC “unfinished business.” Tampa FBI agents determine that he had associated with these al-Qaeda agents, but nonetheless they do not believe him. According to Arkeh, one agent responds to his “something big” warning by saying: “Is that all you have? That’s old news.” The agents fail to learn more from him. On September 9, concerned that time is running out, a fellow prisoner will try to arrange a meeting, but nothing will happen before 9/11. The Tampa FBI agents will have a second interview with him hours after the 9/11 attacks, but even long after 9/11 they will claim that he cannot be believed. On January 6, 2002, the Tampa FBI will issue a statement: “The information [was] vetted to FBI New York, the Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Tampa Division and the United States Attorney for the Middle District of Florida. All agreed the information provided by this individual was vague and unsubstantiated... Mr. Arkeh did not provide information that had any bearing on the FBI preventing September 11.” ([Bloodsworth 1/6/2002](#); [Bloodsworth 10/30/2002](#)) However, a different group of FBI agents will interview him in May 2002 and find his information credible (see [May 21-22, 2002](#)).

August 21, 2001: Local FBI Pleads with Headquarters to Warn Secret Service About Moussaoui

The Minnesota FBI office e-mails FBI headquarters on this day, saying it is “imperative” that the Secret Service be warned of the danger that a plot involving Zacarias Moussaoui might pose to the president’s safety. However, no such warning is ever sent. ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#); [Shenon 10/18/2002](#))

August 21, 2001: PNAC Think Tank Leader States US Should Embrace Imperialist Hegemon Role

Thomas Donnelly, deputy executive director of the PNAC, explains to the Washington Post that the US should embrace its role as imperialist hegemon over the world. He says many important politicians privately agree with him. “There’s not all that many people who will talk about it openly,” he says. “It’s discomfoting to a lot of Americans. So they use code phrases like ‘America is the sole superpower.’” He also says, “I think Americans have become used to running the world and would be very reluctant to give it up, if they realized there were a serious challenge to it.” ([Ricks 8/21/2001](#)) Such statements of policy had been publicly denounced by Bush prior to his election, and some claim that the Bush administration only changes its mind toward a more aggressive policy after 9/11. However, this claim is inconsistent with the roles of senior Bush officials such as Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz in formulating the preemptive doctrine in 1992 then pushing for it in PNAC during the Clinton administration. In the summer of 2001, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld’s

office “sponsored a study of ancient empires—Macedonia, Rome, the Mongols—to figure out how they maintained dominance.” ([Dowd 3/5/2003](#))

August 21, 2001: FBI Headquarters Blocks Criminal Investigation into Moussaoui

Dave Frasca of the FBI’s Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) denies a request from the Minneapolis FBI field office to seek a criminal warrant to search the belongings of Zacarias Moussaoui, who was arrested on August 15 as part of an intelligence investigation (see [August 16, 2001](#) and [August 16, 2001](#)). Minneapolis agents believe they had uncovered sufficient evidence that Moussaoui is involved in a criminal conspiracy, and want to obtain a criminal search warrant instead of a warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). But because they originally opened an intelligence investigation, they cannot go directly to the local US attorney’s office for the warrant. In order to begin a parallel criminal investigation, they must first obtain permission from the Office of Intelligence Policy and Review (OIPR) so they can pass the information over the “wall.” ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#)) Harry Samit, a Minneapolis FBI agent on the Moussaoui case, calls Dave Frasca, the head of the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters, to discuss the request. Samit tells Frasca that they have already completed the paperwork for a criminal investigation, but, according to Samit, Frasca says, “You will not open it, you will not open a criminal case.” Frasca says that argument for probable cause in seeking a criminal warrant is “shaky” and notes that if they fail to obtain a criminal warrant, they will be unable to obtain a warrant under FISA. Samit, who has only been with the FBI since 1999, defers to his superior, and writes on the paperwork, “Not opened per instructions of Dave Frasca.” Samit then tells his Chief Division Counsel, Coleen Rowley, about the conversation, and she also advises him that it would be better to apply for a warrant under FISA. When the Justice Department’s Office of Inspector General (OIG) interviews Frasca after 9/11, he will claim he never spoke to Samit about this matter, and that the conversation was with Chris Briece, one of Samit’s superiors. However, Briece will deny this and the OIG will conclude that the conversation was between Samit and Frasca. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 128-132](#); [US Department of Justice 3/1/2006](#)) To get a FISA search warrant for Moussaoui’s belongings the FBI must now show there is probable cause to believe Moussaoui is an agent of a foreign power. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 3/9/2006](#)) A criminal warrant to search Moussaoui’s belongings will be granted only after the 9/11 attacks (see [September 11, 2001](#)).

August 21, 2001: FBI Fails to Ask Al-Qaeda Operative in Custody about Almihdhar

Margaret Gillespie, an FBI agent detailed to the CIA who has just found out hijacker Khalid Almihdhar is in the US (see [August 21-22, 2001](#)), suggests asking failed Millennium bomber Ahmed Ressam whether he recognizes Almihdhar, but the proposal

is not acted on. Ressam was arrested on his way to bomb Los Angeles airport (see [December 14, 1999](#)), but has been co-operating with the US government against al-Qaeda (see [May 30, 2001](#)). Gillespie makes the suggestion in an e-mail to Tom Wilshire, a CIA representative to the FBI. It is unclear what Wilshire does with the suggestion, but Ressam is not interviewed. When shown photos of Almihdhar after 9/11, Ressam will not recognize him. The FBI also fails to ask Ressam about Zacarias Moussaoui before 9/11, but Ressam will identify Moussaoui as a person that attended al-Qaeda's camps in Afghanistan shortly after 9/11 (see [Late August-Early September 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 275-6, 541](#))

August 21, 2001-September 13, 2001: FBI and CIA Ask British about Moussaoui But Get No Answer until After 9/11

On August 21, the FBI's legal attache in London hand-delivers a request for information about Zacarias Moussaoui to British officials. On August 24, the CIA tells the British that Moussaoui is a possible "suicide hijacker" who is involved in "suspicious 747 flight training." The CIA asks for information on him on August 28. The FBI raises the matter with the British again on September 3 and again on September 5. Although the British do not respond to these requests until just after 9/11, French intelligence, which has been sharing information about Moussaoui with the British (see [1999](#)), sends the FBI some information about Moussaoui's activities and history in England (see [August 22, 2001](#)). Then, on September 13, 2001, the British supposedly learn new information that Moussaoui attended an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan (see [1995-1998](#)). The 9/11 Commission will conclude, "Had this information been available in late August 2001, the Moussaoui case would almost certainly have received intense and much higher-level attention." A British official will complain, "We passed on all the relevant information [about Moussaoui] as soon as we obtained it." ([Borger 4/14/2004; 9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 274-75](#)) However, the British had Moussaoui under surveillance in 2000 (see [Mid-2000-December 9, 2000](#)), and appear to have failed to pass on any information about this surveillance or what it uncovered.

August 21-22, 2001: FBI Agents Finally Realize Hijacker Almihdhar Is in US

An FBI agent is detailed to the CIA's bin Laden unit locates CIA cables saying that hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi entered the US in early 2000. The agent, Margaret Gillespie, then checks with the US Customs service and discovers that hijacker Khalid Almihdhar entered the US on July 4, 2001, and there is no record he has left the country. As there is "an imperative to find anyone affiliated with al-Qaeda if they [are] believed to be in the US," Gillespie immediately contacts Dina Corsi, an FBI agent in its bin Laden unit. Gillespie, who has been working on the USS *Cole* bombing and Malaysia summit for some time, will later say that when she learns of their arrival in the US "it all clicks for me." The Justice Department Office of Inspector General will find that Gillespie's

“actions on receipt of the information clearly indicate that she understood the significance of this information when she received it. She took immediate steps to open an intelligence investigation.” Gillespie and Corsi meet with Tom Wilshire, a CIA officer involved in the investigation (see [August 22, 2001](#)) and Almihdhar and Alhazmi are soon watchlisted (see [August 23, 2001](#)). (US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 300-301, 313 ³; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ³)

Before August 22, 2001: FBI Headquarters Agent Learns Al-Qaeda Leader Attended Malaysia Summit with 9/11 Hijackers, Investigation Fails to Discover How

FBI headquarters agent Dina Corsi learns that al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash attended a summit in Malaysia that was also attended by 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi (see January 5-8, 2000); an e-mail sent by Corsi on this date contains the first reference in FBI documents to bin Attash’s presence at the Malaysia summit. Although it is her job to support the investigation into the attack on the USS *Cole* (see [October 12, 2000](#)), which bin Attash commanded, and she is aware that bin Attash is important to the *Cole* investigation, even saying that she is focused on his identity and whereabouts, she fails to communicate this information to the agents investigating the bombing, who do not receive it before 9/11 (see [August 30, 2001](#)). After 9/11, she will say she cannot recall how she learned this information and an investigation by the Justice Department’s Office of Inspector General will fail to find any documents that cast light on the matter. Although she does not do anything with this information before another FBI agent tells her Khalid Almihdhar is in the US (see [August 21-22, 2001](#)), she will later say that the information bin Attash was at the Malaysia summit was important, as it connected Almihdhar and Alhazmi to the *Cole* bombing. She will also say that CIA officers Tom Wilshire and Clark Shannon, who she discussed al-Qaeda’s Malaysia meeting with and who knew that bin Attash was in Malaysia with Alhazmi and Almihdhar (see [Late May, 2001](#), [Mid-May 2001](#) and [June 11, 2001](#)), did not give her this information. Although Corsi and others know that bin Attash is an important al-Qaeda leader, he is not watchlisted at this point, although one of his aliases is watchlisted in August (see [August 23, 2001](#)). (US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 280, 284, 286, 293, 296, 302 ³)

August 22, 2001: Top FBI Al-Qaeda Expert Leaves FBI in Frustration; Misses Important Warnings



John O'Neill (left) with Dan Coleman at O'Neill's retirement party on August 22, 2001. [Source: *Dan Coleman*] Counterterrorism expert John O'Neill retires from the FBI. He says it is partly because of the recent power play against him, but also because of repeated obstruction of his investigations into al-Qaeda. ([Wright 1/14/2002](#)) In his last act, he signs papers ordering FBI investigators back to Yemen to resume the USS *Cole* investigation, now that Barbara Bodine is leaving as ambassador (they arrive a couple days before 9/11). He never hears the CIA warning about hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar sent out just one day later. He also apparently is not told about the arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui on August 15, 2001 ([PBS 10/3/2002](#)) ; nor does he attend a June meeting when the CIA reveals some of what it knows about Alhazmi and Almihdhar. ([Gilmore and Wiser 10/3/2002](#)) ABC News reporter Chris Isham will later say, "John had heard the alarm bells, too, and we used to talk about it. And he knew that there was a lot of noise out there and that there were a lot of warnings, a lot of red flags, and that it was at a similar level that they were hearing before the millennium, which was an indication that there was something going on. And yet he felt that he was frozen out, that he was not in a capacity to really do anything about it anymore because of his relationship with the FBI. So it was a source of real anguish for him." ([PBS 10/3/2002](#))

[August 22, 2001: French Connect Moussaoui to Chechen Rebels, FBI Headquarters Still Refuses Search Warrant](#)



Jean-Louis Bruguiere, who assisted the FBI with the Moussaoui case. [Source: *Michel Lipchitz / Associated Press*] After arresting Zacarias

Moussaoui, the FBI's Minneapolis field office asks French authorities if they have any information on him. The French then provide the US with intelligence indicating that Moussaoui is associated with a radical militant who died fighting for the Chechen rebels in 2000 (see [Late 1999-Late 2000](#)). The French interviewed one of this militant's associates who said he had been recruited by Moussaoui to fight in Chechnya and described Moussaoui as "the dangerous one." ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 140-1](#)) French authorities attempt to gather additional information by talking to Moussaoui's mother. Judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere, France's lead investigating magistrate in charge of counterterrorism affairs, also provides information. "Let's just say that Zacarias Moussaoui was well-known by the French security service..." Bruguiere later recalls in a 2004 interview with CBC. "When the names come from abroad, we usually have a file, and it was the same with him. He was a well-known personality. He lived in France and then left here to go to England." Bruguiere will also say that the French provided US authorities with information on Moussaoui's activities in both France and England (see [1999](#) and [August 21, 2001-September 13, 2001](#)). ([McKenna 3/16/2004](#)) Upon reviewing this information, Mike Maltbie of the Radical Fundamentalist Unit at FBI headquarters will inform Minneapolis that it is not enough for a search warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, because, even though the French sent information about Moussaoui, Maltbie objects that the Moussaoui the French are talking about may not be the same one Minneapolis has in custody. The result of this is that FBI staff are sent on what Minneapolis agent Harry Samit will later call a "wild goose chase"—they are asked to spend days poring through French phone books to make sure they have the right Moussaoui. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 8/27/2001](#); [Federal Bureau of Investigation 8/28/2001](#); [Riley 3/21/2006](#); [Serrano 3/21/2006](#)) For a search warrant to be granted there must be probable cause to believe Moussaoui is an agent of a foreign power. Maltbie claims that the Chechen rebels, who have never been treated as a foreign power before for a FISA warrant, cannot be treated as such, because they are not a "recognized" foreign power, only dissidents engaged in a civil war, and are not hostile to the US. In fact, the FBI has already received information indicating a close relationships between Chechen rebels and bin Laden (see, e.g., [1986-March 20, 2002](#), [August 24, 2001](#), and [\(October 1993-November 2001\)](#)) and that the two groups are working together on a strike against US interests (see [Before April 13, 2001](#)). Maltbie says that even if the Chechen rebels are a foreign power, then it will take some time to develop this information to the point where a FISA application can be submitted. Previous to this, Maltbie had only once advised a field office it was not going to get a FISA warrant. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 141-4](#)) The French provide more information on Moussaoui a few days later (see [August 30, 2001](#)).

August 22, 2001: US and Pakistan Negotiate to Capture or Kill bin Laden

The Asia Times reports that the US is engaged in "intense negotiations" with Pakistan for assistance in an operation to capture or kill bin Laden. However, despite promised rewards, there is a "very strong lobby within the [Pakistani] army not to assist in any US moves to apprehend bin Laden." ([Shahzad 8/22/2001](#))

Late August-September 10, 2001: Hijackers' San Diego Associates Appear to Have Foreknowledge of Attacks



Mohdar Abdullah, associate of Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar. [Source: *San Diego Union-Tribune*] Associates of hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar in San Diego reportedly change their behavior and seem to be aware that “something big” is about to happen. But it is not clear how they would have obtained this information. The 9/11 Commission will suggest that in late August Alhazmi may have called Mohdar Abdullah, a San Diego resident with whom he had previously been seen acting suspiciously (see [June 10, 2000](#)). Both Abdullah and another former associate of the hijackers, Yazeed al-Salmi, suddenly become intent on marrying before 9/11. The 9/11 Commission will quote a witness saying al-Salmi told him, “I knew they were going to do something, that is why I got married.” In addition, employees at the Texaco station where Alhazmi worked (see [Autumn 2000](#)) apparently expect that law enforcement authorities will visit them in the near future. Further, according to one witness, early on the morning of September 10, Abdullah, Osama Awadallah, Omar Bakarbashat, and others behave suspiciously at the gas station. The witness will say that after the group meets, Awadallah tells the others, “[I]t is finally going to happen” and they celebrate with high fives. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 249-50, 532](#))

August 22, 2001: FBI Agent on Moussaoui Case Reads Phoenix Memo, Does Nothing with It

Rita Flack, an intelligence operations specialist with the FBI’s Radical Fundamentalist Unit, is looking for evidence of ties between Zacarias Moussaoui and a foreign power so the agency can obtain a warrant to search Moussaoui’s belongings (see [August 21, 2001](#)). On this day, she comes across the Phoenix memo written by FBI agent Ken Williams (see [July 10, 2001](#)) which observed that an unusual number of Islamic radicals are taking aviation training in the US. In the memo, Williams suggested that bin Laden may be coordinating the flight training as part of preparations for a terrorist attack. Flack prints the Phoenix memo. She will later tell the Department of Justice’s Office of Inspector General that it is her usual practice to read the documents she prints, but she will not recall actually reading the Phoenix memo. She will also say she did not give the memo to anyone else, including colleague Mike Maltbie or the Minneapolis FBI field office. Nor did she discuss it with anyone, she says. After 9/11, she will say that there was nothing in

the memo that would have bolstered Moussaoui's connection to a foreign power, although this will be disputed by three National Security Law Unit attorneys (see [August 22-28, 2001](#)). The Department of Justice's Office of Inspector General will state: "We believe she should have at least recognized the relevance of the [memo] and the potential relationship of its theories to the Moussaoui case... We think [Flack] should have brought the Phoenix [memo] to someone's attention." ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 145-6, 217-8](#); [US Department of Justice 3/1/2006](#)) The Senate Judiciary Committee will also later say, "The [Phoenix memo] contained information that was material to the decision whether or not to seek a FISA warrant in the Moussaoui case." ([US Congress 2/2003](#))

August 22, 2001: CIA Officer Who Already Knows of Almihdhar and Alhazmi's US Travel Is Informed of it by FBI, Agrees Investigation Should Start

After two FBI agents learn that hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi may be in the US (see [August 21-22, 2001](#)), they call a meeting with Tom Wilshire, a CIA officer interested in the investigation who is on loan to the FBI. Although all three will later be unable to recall the specifics of the conversation, they agree that it is important to initiate an investigation to locate Almihdhar. However, Wilshire has been aware that Almihdhar has a US visa since January 2000, when he frustrated the passage of such information to the FBI (see [January 4-6, 2000](#)). He is also already aware that Alhazmi entered the US in January 2000 (see [May 15, 2001](#)) but again does not share this with the FBI. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 301-2](#))

August 22, 2001: FBI Headquarters Blocks Notification to Justice Department about Moussaoui

Staff at the FBI's Minneapolis field office form the opinion that there is a "reasonable indication" Zacarias Moussaoui wants to commit a "significant federal crime," meaning that, under the amended 1995 "wall" procedures (see [July 19, 1995](#) and [August 6, 2001](#)), they must inform an attorney at the Justice Department's Criminal Division about the case. However, Mike Maltbie, an agent with the FBI's Radical Fundamental Unit, blocks the notification. Minneapolis agents Chris Briebe and Greg Jones believe that if the Criminal Division were notified, it would then order Minneapolis to seek a criminal warrant to search Moussaoui's belongings, overcoming opposition to the search being put up by Maltbie and his colleagues (see [August 20-September 11, 2001](#) and [August 21, 2001](#)). However, Maltbie prevents the notification from being sent, saying that he does not see any evidence of a federal crime, and that asking for a criminal warrant could unfavorably affect the chances of getting a warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), if the criminal application were unsuccessful. He also says that getting a FISA warrant is easier, although two days later he says obtaining a FISA warrant will "take a few months" (see [August 24, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 127-8, 143-4](#))

August 22-28, 2001: Phoenix Memo Withheld from FISA Attorneys in Moussaoui Case

The FBI's Minneapolis field office drafts an application for a FISA warrant to search Zacarias Moussaoui's belongings and sends it to the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters. From there, the application is sent to four attorneys at the FBI's National Security Law Unit, as it needs to be legally cleared by them before being submitted to the FISA Court. All four attorneys are doubtful that the application contains enough evidence to secure a warrant. Although they are aware that Moussaoui is connected to Chechen rebels, they do not believe the FISA court will consider the Chechen rebels to be a foreign power. Moreover, they do not think the connection between the Chechens and bin Laden is strong enough to make Moussaoui an agent of al-Qaeda. However, the attorneys are not given the relevant documentation. For example, they are not informed that the FBI was warned in April that the Chechen rebel leader and Osama bin Laden were planning an attack against the US (see [Before April 13, 2001](#)). Nor are they provided with a copy of the Phoenix Memo, in which Arizona FBI agent Ken Williams correctly theorized that bin Laden was sending agents to the US to train in flight schools (see [July 10, 2001](#)). Attorney Sherry Sabol will later say that she asked RFU agents Mike Maltbie and Rita Flack whether there was any evidence of people being sent to the US for flight training. Flack, who read the Phoenix memo five days before (see [August 22, 2001](#)), said no. Maltbie will later say he does not recall this and Flack will deny it. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 139-160](#); [US Department of Justice 3/1/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) The Department of Justice's Office of Inspector General will later criticize Flack for failing to inform the attorneys of the memo. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 208](#)) Sabol and two of the other attorneys will say that they would have taken actions to support the application if they had known about the Phoenix Memo. However, they do not believe that material from the Phoenix memo would have been enough to secure the FISA warrant. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 146-8, 158-160, 208](#))

August 23, 2001: Former FBI Al-Qaeda Expert Begins Job as Head of Security at the WTC

John O'Neill begins his new job as head of security at the WTC. O'Neill had been the special agent in charge of the FBI's National Security Division in New York, and was the bureau's top expert on al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. ([Kolker 12/17/2001](#); [Wright 1/14/2002](#)) He'd left his job with the FBI just the day before (see [August 22, 2001](#)). His friend Jerome Hauer, who is the former head of New York's Office of Emergency Management, had found him the job at the World Trade Center. Developer Larry Silverstein, who recently took over the lease of the WTC (see [July 24, 2001](#)), had been highly impressed with O'Neill but insisted he start in the post no later than the first week of September, when his firm Silverstein Properties is set to assume control of the buildings. O'Neill had agreed to this. ([Weiss 2003, pp. 336-338, 345-346 and 349-351](#))

After hearing that O'Neill has got this job, Chris Isham, a senior producer at ABC News who is a close friend, says to him, "Well, that will be an easy job. They're not going to bomb that place again." O'Neill replies, "Well actually they've always wanted to finish that job. I think they're going to try again." ([Isham 5/31/2002](#)) After a few days as the WTC security director, O'Neill will move into his new office on the 34th floor of the South Tower. ([Weiss 2003, pp. 353-354 and 366](#))

August 23, 2001: Hijackers Alhazmi and Almihdhar Are Finally Added to Terrorist Watch List

23 AUG 01

CIA/DDO

TO: IMMEDIATE SECSTATE WASHDC//INR//IC,
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE//HQINT INFO
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION,
US CUSTOMS SERVICE//OFFICE OF INTELLIGENCE.

ATTN: STATE: DS/ITA - INR/IC - S/CT -
CHRIS ENSLEY, S/CT -

USCS: CHIEF ANTI-TERRORISM SECTION

INS: HQNSU, SSA

INS HQINT, SSA

FBI: FBIHQ SIOC, ACTING UNIT CHIEF ROD MIDDLETON, SSA KEVIN
CASSIDY, IRS DINA CORSI, IOS DONNA WALSH.

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO ENTER BIN LADIN-RELATED INDIVIDUALS INTO
VISA/VIPER, TIPOFF AND TECS

3. ACTION: PLEASE ENTER THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS INTO THE
VISA/VIPER, TIPOFF AND TECS SYSTEMS, DUE TO THEIR CONFIRMED LINKS
TO OPERATIVES AND SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES
WHILE TRAVELING IN EAST ASIA. WE RECOMMEND THAT THESE INDIVIDUALS
TERRORIST

BE WATCHLISTED IMMEDIATELY TO BE DENIED ENTRY INTO THE UNITED
STATES:

A. KHALID BIN MUHAMMAD BIN 'ABDALLAH AL-MINHAR

AKA:

DPOB: 16 MAY 1975, MECCA, SAUDI ARABIA

CITIZENSHIP: SAUDI ARABIA

NATIONALITY: SAUDI ARABIAN NATIONAL OF YEMENI ORIGINS

PASSPORTS: 1) SAUDI PASSPORT NUMBER B721156 (ISSUED 06 APRIL
1999)

2) SAUDI PASSPORT NUMBER C551754

(ENTERED BANGKOK, THAILAND ON 08 JANUARY 2000 ON 15 JANUARY 2000

The CIA cable watchlisting Alhazmi, Almihdhar, and two others (the sections mentioning Shakir and bin Attash are blacked out). *[Source: FBI]* (click image to enlarge) Thanks to the request of Margaret Gillespie, an FBI analyst assigned to the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center, the CIA sends a cable to the State Department, INS, Customs Service, and FBI requesting that "bin Laden-related individuals" Nawaf Alhazmi, Khalid Almihdhar, Ahmad Hikmat Shakir, and Salah Saeed Mohammed bin Yousaf (an alias for Khallad bin Attash) be put on the terrorism watch list. All four individuals had attended the January 2000 al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia. The cable mostly focuses on Almihdhar, briefly outlining his attendance at the Malaysia summit (see January 5-8, 2000) and his subsequent travel to the US in January 2000 and July 2001. Since March 2000, if not earlier, the CIA has had good reason to believe Alhazmi and Almihdhar were al-Qaeda operatives living in the US, but apparently did nothing and told no other agency about it until now. The hijackers are not located in time, and both die in the 9/11 attacks. FBI agents later state that if they been told about Alhazmi and Almihdhar sooner, "There's no question we could have tied all 19 hijackers together" given the frequent contact between these two and the other hijackers. ([Isikoff and Kladman 6/2/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 538](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 32-36, 302](#)) However, in what the Washington Post calls a "critical omission," the FAA, the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, and the FBI's Financial Review Group are not notified. The two latter groups have the power to tap into private credit card and bank data, and claim they could have readily found Alhazmi and Almihdhar, given the frequency the two used credit cards. ([Smith 7/25/2003](#)) Furthermore, counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke and his Counterterrorism Security Group are not told about these two operatives before 9/11 either. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 3/24/2004](#)) The CIA later claims the request was labeled "immediate," the second most urgent category (the highest is reserved for things like declarations of war). ([Drogin, Lichtblau, and Krikorian 10/28/2001](#)) The FBI denies that it was marked "immediate" and other agencies treated the request as a routine matter. ([Drogin, Lichtblau, and Krikorian 10/18/2001](#); [US Congress 9/20/2002](#)) The State Department places all four men on the watch list the next day. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) However, this watch list, named TIPOFF, checks their names only if they use international flights. There is another watch list barring suspected terrorists from flying domestically. On 9/11, it contains only 12 names, including Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and other al-Qaeda figures, and some names are added as late as August 28, 2001. But none of these four men are added to this domestic list before 9/11. (see [April 24, 2000](#)). ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004](#))

August 23, 2001: FBI Agents Visit Moussaoui's Former Flight School; Fail to Make Connections

Two agents from the Oklahoma City FBI office visit Airman Flight School in Norman, Oklahoma, to learn about Zacarias Moussaoui's training there earlier in the year. One of these agents had visited the same school in September 1999 to learn more about Ihab Ali, an al-Qaeda agent who trained there in 1993. Apparently, this agent forgets the connection when he visits the school to look into Moussaoui. He later admits he should have connected the two cases. ([Cullen and Ranalli 9/18/2001](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#).)

[pp. 322](#)) The staff director of the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry later states, “No one will ever know whether a greater focus on the connection between these events would have led to the unraveling of the September 11 plot.” ([Smith 9/25/2002](#)) The Oklahoma City office also does not connect Moussaoui to a memo that had come from its office in May 1998 warning that “large numbers of Middle Eastern males” were receiving flight training in Oklahoma and could be planning terrorist attacks (see [May 15, 1998](#)). Furthermore, Moussaoui’s Oklahoma roommate Hussein al-Attas is also under suspicion at this time (see [August 16, 2001](#)). One of the people who attempted to post bond for al-Attas, William Webb, had previously been the subject of an extensive investigation by the same Oklahoma City FBI office. Webb is a member of the extremist group the Muslim Brotherhood and is also Vice President of Overseas Operations and Recruiting for the Palestinian group Fatah. Further, Webb is connected to Anwar Al Aulaqi, an imam who has frequent ties with some of the 9/11 hijackers and is suspected of involvement in the 9/11 plot (see [March 2001](#)). Al Aulaqi was the subject of an FBI counterterrorism inquiry the year before (see [June 1999-March 2000](#)). These connections are also not noticed. ([US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 322](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 134-5](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))

August 23, 2001: CIA Director Told of Moussaoui but Doesn’t Inform White House and Takes No Action

CIA Director George Tenet and senior CIA senior staff are briefed repeatedly about the arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui. When news of the case first reaches the CIA, Tenet is absent and his deputy John McLaughlin is briefed, probably around August 20, 2001. ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 541](#)) Tenet is informed of Moussaoui on August 23 in a briefing entitled “Islamic Extremist Learns to Fly.” The briefing states that Moussaoui paid for his training in cash, was interested to learn a plane’s doors do not open in flight, and wanted training on London to New York City flights. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria District 7/31/2006](#)) At the same time Tenet is briefed on a number of other items, including the arrest of one of Moussaoui’s associates, Djamel Beghal (see [July 28, 2001](#)), and a group of Pakistanis arrested in Bolivia during preparations for a hijacking. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 200](#)) Tenet and other CIA officials are then kept up to date with developments in the case in a series of at least five briefings. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) However, apparently others such as President Bush and the White House Counterterrorism Support Group (CSG) are not told about Moussaoui until after the 9/11 attacks begin (see [August 16-September 10, 2001](#)). Even the acting director of the FBI is not told (see [August 16-September 10, 2001](#)), despite the fact that lower level FBI officials who made the arrest tried to pass on the information. Tenet later maintains that there was no reason to alert President Bush or to share information about Moussaoui during an early September 2001 Cabinet-level meeting on terrorism, saying,

“All I can tell you is, it wasn’t the appropriate place. I just can’t take you any farther than that.” ([Eggen 4/17/2004](#); [US District Court of Eastern Virginia 5/4/2006, pp. 6](#).)

August 23, 2001: Mossad Reportedly Gives CIA List of Terrorist Living in US; at Least Four 9/11 Hijackers Named

According to German newspapers, the Mossad gives the CIA a list of 19 terrorists living in the US and say that they appear to be planning to carry out an attack in the near future. It is unknown if these are the 19 9/11 hijackers or if the number is a coincidence. However, four names on the list are known, and these four will be 9/11 hijackers: Nawaf Alhazmi, Khalid Almihdhar, Marwan Alshehhi, and Mohamed Atta. ([Schrom 10/1/2002](#); [Gebauer 10/1/2002](#); [Broomby 10/2/2002](#); [Ha'aretz 10/3/2002](#)) The Mossad appears to have learned about this through its “art student spy ring.” Yet apparently, this warning and list are not treated as particularly urgent by the CIA and the information is not passed on to the FBI. It is unclear whether this warning influenced the decision to add Alhazmi and Almihdhar to a terrorism watch list on this same day, and if so, why only those two. ([Gebauer 10/1/2002](#)) Israel has denied that there were any Mossad agents in the US. ([Ha'aretz 10/3/2002](#))

August 23, 2001: FBI Field Agent Tells FBI Headquarters Search for Almihdhar Should Be Criminal, Not Intelligence Investigation

After being alerted to the fact hijacker Khalid Almihdhar is in the US, FBI agent Craig Donnachie says that the FBI should look for him under a criminal investigation, not an intelligence investigation. Donnachie, an intelligence agent at the FBI’s New York field office, is contacted by headquarters agent Dina Corsi, who says that the search for Almihdhar should be an intelligence investigation because the case is partially based on information from the NSA. Donnachie, however, tells her that the attempt to locate Almihdhar is related to the criminal investigation into the bombing of the USS *Cole* and would normally be handled as a sub-file of the main investigation, not a separate investigation. The case will later be opened as an intelligence investigation, meaning fewer resources can be devoted to it (see [August 29, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 304](#).)

August 23, 2001: FBI Agent Discusses Opening of Intelligence Investigation with CIA Officer, Notes Almihdhar Has Stronger Link to USS *Cole* Bombing

FBI headquarters agent Dina Corsi writes to Tom Wilshire, a CIA manager detailed to the FBI, and tells him that the search for hijacker Khalid Almihdhar will be conducted as an

intelligence investigation (see [August 23, 2001](#) and [August 29, 2001](#)). She also says that she is surer now that Almihdhar is connected to the bombing of the USS *Cole*, writing, “I am still looking at intel, but I think we have more of a definitive connection to the *Cole* here than we thought.” Even though Corsi thinks Almihdhar is tied to the *Cole* bombing, she will oppose the search for him being conducted as part of the criminal investigation and insist that it be part of an intelligence investigation (see [August 28, 2001](#) and [August 28, 2001](#)). (US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 304.)

August 23, 2001: FBI Headquarters Gives New York Field Office Heads Up Over Hijacker Almihdhar, but Investigation Is Not Considered Urgent

FBI headquarters agent Dina Corsi, who has discovered hijacker Khalid Almihdhar is in the country (see [August 21-22, 2001](#)), contacts the FBI’s New York field office to give it a heads up that information about Almihdhar will soon be passed to it, and it will be asked to search for him. Corsi does not usually call in advance of sending notification, but she thinks that the situation is urgent in this case, as they need to locate Almihdhar, who is watchlisted at this time (see August 23, 2001), before he leaves the US. However, when she sends written notification (see [August 28, 2001](#)), it only has “routine” precedence, the lowest level. When asked about the discrepancy after 9/11, Corsi will say that this case was “no bigger” than any other case. I-49 squad supervisor Jack Cloonan and another FBI supervisor will later also say they recognized there was some urgency to the Almihdhar investigation, but the Justice Department’s Office of Inspector General will comment: “Yet, the FBI in New York did not treat it like an urgent matter.” (US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 303-5, 354.)

August 23-27, 2001: Minnesota FBI Agents ‘Absolutely Convinced’ Moussaoui Plans to Hijack Plane; They Are Undermined by FBI Headquarters



Zacarias Moussaoui’s™ laptop, not opened until after 9/11. [Source: FBI] In the wake of the French intelligence report (see [August 22, 2001](#))

on Zacarias Moussaoui, FBI agents in Minneapolis, Minnesota, are “in a frenzy” and “absolutely convinced he [is] planning to do something with a plane.” Agent Greg Jones tells FBI headquarters that Moussaoui might “fly something into the World Trade Center.” ([Isikoff 5/20/2002](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 153](#)) Minneapolis FBI agents become “desperate to search the computer lap top” and “conduct a more thorough search of his personal effects,” especially since Moussaoui acted as if he was hiding something important in the laptop when arrested. ([Time 5/21/2002](#); [Ratnesar and Weisskopf 5/27/2002](#)) As the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters has already blocked an application for a criminal warrant (see [August 21, 2001](#)), the FBI’s Minneapolis field office must apply for one under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). Minneapolis agent Harry Samit completes an application for a warrant to search Moussaoui’s belongings on August 25. To obtain the warrant, he has to show there is probable cause to believe Moussaoui is an agent of a foreign power. The memo states that Moussaoui recruited a fighter for a particular Chechen rebel group connected to al-Qaeda, so he is connected to al-Qaeda through the Chechens. However, the RFU at FBI headquarters believes that the Chechen rebels should not be described as a foreign power and that the link between the Chechens and bin Laden is not strong enough. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 128-132](#); [US Department of Justice 3/1/2006](#)) However, earlier in 2001 the FBI had received information indicating that this Chechen group and bin Laden were planning to attack US interests (see [Before April 13, 2001](#)). Minneapolis FBI agent Coleen Rowley later sums up how the Minneapolis agents feel at this point, when she says FBI headquarters “almost inexplicably, throw up roadblocks” and undermine their efforts. Headquarters personnel bring up “almost ridiculous questions in their apparent efforts to undermine the probable cause.” One of Jones’ e-mails to FBI headquarters says they are “setting this up for failure.” That turns out to be correct. ([Time 5/21/2002](#); [Ratnesar and Weisskopf 5/27/2002](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 161](#))

August 23, 2001-April 2004: Owner of Flight School Attended by Two 9/11 Hijackers Faces Numerous Legal Suits

Rudi Dekkers, owner of Huffman Aviation—the Venice, Florida flight school attended by Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi—faces a series of legal suits. On August 23, 2001, a former female employee initiates a suit to enforce the settlement of a charge of “severe” sexual harassment by Dekkers. Huffman Aviation earlier agreed to pay her \$15,000 in return for her not suing them. ([Mudge 10/3/2001](#); [Martin 7/25/2004](#)) In August 2002, Dekkers’ former business partner Wally Hilliard files a suit, claiming Dekkers has failed to repay several loans, including one for \$1.7 million, and also owes money for Huffman stock he sold him. ([McIntyre 8/24/2002](#)) In January 2003, the state attorney’s office files criminal fraud charges against Dekkers for securing a loan of \$200,000 with a mortgage on property his company had no legal interest in. The suit could result in a five-year prison sentence, but is later dismissed. ([McIntyre 1/18/2003](#); [Associated Press 1/22/2003](#); [Mudge 1/25/2003](#); [McIntyre 12/6/2003](#)) And in April 2004, along with Hilliard, he is accused of making as many as 26 unauthorized passenger flights during 1999, and faces a

fine of up to \$286,000. ([Associated Press 4/14/2004](#)) In July 2004, the St. Petersburg Times will comment that Dekkers “continues to drive expensive vehicles and live in a million-dollar waterfront home, even though a Naples lawyer had ‘to chase him around’ to get him to pay a \$359 judgment.” Even before 2001, Dekkers had a history of troubled businesses and being the subject of legal suits. In spite of this, following 9/11 he becomes a much sought-after figure by the media, later remarking, “I’m always on television somewhere.” He is even invited to testify before Congress regarding the two hijackers’ attendance at his flight school. ([US Congress 3/19/2002](#); [McIntyre 8/24/2002](#); [Martin 7/25/2004](#))

(August 23-September 10, 2001): Flight 77 Hijackers Stay at Valencia Motel

From September 2 (or August 23, according to some reports) until the day before the attacks, five of the hijackers stay in Room 343 at the rundown Valencia Motel in Laurel, Maryland. The five men—Khalid Almihdhar, Majed Moqed, Nawaf Alhazmi, Salem Alhazmi, and Hani Hanjour—are later identified as the hijackers of Flight 77. Their suite has only one bedroom, with two double beds. Reportedly, they all leave it at 10 each morning and go out for the day in an old Toyota Corolla with California license plates. The motel’s manager later will state that only two men rented the room for one week, paying \$308 for it with a credit card, though several long-term motel residents will remember a larger group. ([Masters, Smith, and Shear 9/19/2001](#); [Vozzella 9/20/2001](#); [Heinzmann and Zeleny 9/23/2001](#); [Frank 9/23/2001](#); [Shin 9/28/2001](#); [O’Meilia 10/15/2001](#)) During their time at the motel the five men show up several times at a nearby gym (see [May 6-September 6, 2001](#)). However, there are conflicting accounts that Almihdhar, Hanjour, and Nawaf Alhazmi stayed in San Diego until about September 9 (see [Early September 2001](#)).

August 22, 2001 or Shortly After: I-49 Squad Learns Almihdhar Is in US, Cole Investigator Appreciates this Is Important

After FBI agent Dina Corsi learns hijacker Khalid Almihdhar is in the US (see [August 21-22, 2001](#)), she e-mails a supervisor on the I-49 squad at the FBI’s New York office to inform him. The squad, which specializes in al-Qaeda related terrorism, will later start an unsuccessful search for Almihdhar (see [August 29, 2001](#)). Steve Bongardt, deputy head of the USS *Cole* investigation, calls Corsi and says, “Dina, you got to be kidding me! [Almihdhar’s] in the country.” Bongardt realizes that if Almihdhar is in the US, then he may well have something nefarious in mind. Shortly after (see [August 29, 2001](#)) he tells Corsi, “If this guy is in the country, it’s not because he’s going to f***ing Disneyland!” ([Wright 7/10/2006](#) ²)

August 24, 2001: Foreign Intelligence Warns US of Al-Qaeda Plot to Attack within US

The 9/11 Commission later will note that at this time, an unnamed foreign intelligence “service report[s] that [al-Qaeda deputy leader] Abu Zubaida [is] considering mounting terrorist attacks in the United States, after postponing possible operations in Europe. No targets, timing or method of attack [are] provided.” Newsweek will suggest that most or all of this information may have come from a US debriefing of al-Qaeda bomber Ahmed Ressam in May 2001 (see [May 30, 2001](#)). Newsweek will note that it is a common occurrence for foreign intelligence agencies to “simply rereport to the CIA what it had originally learned from the FBI through separate channels.” Still, even “the multiple channels for Ressam’s warnings [do] little to change thinking within the FBI or CIA...” ([Isikoff and Hosenball 4/28/2005](#); [US District Court of Eastern Virginia 5/4/2006, pp. 6](#).) However, it is possible the information could be more than a mirror of what Ressam said, since a number of Western intelligence agencies are monitoring Zubaida’s phone calls before 9/11 (see [October 1998 and After](#)).

August 24, 2001: Frustrated Minnesota FBI Asks CIA for Help with Moussaoui Case

Frustrated with the lack of response from FBI headquarters about Zacarias Moussaoui, the Minnesota FBI contacts an FBI agent working with the CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center, and asks for help. ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#)) On this day, the CIA sends a cable to stations and bases overseas requesting information about Moussaoui. The cable is titled, “Subjects Involved in Suspicious 747 Flight Training.” The cable says that the FBI is investigating Moussaoui for possible involvement in the planning of a terrorist attack and mentions his efforts to obtain flight training. It also suggests he might be “involved in a larger plot to target airlines traveling from Europe to the US” ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 540](#)) It calls him a “suspect 747 airline attacker” and a “suspect airline suicide hijacker” —showing that the form of the 9/11 attack is not a surprise, at least to the CIA. ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#)) FBI headquarters responds by chastising the Minnesota FBI for notifying the CIA without approval. ([Time 5/21/2002](#))

August 24, 2001: CIA Backs Minneapolis’ Request for Search Warrant

After being contacted by FBI headquarters (see [August 20, 2001](#)) and the local Minneapolis field office (see [August 24, 2001](#)), the CIA offers an opinion on the Moussaoui case. In response to French information linking Moussaoui to the Chechen rebels (see [August 22, 2001](#)), a CIA officer tells Minneapolis agent Harry Samit that this is “highly interesting,” adding, “[I] am not sure why this is not enough to firmly link Moussaoui to a terrorist group—Ibn Al-Khattab is well known to be the leader of the Chechen mujaheddin movement and to be a close buddy with bin Laden from their earlier

fighting days. From a read of the [French] info, Moussaoui is a recruiter for Khattab. I can confirm from our own info that in fact the dead guy [Masoud Al-Benin] in fact was a fighter for Khattab who perished in Chechnya in April 2000” (see [Late 1999-Late 2000](#)). In a document submitted to court, the CIA officer will state “[T]he connection between Ibn Khattab and Osama bin Laden had been known for years at the CIA... it was crystal clear that Khattab and [bin Laden] were intricately tied together and they had clearly shared funding operations and training... it was no leap of faith to connect Khattab to [bin Laden] and there was lots of information connecting the two groups... the FBI informed [me] that French information discerned that Moussaoui had recruited for Khattab, clearly establishing his connection to Khattab, and thereby his connection to [bin Laden].” However, FBI headquarters, which is aware that bin Laden and the Chechen rebel leader are plotting together against the US (see, e.g., [Before April 13, 2001](#)), will refuse to apply for a search warrant for Moussaoui’s belongings, saying that the connections between Moussaoui and the Chechen rebels, and the Chechen rebels and bin Laden are not strong enough to justify one (see [August 20-September 11, 2001](#) and [August 28, 2001](#)). (US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006.)

August 24, 2001: FBI Agent Tells CIA ‘No Indication’ Moussaoui Is Planning Nefarious Activity, Despite Knowing Evidence Otherwise

Mike Maltbie, a supervisory special agent with the Radical Fundamentalist Unit at FBI headquarters, writes to a CIA manager stationed with the FBI as a consultant about the case of Zacarias Moussaoui and Hussein al-Attas. He tells the manager what actions the FBI has taken on the case and concludes by saying, “Please bear in mind that there is no indication that either of these two had plans for nefarious activity as was apparently indicated in an earlier communication.” The word “no” is underlined. (US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 151.) However, the FBI’s field office in Minneapolis suspects Moussaoui is part of a wider plot to hijack airliners and Maltbie is aware of their concerns (see [August 15-20, 2001](#)).

August 24, 2001: FBI Headquarters Tells Minneapolis Moussaoui Warrant Will ‘Take a Few Months’

Mike Maltbie of the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters tells Greg Jones of the FBI’s Minneapolis field office that obtaining a search warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Act (FISA) for Zacarias Moussaoui’s belongings could “take a few months” because there are “hundreds of these FISA requests.” (FISA warrants can actually be obtained in a matter of hours if needed, and can even be approved retroactively) Maltbie tells Jones that the situation is not an emergency, as he believes an act of terrorism is not imminent in this case, but that Minneapolis can write a letterhead memorandum for FBI headquarters about the case. (US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 48, 53, 148-9; US Department of Justice 3/1/2006.)

August 24, 2001: CIA Manager Requests Information about Moussaoui Case, Makes Disparaging Reference to Minneapolis Field Office

Tom Wilshire, a CIA manager detailed to the FBI (see [May 2001](#)), writes to Dave Frasca, head of the FBI's radical fundamentalist unit, to obtain information about the progress of the case of Zacarias Moussaoui. Moussaoui was arrested by the FBI's Minneapolis field office, which Wilshire refers to as the "Minneapolis Airplane IV crowd." Presumably, this is a reference to the films *Airplane* and *Airplane II*, which were parodies of disaster and sci-fi movies. He asks whether leads have been sent out to obtain additional biographical information and whether the FBI has photographs it can provide the CIA. He receives a reply from one of Frasca's subordinates telling him there are no indications Moussaoui has plans for nefarious activity (see [August 24, 2001](#)). ([Haflidason 3/13/2001](#); [Haflidason 3/13/2001](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 151](#) ³; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#) ⁴)

August 24, 2001: CIA Officer Detailed to FBI Asked to Help with Moussaoui Warrant

After the CIA sends the FBI information it thinks is sufficient for a warrant to search Zacarias Moussaoui's belongings (see [August 24, 2001](#)), the CIA's Counterterrorist Center (CTC) sends the same information to a CIA representative to the FBI and asks him to help arrange a search warrant. The representative is not named, but it may be Tom Wilshire (see [May 2001](#)), a CIA officer assigned to the FBI who requests information about Moussaoui on this day (see [August 24, 2001](#)). The CTC officer writes: "No one in the FBI seems to have latched on to this. Perhaps you can educate them on Moussaoui. This may be all they need to open a FISA on Moussaoui." ([Tenet 2007, pp. 202](#))

After August 23, 2001: US Intelligence Again Fails to Connect Al-Qaeda Leader to Alias

When the US intelligence community watchlists the alias Salah Saeed Mohammed bin Yousaf, which is used by al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash (see August 23, 2001), it fails to realize that "bin Yousaf" is really bin Attash, who is known to be one of the masterminds of the USS *Cole* bombing (see [Late October-Late November 2000](#) and [November 22-December 16, 2000](#)). The CIA knows that both bin Attash and "Salah Saeed Mohammed bin Yousaf" were in Malaysia with 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi in January 2000 (see January 5-8, 2000, [January 8, 2000](#), and [January 4, 2001](#)). Furthermore, the CIA has a photo of bin Attash provided by the Yemeni government, and surveillance photos and video of bin Attash with Alhazmi and Almihdhar at an al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia (see [January 6-9, 2000](#) and January 5, 2000). And when bin Attash applied for a US visa, he used the "bin Yousaf" alias (see [April 3, 1999](#)), so presumably a comparison of his photo from that application with other

photos would reveal that “bin Yousaf” and bin Attash are one and the same person. However, apparently no check is made for any US visa of “bin Yousaf,” even after he is watchlisted to prevent him from coming into the US, which would require a visa. Had a check been made, it would have been discovered that he applied for a visa at the same time as both Almihdhar and Alhazmi (see [April 3-7, 1999](#)), the very people who have been watchlisted together with him. Presumably, discovering that Alhazmi and Almihdhar had applied for US visas with one of the *Cole* masterminds would have greatly increased the urgency of finding them. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 538](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 248, 300-3](#)) The US missed other opportunities to learn more about this alias (see [After January 8, 2000](#) and [After December 16, 2000](#)).

(Shortly After August 23, 2001): Top FBI Official Possibly Notified of Search for Hijacker Almihdhar

After 9/11, no clear evidence that any of the FBI’s top managers are informed of the search for hijacker Khalid Almihdhar will be uncovered and the 9/11 Commission will comment, “It appears that no one informed higher levels of management in either the FBI or CIA about the case.” However, the Commission will also note that “one witness recalls a discussion with a senior FBI official, that official denies that a discussion took place. The other alleged participant does not recall such a meeting.” The list of sources that follows this passage indicates that the senior official is International Terrorism Operations Section chief Michael Rolince, who is also informed of the Moussaoui case around this time, but will attempt to play down his knowledge of it (see [Late August 2001](#) and [March 21, 2006](#)), and the other participants are two of the following: FBI headquarters agent Dina Corsi, CIA officer Tom Wilshire, and acting head of the FBI’s bin Laden unit Rod Middleton. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 270, 538](#))

August 25, 2001: Bin Laden Publicly Hints at Attack on US

Bin Laden gives an interview to Middle Eastern television. According to ABC News, “When asked about his supporters, he says with a significant and knowing smile there is going to be a surprise to the United States.” ([ABC News 9/14/2001](#))

August 25, 2001: 9/11 Facilitator Obtains Credit Card for KSM

A supplemental Visa credit card on a “Mustafa al-Hawsawi” bank account is issued in the name of Abdulrahman A. A. al-Ghamdi, which the FBI says is an alias for Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM). The FBI believes this helps prove KSM is a superior to 9/11 facilitator al-Hawsawi (see [July 23, 2001](#)). ([Hedges 6/5/2002](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#))

Late August-Early September 2001: Hijacker Atta Receives Money from Egypt

Mohamed Atta receives two wire transfers from Egypt through a small Florida money-wiring business. ([Cohen 10/1/2001](#)) These transfers are not mentioned by the 9/11 Commission. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004](#) ³) Atta, an Egyptian, was in contact with his family in Cairo, Egypt, about once a month while he was in the US, although his father subsequently claimed not to know he was there (see [September 19, 2001](#)). Atta celebrates his birthday roughly around this time, on August 27 (8 Jumada al-Thani 1388 A.H.) or September 1, depending on whether he was going by the Muslim or Western calendar. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria District 7/31/2006](#) ³; [Rabiah \(.com\) 12/3/2006](#))

Late August-Early September 2001: FBI Fails to Ask Failed Millennium Bomber to Identify Moussaoui

The FBI fails to ask Ahmed Ressam, an al-Qaeda operative arrested during the Millennium alert (see [December 14, 1999](#)), whether he can identify Zacarias Moussaoui. Agents in Seattle holding Ressam receive a general notification about the Moussaoui case, but it lacks urgency and they do not follow up on it with Ressam (see [September 4, 2001](#)). When asked shortly after 9/11, Ressam will say he recognizes Moussaoui from al-Qaeda's training camps in Afghanistan. The 9/11 Commission will conclude that had Ressam been shown photos of Moussaoui and identified him before 9/11, the FBI would have been able to search his belongings. The belongings contain enough information to potentially prevent 9/11 (see August 16, 2001). The FBI also fails to ask Ressam whether he recognizes Khalid Almihdhar at this time, although Ressam has never met Almihdhar and will not identify him after 9/11 (see [August 21, 2001](#)). ([Sunday Times \(London\) 2/3/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 275-6, 541)

August 25-27, 2001: Alhazmi and Almihdhar Buy 9/11 Plane Tickets Despite Presence on Watch List

Hijacker Khalid Almihdhar buys his 9/11 plane ticket on-line using a credit card; hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi does the same two days later (see [August 25-September 5, 2001](#)). Both men were put on a terrorist watch list on August 23 (see August 23, 2001), but the watch list only means they will be stopped if trying to enter or leave the US. There is another watch list that applies to domestic flights that some of their associates are on, but they are only placed on the international watch list (see [April 24, 2000](#)). Procedures are in place for law enforcement agencies to share watch list information with airlines and airports and such sharing is common, but the FAA and the airlines are not notified about this case, so the purchases raise no red flags. ([Lichtblau 9/20/2001](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) An official later states that had the FAA been properly warned, "they should have been picked up in the reservation process." ([Washington Post 10/2/2002](#))

August 25-September 5, 2001: Hijackers Spend Over \$30,000 on 9/11 Tickets

All the hijackers book their flights for 9/11, using their apparent real names. The total cost of the tickets is in excess of \$30,000:

- August 25: Khalid Almihdhar, who was watchlisted two days previously (see August 23, 2001), and Majed Moqed book tickets for American Airlines flight 77 using the AA.com website. They are collected from the American Airlines ticket counter at Baltimore Washington International Airport on September 5. The tickets were not mailed, because the shipping address did not match the credit card address. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 72, 74](#).)
- August 26: Wail Alshehri buys a ticket for American Airlines flight 11 over the phone with his debit card. His brother Waleed buys a ticket for the same flight at the AA.com website using his debit card. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#).; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 72](#).)
- August 27: Nawaf Alhazmi, who was watchlisted four days before (see August 23, 2001), buys tickets for himself and his brother Salem for American Airlines flight 77 through Travelocity from a Kinkos computer in Laurel, Maryland, using his debit card. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#).; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 72](#).)
- August 27: Saeed Alghamdi uses his debit card to purchase tickets for United Airlines flight 93 for himself and Ahmed Alnami from the UA.com website. The tickets are not paid for until September 5, 2001, due to a problem with the debit card. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 72](#).)
- August 27: Fayez Ahmed Banihammad uses his visa card to purchase tickets for himself and Mohamed Alshehri for United Airlines flight 175 over the telephone. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 72-73](#).; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#).)
- August 28: Mohamed Atta uses his debit card to buy tickets for American Airlines flight 11 for himself and Abdulaziz Alomari from the AA.com website. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#).)
- August 28: Waleed Alshehri purchases a ticket for Satam al-Suqami for American Airlines flight 11 in person from the company's counter at Fort Lauderdale Airport. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 73](#).)
- August 28: Marwan Alshehhi purchases a ticket for United Airlines flight 175 from the company's counter at Miami International Airport. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#).; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 73](#).)
- August 29: Hamza Alghamdi books tickets for himself and Ahmed Alghamdi for United Airlines flight 175 from the UA.com website. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#).)
- August 29: Ahmed Alhaznami creates a new e-mail account and Travelocity.com

account and uses them to book a ticket for himself on United Airlines flight 93. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 74](#))

■August 30: Ziad Jarrah purchases a ticket for himself for United Airlines flight 93 from the UA website. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))

■August 31: Hani Hanjour purchases a ticket for American Airlines flight 77 from ATS Advanced Travel Services in Totowa, New Jersey, paying in cash. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))

At least five tickets are one way only. ([Getter, Serrano, and Williams 9/18/2001](#)) There are numerous connections between the hijackers booked on the four flights by this point:

■Hijackers on different 9/11 flights arrived in the US on the same plane. For example, Salem Alhazmi (Flight 77) arrived with Abdulaziz Alomari (Flight 11), and Fayez Ahmed Banihammad (Flight 175) arrived with Saeed Alghamdi (Flight 93) (see [April 23-June 29, 2001](#));

■Two of the pilots, Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi, train and live together, and have a joint bank account (see [Mid-July 2000 - Early January 2001](#)), [July 6-December 19, 2000](#), and [June 28-July 7, 2000](#));

■Hijackers from different planes open bank accounts together (see [May 1-July 18, 2001](#) and [June 27-August 23, 2001](#)); and

■The hijackers obtain identity documents together (see [April 12-September 7, 2001](#) and [August 1-2, 2001](#)).

Six hijackers also provide the same phone number and three use the same address. ([Morgan, Kidwell, and Corral 9/22/2001](#))

August 27, 2001: Spanish Police Tape Phone Calls Indicating Aviation-Based Plans to Attack US



Farid Hilali, a.k.a. Shakur. [*Source: Reuters*]/Spanish police tape a series of cryptic, coded phone calls from a caller in Britain using the codename “Shakur” to Barakat Yarkas (also known as Abu Dahdah), the leader of a Spanish al-Qaeda cell presumably visited by Mohamed Atta in July. A Spanish judge will claim that a call by a man using the alias “Shakur” on this day shows foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks. “Shakur” says that he is “giving classes” and that “in our classes, we have entered the field of aviation, and we have even cut the bird’s throat.” Another possible

translation is, “We are even going to cut the eagle’s throat,” which would be a clearer metaphor for the US. ([Harris 11/25/2001](#); [Gillan et al. 2/14/2002](#)) Spanish authorities later claim that detective work and voice analysis shows “Shakur” is Farid Hilali, a young Moroccan who had lived mostly in Britain since 1987. The Spanish later will charge him for involvement in the 9/11 plot, claiming that, in the 45 days preceding 9/11, he travels constantly in airplanes “to analyse them and to be prepared for action.” It will be claimed that he is training on aircraft in the days leading up to 9/11. It will further be said that he is connected to the Madrid train bombing in 2003. ([Kennedy, Ford, and Tendler 6/30/2004](#); [Hurst 7/15/2004](#); [Kennedy 7/16/2004](#)) The Spanish Islamic militant cell led by Yarkas is allegedly a hub of financing, recruitment, and support services for al-Qaeda in Europe. Yarkas’s phone number will later also be found in the address book of Said Bahaji, and he had ties with Mohammed Haydar Zammar and Mamoun Darkazanli. All three are associates of Atta in Hamburg. ([Rotella 11/23/2001](#)) Yarkas also “reportedly met with bin Laden twice and was in close contact with” top deputy Muhammad Atef. ([Finn and Rolfe 11/19/2001](#)) On November 11, 2001, Yarkas and ten other Spaniards will be arrested and charged with al-Qaeda activity. ([Dillon 11/21/2001](#))

August 27, 2001: INS Given Non-Urgent Request to Determine Visa Status of Alhazmi and Almihdhar

The FBI contacts the State Department and the INS to determine the visa status of recently watch listed hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar. Almihdhar’s visa obtained in June is revoked the same day; Alhazmi’s visa has already expired and he is in the country illegally. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) However neither agency is asked “to assist in locating the individuals, nor was any other information provided [that] would have indicated either a high priority or imminent danger.” An INS official later states, “if [the INS] had been asked to locate the two suspected terrorists... in late August on an urgent, emergency basis, it would have been able to run those names through its extensive database system and might have been able to locate them.” The State Department says that “it might have been able to locate the two suspected terrorists if it had been asked to do so.” ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#))

August 27, 2001: Conflict between Minneapolis and FBI Headquarters Comes into the Open

FBI agents at the bureau’s Minneapolis field office have been arguing with the FBI’s Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) over whether there is sufficient evidence to secure a warrant to search Zacarias Moussaoui’s belongings (see [August 20-September 11, 2001](#)). The tensions surface in a call between Minneapolis agent Greg Jones and Supervisory Special Agent Mike Maltbie. This is a partial reconstruction of the conversation based on Jones’ notes: Maltbie: “What you have done is couched [the request] in such a way that people get spun up.” Jones: “Good. We want to make sure he doesn’t get control of an airplane and crash it into the [World Trade Center] or something like that.” Maltbie: “[T]hat’ not going to happen. We don’t know he’s a terrorist. You don’t have enough to

show he is a terrorist. You have a guy interested in this type of aircraft—that is it.” Jones also asks whether the warrant request has been shown to Section Chief Michael Rolince yet, and Maltbie replies it has not. ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 153-5](#); [US Department of Justice 3/1/2006](#).) Another Minneapolis agent, Harry Samit, also contacts Maltbie and expresses his frustration with RFU’s position that they do not have enough evidence. In an interview with the Department of Justice’s Office of Inspector General he recalls telling Maltbie: “... if you’re not going to advance this the FISA route, or if you don’t believe we have enough for a FISA, I shudder to think—and that’s all I got out. And [Maltbie] cut me off and said, ‘You will not question the unit chief and you will not question me. We’ve been through a lot. We know what’s going on. You will not question us.’ And that could be the mantra for FBI supervisors.” ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 155](#).)

August 27, 2001: Minneapolis Chief Calls FBI Headquarters to Discuss Moussaoui

Harry Samit and Greg Jones, agents at the FBI’s Minneapolis field office investigating Zacarias Moussaoui, are having some problems with Mike Maltbie, a supervisory special agent at FBI headquarters’ Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) (see [August 20-September 11, 2001](#)). They ask their boss to call RFU head Dave Frasca to “find out what [Maltbie]’s problem [is].” Jones and his boss place the call. According to Jones, when the call starts, Frasca is “immediately defensive” and asks Maltbie to join the call. Jones’ notes indicate that he asks what is going to happen if “they won’t let us go criminal” and there is not enough information for a warrant under FISA. Jones asks what will happen if Moussaoui cannot be connected to a known group. The answer recorded in his notes is “That isn’t something for you to worry about.” However, Frasca will state he never said this. Maltbie’s performance—the original reason for the call—is apparently not discussed. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 155-8](#); [US Department of Justice 3/1/2006](#).)

August 27, 2001: Saudis Threaten to End Their Alliance with US

Crown Prince Abdullah, the effective leader of Saudi Arabia, is upset with US policy over Israel and Palestine and threatens to break the Saudi alliance with the US. He has Prince Bandar, Saudi ambassador to the US, personally deliver a message to President Bush on August 27. Bandar says, “This is the most difficult message I have had to convey to you that I have ever conveyed between the two governments since I started working here in Washington in 1982.” He brings up a number of issues, including the complaint that since Bush became president US policy has tilted towards Israel so much that the US has allowed Israeli Prime Minister Sharon to “determine everything in the Middle East.” The message concludes, “Therefore the Crown Prince will not communicate in any form, type or shape with you, and Saudi Arabia will take all its political, economic and security decisions based on how it sees its own interest in the region without taking into account

American interests anymore because it is obvious that the United States has taken a strategic decision adopting Sharon's policy." Bush seems shocked and replies, "I want to assure you that the United States did not make any strategic decision." Secretary of State Powell later confronts Bandar and says, "What the fuck are you doing? You're putting the fear of God in everybody here. You scared the shit out of everybody." Bandar reportedly replies, "I don't give a damn what you feel. We are scared ourselves." Two days later, Bush replies with a message designed to appease the Saudi concerns (see [August 29-September 6, 2001](#)). ([Woodward 2006, pp. 77-79](#))

August 27-31, 2001: Power Failure at Washington Medical Center Helps Prepare 9/11 Response



Walter Reed Army Medical Center. [Source: *US Army*] The Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) in Washington, DC suffers a four-day power loss following an electrical transformer fire on August 27. Backup generators ensure patient care is minimally affected, but as a precaution 77 of the hospital's roughly 100 patients are moved to other facilities until it regains full power. Most go to the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) in Bethesda. According to Capt. Tom Sizemore, the acting commander of the NNMC, precautionary measures are necessary due to the size of the patient transfer. So on August 28 he sets the hospital into a mass casualty condition. Usually such a condition is only set in response to a major incident with many seriously injured people. Sizemore says, "This most unfortunate opportunity has provided NNMC with a very special opportunity. We were able to exercise our response system, with real patients, but (thank God) not with patients involved in some mass disaster." ([Little 8/31/2001](#); [Maurer 9/6/2001](#); [Coultas 9/6/2001](#); [Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 146](#)) Walter Reed is about six miles from the Pentagon, and its ambulance teams will respond to the attack there on September 11. Many believe that coping with the power failure helps prepare them for this. One member of staff later says, "A lot of the procedures that we used in the September 11 tragedy, we had just come out of this power loss where we had implemented a lot of what we did. We had good procedures in place that we had already just executed. It was really eerie." ([Domrose 9/17/2001](#); [Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 145-146](#)) A similar incident also occurs around this time at DeWitt Army Community Hospital at Fort Belvoir, an army base roughly 12 miles south of the Pentagon. The details of this are unspecified. ([Dunn 9/20/2001](#)) Ambulance teams from DeWitt will also be involved in the emergency response to the Pentagon attack. ([Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. i](#))

[August 27-September 1, 2001: Hijackers Stay at Maryland Motel at Different Times](#)



The Pin-Del Motel. [Source: Michael Springer / Zuma Press] On August 27, Flight 93 hijacker Ziad Jarrah checks into the Pin-Del, a budget motel in Laurel, Maryland. Giving a Florida address and driver's license number, he pays for three nights with a Visa card, but leaves the following evening. ([Manning 9/19/2001](#); [Masters, Smith, and Shear 9/19/2001](#)) Days later, Nawaf Alhazmi spends the night of September 1 at the same motel. He uses a New York driver's license as identification, which gives his address as a Manhattan hotel. But the records of this hotel later will show he never stayed there, and his driver's license will also be found to be a fake. On September 2, he joins the other Flight 77 hijackers at another motel, about a mile from the Pin-Del (See [August 23-September 10, 2001](#)). Jarrah is apparently never seen with any of the other hijackers while in the US. ([Manning 9/19/2001](#); [Riley and Perlman 9/21/2001](#))

[August 27-28, 2001: NSA Approves Passage of Key Information about Almihdhar to Cole Investigators, but FBI Headquarters Continues to Withhold It](#)

The NSA's representative to the FBI asks the NSA for permission to pass intelligence information about hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi to FBI criminal agents investigating the bombing of the USS *Cole* and permission is granted the same day, but FBI headquarters does not forward this information to the *Cole* investigators. The request is made on behalf of FBI headquarters agent Dina Corsi, but Corsi does not want the agents to launch a criminal investigation to find Almihdhar in the US—she believes the information will be useful to them because of Almihdhar's connection to the *Cole* bombing. The information identifies Almihdhar as an "Islamic extremist" and says that he traveled to Kuala Lumpur, where he met an associate named Nawaf (see January 5-8, 2000). This links Almihdhar to the *Cole* bombing because the FBI thinks one of the bombers, Fahad al-Quso, may have traveled to Kuala Lumpur at the same time as Almihdhar. Although the 9/11 Commission will say that Corsi "had permission to share the information" with the *Cole* investigators, she apparently does not do so, even though

it is clear from conversations they have around this time that they want it (see [August 28, 2001](#), and [August 28, 2001](#), [August 28-29, 2001](#), and [August 29, 2001](#)). (9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 271, 539; US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 276-7, 283, 286, 294, 304; US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006.)

August 28, 2001: CIA Fails to Connect KSM, Bin Al-Shibh, and Moussaoui

In April 2001, the CIA analyzed some “intriguing information associated with a person known as ‘Mukhtar.’” The CIA didn’t know who this was at the time, only that he was associated with top al-Qaeda deputy Abu Zubaida and that he seemed to be involved in planning al-Qaeda activities. On August 28, 2001, the CIA receives a cable reporting that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) has the nickname of Mukhtar (which means “brain” in Arabic). However, apparently no one at the CIA’s bin Laden unit makes the connection between this new information and the April 2001 information. The 9/11 Commission writes, “Only after 9/11 would it be discovered that Mukhtar/KSM had communicated with a phone that was used by [Ramzi] bin al-Shibh, and that bin al-Shibh had used the same phone to communicate with [Zacarias] Moussaoui [who is in US custody by this time.]” (US Congress 7/24/2003, pp. 322; 9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 277)

August 28, 2001: Edits to Moussaoui Warrant Request ‘Set It Up for Failure’

The FBI’s Minneapolis field office has submitted a memorandum to the Radical Fundamental Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters for a search warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) for Zacarias Moussaoui’s belongings (see [August 23-27, 2001](#)). Before it is submitted, RFU agent Mike Maltbie makes several alterations to the memo. In particular, he deletes a key section saying that a CIA officer had described Chechen rebel leader Ibn Khattab, to whom Moussaoui was connected, as an associate of bin Laden. He deletes this even though the FBI was recently warned that bin Laden and Ibn Khattab may be working together on attacks against US interests (see [Before April 13, 2001](#)). However, Minneapolis FBI agent Greg Jones objects in a lengthy e-mail that “we are setting this up for failure if we don’t have the foreign power connection firmly established for the initial review.” Jones also complains about other changes made by Maltbie, including:

- Maltbie changes a statement about Moussaoui “preparing himself to fight” to one saying he and an associate “train together in defensive tactics.”
- Maltbie changes the sentence, “Moussaoui was unable to give a convincing explanation for his paying \$8300 for 747-400 training,” to “Moussaoui would give an explanation for his paying \$8300 in cash for 747-700 flight simulation training.”
- Maltbie changes a statement that Moussaoui has no convincing explanation for the large sums of money he had to “Moussaoui would not explain the large sums of money known to have been in his possession.”

Maltbie responds by saying that they will attempt to put something together for the foreign power requirement and by changing some, but not all of the sections Jones complains about. However, Minneapolis is still unhappy and the Department of Justice's Office of Inspector General will state that after Jones' complaints are taken into consideration the memo is only "slightly less persuasive." The key section about Chechnya is not reinstated, but Moussaoui's links to Chechnya are discussed at the relevant meeting with an attorney about the request (see [August 28, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 161-4, 209-211](#))

August 28, 2001: Atta Buys Flight Ticket Despite Being Wanted by Police

Mohamed Atta is able to buy his flight ticket, despite having an arrest warrant for driving without a license and also having violated visa regulations (see [April 26, 2001](#)). He should have been wanted for abandoning a stalled aircraft in December 2000 as well (see [December 26, 2000](#)). ([Australian Broadcasting Corporation 11/12/2001](#))

Late August 2001: Moussaoui Case Mentioned to Head of FBI's International Terrorism Operations Section

Dave Frasca, head of the FBI's Radical Fundamentalism Unit (RFU), and Michael Rolince, the assistant director in charge of the FBI's International Terrorism Operations Section (ITOS), have at least two brief conversations about the Zacarias Moussaoui case. Moussaoui, suspected of having ties to Islamic militants, was arrested in mid-August (see [August 16, 2001](#)). Though it is not known what Frasca and Rolince talk about, it is possible their discussions concern complaints from the Minneapolis field office about how RFU is handling the case (see [August 27, 2001](#)). According to the 9/11 Commission, there is no evidence that this discussion ever reaches Assistant Director for Counterterrorism Dale Watson or Acting FBI Director Thomas Pickard. If this is true, the FBI's handling of the case is remarkably different than the approach taken in the CIA, where Director George Tenet is briefed repeatedly on the matter (see [August 23, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 275](#); [Sniffen 3/21/2006](#)) A warning that Osama bin Laden and Chechen rebel leader Ibn Khattab were planning a joint operation against the US was sent to Rolince earlier in the year (see [Before April 13, 2001](#)) and the FBI is aware that Moussaoui had recruited for the Chechen rebels (see [August 22, 2001](#)). Rolince will be involved in preparations for Moussaoui's deportation to France shortly before 9/11 (see [August 30-September 10, 2001](#)).

August 28, 2001: USS Cole Investigator Receives Almihdhar Memo, FBI Headquarters Forces Him to Delete It

Steve Bongardt, an FBI criminal agent investigating the bombing of the USS *Cole*, receives an e-mail from FBI headquarters asking the FBI's New York office to start looking for hijacker Khalid Almihdhar under an intelligence investigation, but is forced to delete it following an argument with headquarters. The e-mail was not addressed to Bongardt, but forwarded to him by a supervisor, possibly in error. However, Bongardt calls Dina Corsi, the headquarters agent who wrote the e-mail, and expresses his surprise at the information contained in it: "Dina, you got to be kidding me! Almihdhar is in the country?" He tells her the search should be conducted as a criminal investigation, not an intelligence investigation. Corsi incorrectly replies that the "wall" prevents the search from being carried out by criminal agents (see [Early 1980s](#) and [July 19, 1995](#)), as the investigation requires intelligence from the NSA that criminal agents cannot have, and she forces him to delete the e-mail from his computer (see [August 29, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 271](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 304](#); [Wright 2006, pp. 353](#))

August 28, 2001: FBI Headquarters Asks New York Office to Open Intelligence Investigation into Hijacker Almihdhar

FBI headquarters agent Dina Corsi asks the FBI's New York field office to open an intelligence investigation into hijacker Khalid Almihdhar and find him in the US. The documentation mentions Almihdhar's arrival in the US in July 2001 (see [July 4, 2001](#)), his previous travel to the US in January 2000 with Nawaf Alhazmi (see [January 15, 2000](#)), his attendance at al-Qaeda's Malaysia summit (see January 5-8, 2000), his association with an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)), and similarities between his travel and that of Fahad al-Quso, Ibrahim al-Thawar (a.k.a. Nibras), and Khallad bin Attash (see [January 8-15, 2000](#)), operatives involved in the bombing of the USS *Cole*. Corsi does not mention that the CIA knows bin Attash also attended the Malaysia summit, as this information has not officially been passed to the FBI yet. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 304](#))

August 28, 2001: *Cole* Agent Argues with FBI Headquarters Over Search for Hijacker Almihdhar

FBI New York agent Steve Bongardt, FBI headquarters agent Dina Corsi, and acting FBI Osama bin Laden unit head Rod Middleton, who is Corsi's supervisor, discuss whether the search for hijacker Khalid Almihdhar should be an intelligence or criminal investigation. Bongardt argues that the search should be a criminal investigation because of Almihdhar's connection to the bombing of the USS *Cole* and because more agents could be assigned to a criminal investigation (note: the office only has one rookie intelligence agent available). He also says a criminal investigation would have better tools, such as grand jury subpoenas, which are faster and easier to obtain than the tools in an intelligence investigation. Corsi and Middleton say that the "wall" prevents the intelligence information necessary for the case being shared with criminal investigators,

so the search must be an intelligence investigation (note: Corsi and Middleton are wrong (see [August 29, 2001](#))). Bongardt is unhappy with this and requests an opinion from the Justice Department's National Security Law Unit (see [August 28-29, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 307](#) ²)

(August 28, 2001): FBI Supervisor Says Search for Almihdhar Should Be Criminal, Not Intelligence Investigation

After learning that FBI headquarters wants the search for hijacker Khalid Almihdhar to be an intelligence investigation, FBI supervisor Jack Cloonan protests, saying a criminal investigation would be more appropriate. Cloonan, an agent on the I-49 al-Qaeda squad at the FBI's New York office, says that the search should be conducted by criminal agents, as they would have more freedom and resources, due to an existing indictment of Osama bin Laden. Other agents on the squad make the same argument (see [August 23, 2001](#) and [August 28, 2001](#)). However, in the end the search will be conducted as an intelligence investigation, but will not find Almihdhar before 9/11 as only one inexperienced agent will be assigned to it (see [August 29, 2001](#)). ([Wright 2006, pp. 353](#))

August 28-30, 2001: US Politicians Visit Pakistan and Discuss Bin Laden

Senator Bob Graham (D), Representative Porter Goss (R), and Senator Jon Kyl (R) travel to Pakistan and meet with President Pervez Musharraf. They reportedly discuss various security issues, including the possible extradition of bin Laden. They also meet with Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan. Zaeef apparently tells them that the Taliban wants to solve the issue of bin Laden through negotiations with the US. Pakistan says it wants to stay out of the bin Laden issue. ([Agence France-Presse 8/28/2001](#); [Tapper 9/14/2001](#))

August 28-29, 2001: FBI Headquarters Allegedly Misrepresents Attorney's Advice, Ensuring Search for Hijacker Almihdhar Is Intelligence Investigation

FBI headquarters agents Dina Corsi and Rod Middleton contact Justice Department lawyer Sherry Sabol to ask her opinion on the search for hijacker Khalid Almihdhar, but Sabol will later say that Corsi misrepresents her advice to other agents. Corsi contacts Sabol, an attorney at the National Security Law Unit, to ask her about legal restrictions on the search for Khalid Almihdhar, because of an argument she has had with New York agent Steve Bongardt about whether the search should be an intelligence or criminal investigation (see [August 28, 2001](#) and [August 28, 2001](#)). Corsi will later tell Bongardt that Sabol told her that the information needed for the investigation cannot be passed on

to criminal agents at the FBI, only intelligence agents, and that if Almihdhar is located a criminal agent cannot be present at an interview. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 307-8](#)) Corsi's understanding of the issue is wrong and the "wall", which restricted the passage of some intelligence information to criminal agents at the FBI, does not prevent the information in question being shared with criminal agents (see [August 29, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission will comment that Corsi "appears to have misunderstood the complex rules that could apply to the situation." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 271](#)) In addition, Sabol will later insist that her advice was very different than what Corsi claims it is. She will deny saying a criminal agent could not interview Almihdhar, arguing that she would not have given such inaccurate advice. She will also say the caveat on the intelligence information from the NSA would not have stopped criminal agents getting involved and, in any case, the NSA would have waived the caveat, if asked (note: the NSA did so at Corsi's request just one day earlier (see [August 27-28, 2001](#)), but presumably Corsi does not tell Sabol this). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 271](#)) Further, Corsi apparently does not tell Sabol that Almihdhar is in the US illegally. The illegal entry is a crime and means criminal FBI agents can search for him (see [August 29, 2001](#)).

August 28, 2001: Attorney Kills Moussaoui Warrant Request

Mike Maltbie and Rita Flack of the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) forward a request for a warrant to search Zacarias Moussaoui's belongings (see [August 21, 2001](#)) to National Security Law Unit chief Spike Bowman. The request was submitted by the Minneapolis field office (see [August 22-28, 2001](#)), which has been trying to obtain a warrant for some time. Earlier in the day, Maltbie edited the request, removing information connecting Moussaoui to al-Qaeda through a rebel group in Chechnya (see [August 28, 2001](#)). RFU chief Dave Frasca was to attend the meeting, but is called away at the last minute. According to Bowman, who is already very familiar with the facts in this case, Maltbie is adamant that there is not enough evidence to issue the warrant. Bowman agrees, saying that the evidence fails to implicate Moussaoui as an agent of a foreign power. The FBI thus abandons the effort to obtain a FISA warrant and begins planning his deportation (see [August 30-September 10, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 164-6, 168](#); [US Department of Justice 3/1/2006](#))

August 29, 2001: Cayman Islands Letter Warns of 'Major Terrorist Act Against US via an Airline or Airlines'

Three men from either Pakistan or Afghanistan living in the Cayman Islands are briefly arrested in June 2001 for discussing hijacking attacks in New York City (see [June 4, 2001](#)). On this day, a Cayman Islands radio station receives an unsigned letter claiming these same three men are agents of bin Laden. The anonymous author warns that they "are organizing a major terrorist act against the US via an airline or airlines." The letter is

forwarded to a Cayman government official but no action is taken until after 9/11. When the Cayman government notifies the US is unknown. Many criminals and/or businesses use the Cayman Islands as a safe, no tax, no-questions-asked haven to keep their money. The author of the letter will meet with the FBI shortly after 9/11, and will claim his information was a “premonition of sorts.” The three men will later be arrested. What has happened to them since their arrest is unclear. ([Whitefield 9/20/2001](#); [Serrano and Dahlburg 9/20/2001](#); [Hansen 9/23/2001](#))

August 29, 2001: Bush Vows Security Is His First Responsibility

President Bush says, “We recognize it’s a dangerous world. I know this nation still has enemies, and we cannot expect them to be idle. And that’s why security is my first responsibility. And I will not permit any course that leaves America undefended.” ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#))

August 29, 2001: FBI Wrongly Opens Intelligence Investigation to Find Almihdhar, Despite Protests that ‘Someday Somebody Will Die’ as a Result

The FBI opens an intelligence investigation to find hijacker Khalid Almihdhar, despite protests from the FBI New York field office that FBI headquarters has wrongly insisted on an intelligence investigation, when a criminal investigation would be more appropriate and have a better chance of finding him. The Justice Department’s office of inspector general will later conclude that “the designation of the Almihdhar matter as an intelligence investigation, as opposed to a criminal investigation, undermined the priority of any effort to locate Almihdhar.” Upon learning of the decision, Steve Bongardt, an investigator working on the USS *Cole* bombing, writes to headquarters agent Dina Corsi to express his frustration. He points out that she is unable to produce any solid documentary evidence to support her view of the “wall”, a mechanism that restricts the passage of some intelligence information to criminal agents at the FBI (see [Early 1980s](#) and [July 19, 1995](#)), and that her interpretation of the “wall” is at odds with the purpose for which it was established. He adds: “Whatever has happened to this—someday someone will die—and wall or not—the public will not understand why we were not more effective and throwing every resource we had at certain ‘problems.’ Let’s hope the [Justice Department’s] National Security Law Unit will stand behind their decisions then, especially since the biggest threat to us now, UBL [bin Laden], is getting the most ‘protection.’” ([US Congress 9/20/2002](#); [Firestone and Risen 9/21/2002](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 307-9](#); [Wright 7/10/2006](#)) Both the Justice Department’s office of inspector general and the 9/11 Commission will later back Bongardt and say the investigation should have been a criminal investigation, as the “wall” procedures did not apply. The inspector general will comment that Bongardt “was correct that the wall had been created to deal with the handling of only [Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act] information and that there was no legal barrier to a criminal agent being present for an

interview with Almihdhar if it occurred in the intelligence investigation.” ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 351](#)) The 9/11 Commission will remark that Corsi “misunderstood” the wall and that, “Simply put, there was no legal reason why the information [Corsi] possessed could not have been shared with [Bongardt].” It will conclude, “It is now clear that everyone involved was confused about the rules governing the sharing and use of information gathered in intelligence channels. Because Almihdhar was being sought for his possible connection to or knowledge of the Cole bombing, he could be investigated or tracked under the existing Cole criminal case. No new criminal case was needed for the criminal agent to begin searching for [him]. And as the NSA had approved the passage of its information to the criminal agent, he could have conducted a search using all available information. As a result of this confusion, the criminal agents who were knowledgeable about al-Qaeda and experienced with criminal investigative techniques, including finding suspects and possible criminal charges, were thus excluded from the search.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 271, 539](#))

August 29, 2001: Inexperienced FBI Agent Is Assigned to Search for Almihdhar

The FBI’s New York office opens a full field intelligence investigation to locate Khalid Almihdhar. New York FBI agent Robert Fuller, new to the International Terrorism Squad, is the only one assigned to the task. The New York office had been given a “heads up alert” about Almihdhar on August 23, but the search only begins after the FBI decides on August 28 to conduct an intelligence investigation instead of a criminal investigation (see [August 29, 2001](#)). Another agent had labeled the search request “routine”, meaning that Fuller has 30 days to find his target. However, Fuller will be busy with another matter and won’t begin work on finding Almihdhar until September 4 (see [September 4, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004](#))

August 29, 2001: Atta Tells Bin Al-Shibh Exact Date of Attack

In a later interview, would-be hijacker Ramzi bin al-Shibh claims that on this day Mohamed Atta calls him (he is in Germany at the time) from the US. Atta asks him what is “two sticks, a dash and a cake with a stick down?” The answer, which bin al-Shibh figures out, is “11-9” —the European and Arabic way of writing 9/11. ([Rubin and Dorgan 9/9/2002](#); [CBS News 10/9/2002](#)) Now knowing the date of the attack, bin al-Shibh later claims that he orders active cells in Europe, the US, and elsewhere to evacuate.

August 29, 2001: FBI Headquarters Not Concerned about Imam’s Reference to Moussaoui and Jihad

The Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters learns of a translated conversation (see [August 17, 2001](#)) between Zacarias Moussaoui’s roommate, Hussein

al-Attas, and an imam from a mosque in Norman, Oklahoma, in which the imam had said, "I heard you guys wanted to go on jihad." On this day, the FBI also learns about al-Attas's will, which states that "death is near" and that "those who participate in jihad can expect to see God." After receiving the information, RFU chief Dave Frasca replies in an e-mail, "The will is interesting. The jihad comment doesn't concern me by itself in that this word can mean many things in various [M]uslim cultures and is frequently taken out of context." However, a top Justice Department attorney who submits applications for warrants under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), will later say that "he would have tied bells and whistles" to the jihad comment in a FISA application. A later investigation by the Justice Department's Office of Inspector General will conclude that the comment was "significant" and "should have been given greater weight in considering whether there was probable cause to believe Moussaoui was connected to a terrorist group." ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 134, 167-8, 201](#); [US Department of Justice 3/1/2006](#))

August 29, 2001: FBI Does Not Fully Realize Hijacker Almihdhar Entered US Illegally

Although the FBI is aware that hijacker Khalid Almihdhar lied in an application for a visa on which he entered the US the previous month (see [July 4, 2001](#)), it does not fully realize that this means his entry into the US was illegal. If the FBI realized this, it would be able to open a criminal investigation to locate Almihdhar, instead of an intelligence investigation. The New York office, which conducts the search for him, would have preferred a criminal investigation, as more agents could have worked on it, possibly allowing the office to locate Almihdhar before and stop 9/11. The Justice Department's Office of Inspector General will remark after 9/11: "Thus, there was a clear basis to charge Almihdhar criminally with false statements or visa fraud. Significantly, this information had been provided to the FBI without the restrictive caveats placed on NSA reports and other intelligence information. As a result, if Almihdhar had been found, he could have been arrested and charged with a criminal violation based on the false statements on his visa application. However, the FBI did not seem to notice this when deciding whether to use criminal or intelligence resources to locate Almihdhar."

Almihdhar's passport also lacks an expiry date and he is a terrorist posing as a tourist (see [July 4, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 351](#))

August 29, 2001: CIA Officer Possibly Tells FBI Agent Search for Hijacker Almihdhar Must Be Intelligence Investigation

According to author Lawrence Wright, on this day there is a conference call between FBI field agent Steve Bongardt, FBI headquarters agent Dina Corsi, and a CIA supervisor at Alec Station, the CIA's bin Laden unit, who tells Bongardt to stand down in the search for hijacker Khalid Almihdhar. Corsi and Bongardt have been arguing over whether the search for Almihdhar in the US should be a criminal or intelligence investigation (see

[August 28, 2001](#) and [August 28, 2001](#)) and the CIA supervisor apparently sides with Corsi, saying the search should be an intelligence investigation, and Bongardt, a criminal agent, cannot be involved in it. Bongardt is angry with this and remarks, “If this guy [Almihdhar] is in the country, it’s not because he’s going to f___ing Disneyland!” ([Wright 2006, pp. 353-4](#)) However, there is no mention of this conversation in the 9/11 Commission report or the Justice Department’s report into the FBI’s performance before 9/11. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 271](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 306-7](#).) According to the Justice Department report, there was a similar conference call between Bongardt, Corsi, and her supervisor at the FBI around this time (see [August 28, 2001](#)). It is possible Wright is confusing the supervisor of the CIA’s bin Laden unit with the supervisor of the FBI’s bin Laden unit, meaning that the CIA supervisor is not involved in this argument.

After August 28, 2001: FBI Fails to Reconsider Seeking Criminal Warrant for Moussaoui

After the FBI decides not to seek a warrant to search Zacarias Moussaoui’s belongings under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) (see [August 28, 2001](#)), it fails to reconsider the possibility of applying for a criminal warrant. A criminal warrant was not sought initially, partially because if the warrant application were unsuccessful, it would adversely affect the chances of getting a FISA warrant (see [August 21, 2001](#)). Now that a FISA warrant is not to be sought, this potential consequence is irrelevant. Dave Frasca, head of the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters, will later say that he does not know why he, his subordinate Mike Maltbie, and the FBI’s Minneapolis field office do not bring this possibility up at this time, but will suggest that everybody probably forgot to raise the matter. Maltbie will say he does not think there is enough evidence for a warrant. Minneapolis personnel will say they do not bring the issue up because they do not think of it, are not in charge of the case, and the RFU has previously blocked this route. The Justice Department’s inspector general will say that the failure to reconsider obtaining a criminal search warrant is “puzzling” and “even more troubling” than the previous errors in the case’s handling, adding that it “also shows a troubling lack of initiative and acceptance of responsibility by FBI headquarters.” ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 168-9, 191-2](#).)

August 29-September 4, 2001: Minneapolis Memo to FAA Warning of Moussaoui Is Blocked by FBI Headquarters

Harry Samit, an agent at the FBI’s Minneapolis field office, drafts a memo to the FAA summarizing the facts of the Zacarias Moussaoui case. In it, he writes, “Minneapolis believes that Moussaoui, [his roommate Hussein] al-Attas, and others not yet known were engaged in preparing to seize a Boeing 747-400 in commission of a terrorist act. As Moussaoui denied requests for consent to search his belongings and was arrested before sufficient evidence of criminal activity was revealed, it is not known how far advanced

were his plans to do so.” He also mentions Moussaoui’s physical and marital arts training and expresses concern that France, where Moussaoui will soon be deported, may not be able to hold him or his property for long. But Mike Maltbie of the FBI’s Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) instructs the Minneapolis field office not to send the memo because he is also drafting a memo on the Moussaoui case that will be sent to the FAA and other agencies. However Maltbie’s memo lacks a threat assessment and does not mention Minneapolis’ suspicions that Moussaoui might be planning a terrorist act involving a hijacked airplane. The memo does not result in any FAA action. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 174-7](#); [Serrano 3/20/2006](#)) A meeting between Samit and a Minneapolis FAA officer will also fail to produce any FAA action (see [September 4, 2001](#)).

August 29-September 6, 2001: Bush Tries to Repair Relations with Saudis, But Policy Change Halted by 9/11 Attacks

The Bush administration attempts to repair its relation with Saudi Arabia after a dramatic letter from Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah. On August 27, 2001, Abdullah, the de facto leader of Saudi Arabia, sent a message to President Bush threatening to end the Saudi alliance with the US because of what they see as US favoritism towards Israel (see [August 27, 2001](#)). Two days later, Bush sends a two-page letter to Abdullah: “Let me make one thing clear up front: nothing should ever break the relationship between us. There has been no change in the strategic equation. I firmly believe the Palestinian people have a right to self-determination and to live peacefully and securely in their own state, in their own homeland, just as the Israelis have the right to live peacefully and safely in their own state.” Journalist Bob Woodward will later note that this “was a much bigger step than President Clinton had taken. Even as Clinton had tried to fashion a Middle East peace agreement as his legacy, he had never directly supported a separate Palestinian state.” On September 6, Abdullah replies, “Mr. President, it was a great relief to me to find in your letter a clear commitment confirming the principle in which the peace process was established. I was particularly pleased with your commitment to the right of the Palestinians to self-determination as well as the right to peace without humiliation, within their independent state.” The Saudis appear appeased. ([Woodward 2006, pp. 77-79](#)) Also on September 6, Bush holds a meeting with his top advisers and suggests a change of policy towards Palestine, including public support for a separate Palestinian state. However, days before Bush is to announce these new policies, the 9/11 attacks take place. None of the planned US policy changes materialize (see [September 6, 2001](#)).

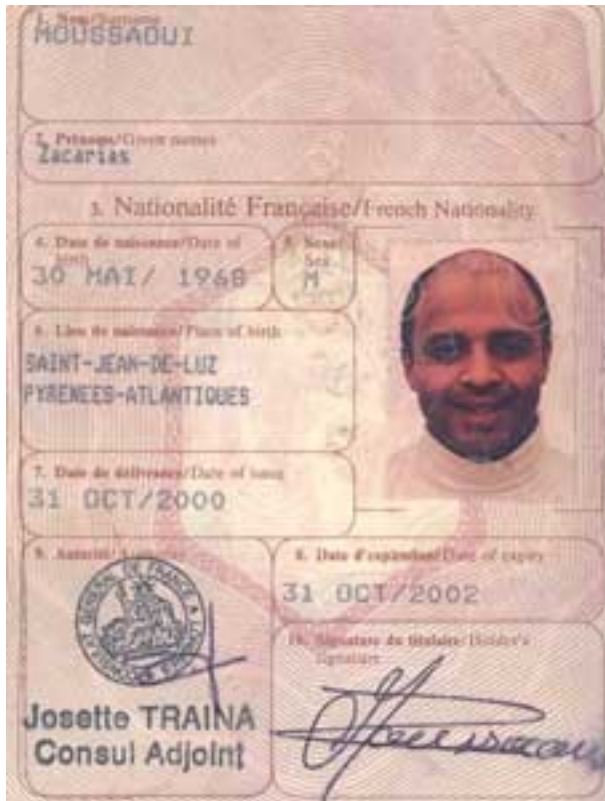
August 29, 2001 and shortly after: FBI Headquarters Rejects Plan to Place Undercover Officer in Moussaoui’s Cell

After failing to obtain a warrant to search Zacarias Moussaoui's belongings (see [August 28, 2001](#)), the FBI's Minneapolis field office considers inserting an Arabic speaking undercover officer into Moussaoui's cell "in an attempt to learn the name or description of the recognized foreign power with whom Moussaoui is aligned." Minneapolis sees no problem with the idea and contacts the Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) at FBI headquarters about it. RFU chief Dave Frasca replies, "Let us look into this asap. Do NOT go forward with the [undercover officer] until we weigh in..." Frasca then discusses the idea with an expert at the FBI's International Terrorism Operations Section, who says the proposal is "ridiculous" and should not be implemented. Frasca also tells Minneapolis the idea is problematic because in the event of criminal proceedings the undercover officer will not be in a position to testify. The plan is abandoned and the FBI continues with preparations to deport Moussaoui (see [August 30-September 10, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 166-7](#))

August 30, 2001: Bin Laden Reportedly Named Commander of Afghanistan Army

It is reported in Russia and Pakistan that the Taliban has named bin Laden commander of the Afghanistan army. ([United Press International 8/30/2001](#))

August 30, 2001: French Provide More Information about Moussaoui



The information sent by the French included a photocopy of this page of Moussaoui's French passport. [Source: FBI] French authorities provide the FBI's representative in Paris with additional information about Zacarias Moussaoui, and he forwards this information to the FBI's Minneapolis field office and headquarters (see [August 22, 2001](#) and [Late 1999-Late 2000](#)). The French say that according to an acquaintance of the suspected militant, Moussaoui is a radical Islamic fundamentalist who is potentially very dangerous. They warn that Moussaoui, who was radicalized at London's Finsbury Park mosque, is devoted to Wahabbism, the Saudi Arabian sect of Islam that is adhered to by bin Laden (see [1994](#)), and has traveled to Kuwait, Turkey, and Afghanistan (see [1995-1998](#)). According to the French, the acquaintance also revealed that Moussaoui is a "strategist" and described him as "a cold stubborn man, capable of nurturing a plan over several months, or even years and of committing himself to this task in all elements of his life." The French also tell the FBI that they would be willing to have Moussaoui deported back to France. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 169-170](#); [Sniffen 3/20/2006](#)) Describing the French report to the FBI, a French justice official later says that France "gave the FBI 'everything we had'" on Moussaoui, "enough to make you want to check this guy out every way you can. Anyone paying attention would have seen he was not only operational in the militant Islamist world but had some autonomy and authority as well." ([Ratnesar and Weisskopf 5/27/2002](#)) And the French interior minister will similarly state, "We did not hold back any information." ([Ross and Scott 9/5/2002](#)) "Even a neophyte working in some remote corner of Florida, would have understood the threat based on what was sent," one senior French investigator later explains. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#)) The FBI decides (see [August 30-September 10, 2001](#)) to deport Moussaoui back to France. At a meeting in Paris several days later (see [September 5-6, 2001](#)), French authorities will again warn their US counterparts about Moussaoui and his connections.

August 30, 2001: CIA Officer Expresses Frustration at FBI's Inaction on Moussaoui, Predicts Suicide Hijacking in US

A CIA officer involved in the Moussaoui case contacts a fellow CIA officer assigned to the FBI and complains about the FBI's inability to obtain a warrant to search Zacarias Moussaoui's belongings, which contain enough information to potentially prevent 9/11 (see August 16, 2001). The officer writes: "Please excuse my obvious frustration in this case. I am highly concerned that this is not paid the amount of attention it deserves. I do not want to be responsible when [Moussaoui and his associate Hussein al-Attas] surface again as members of a suicide terrorist op... I want an answer from a named FBI group chief [note: presumably Dave Frasca, head of the FBI's Radical Fundamentalist Unit] for the record on these questions... several of which I have been asking since a week and a half ago. It is critical that the paper trail is established and clear. If this guy is let go, two years from now he will be talking to a control tower while aiming a 747 at the White House." One of these two CIA officers may be Tom Wilshire, who is involved in the Moussaoui case (see [August 24, 2001](#)). CIA director George Tenet will write, "This comment was particularly prescient because we later learned after 9/11 that Moussaoui had in fact asked Osama bin Laden for permission to be able to attack the White House." ([Tenet 2007, pp. 203](#)) Greg Jones, an FBI agent involved in the case, makes a similar prediction, but guesses that the target will be the World Trade Center, not the White House (see [August 27, 2001](#)).

August 30, 2001: CIA Finally Tells FBI Al-Qaeda Leader Met 9/11 Hijackers in Malaysia, but Information Is Withheld from Investigators

The CIA finally tells the FBI that al-Qaeda leader Khallad bin Attash attended an al-Qaeda summit in Malaysia in January 2000 with 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi (see January 5-8, 2000). The CIA monitored the meeting and has known that bin Attash attended for at least eight months (see [January 4, 2001](#)), but repeatedly failed to tell the FBI of this (see [Shortly Before February 1, 2001](#), [February 1, 2001](#), [Mid-May 2001](#), and [June 11, 2001](#)). The CIA will later say that it thought the FBI knew of the identification in January 2001 (see [January 5, 2001 and After](#)), but a CIA manager asked for permission to pass the information to the FBI in July 2001, implying he knew the FBI did not have the information (see [July 13, 2001](#)). The cable containing the information is for Rodney Middleton, acting head of the FBI's bin Laden unit, and also says that, if the FBI thinks it does not have all the photographs it needs of the Malaysia summit, it should ask the CIA for them. Middleton is aware that the FBI is investigating Almihdhar (see [August 29, 2001](#)), but there is no record of him or anyone else providing this information to either the agent investigating Almihdhar or the main investigation of the USS *Cole* bombing, which bin Attash commanded. The information was requested by FBI agent Dina Corsi and was passed through a CIA Counterterrorism Center representative to the

FBI, presumably Tom Wilshire. Although one of bin Attash's aliases was watchlisted one week before (see August 23, 2001), he is not watchlisted under his real name even at this point, meaning the commander of the USS *Cole* attack can enter the US under his own name as he pleases. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 298, 305, 310](#).)

August 30, 2001-September 4, 2001: Egypt Warns Al-Qaeda Is in Advanced Stages of Planning Significant Attack on US

According to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Egyptian intelligence warns American officials that bin Laden's network is in the advanced stages of executing a significant operation against an American target, probably within the US. ([Panossian 12/7/2001](#); [Tyler and MacFarquhar 6/4/2002](#)) He says he learned this information from an agent working inside al-Qaeda. US officials will deny receiving any such warning from Egypt. ([News 6/4/2002](#))

August 30-September 6, 2001: Oklahoma FBI Blows Second Moussaoui Lead

The FBI's Oklahoma City field office again fails to provide help with the Moussaoui investigation. They had been asked by colleagues in Minneapolis to investigate El Hadj Ndiaye, an associate of Moussaoui who knew Moussaoui wanted to go on jihad (see [August 17, 2001](#)). However, instead of interviewing the list of people Minneapolis wanted them to talk to, they just speak to one person. On September 6, Minneapolis agent Harry Samit notes that the interviewee seems to be close to Ndiaye and that he would "be willing to throw the Bureau off the trail" because of this closeness. The same field office had previously failed to make connections related to another lead in the investigation (see [August 23, 2001](#)). Samit also expresses his disappointment at their performance: "Oklahoma City continues to fall short of expectations... Anyway, we know for future reference how weak they are." ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#).)

(August 30-September 10, 2001): FBI Plans to Deport Moussaoui So Belongings Can Be Searched in France

Following the collapse of the FBI's attempts to search Zacarias Moussaoui's belongings (see [August 28, 2001](#)), the FBI begins working on a plan to deport him to France so his belongings can be searched there. The French ask that a law enforcement officer from the US accompany Moussaoui. The FBI's Minneapolis field office and the FBI's assistant legal attache in Paris ask that Minneapolis agent Harry Samit and an INS agent go to France with Moussaoui to brief the French and await the results of the search of his

belongings. Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU) chief Dave Frasca opposes this plan. Michael Rolince, head of the bureau's International Terrorism Operations Section, opposes it as well, later claiming that he thought Samit might try to obtain information from Moussaoui on the journey. For several days, Frasca and one of his subordinates, Mike Maltbie, continue to haggle with Minneapolis over whether Samit can accompany Moussaoui. But when the French and the assistant legal attache insist, they drop their objections. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 171-3](#)) Minneapolis is highly unsatisfied with this solution and would have preferred to obtain a warrant to search his belongings. Samit writes before 9/11 that deporting Moussaoui "was a distant third in my list of desired outcomes, but at this point I am so desperate to get into his computer I'll take anything." ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/10/2001](#)) Samit will later accuse the RFU of "criminal negligence" because they were trying to "run out the clock" and deport Moussaoui, instead of prosecuting him. ([Markon and Dwyer 3/21/2006](#)) The 9/11 attacks occur before the deportation can take place (see [September 11, 2001](#)).

Late August 2001: Bin Laden Boasts in Interview of 'Very, Very Big Attacks' Against US

In an interview with the London-based newspaper al-Quds al-Arabi, bin Laden boasts that he is planning an "unprecedented" strike against the US. Abdel-Bari Atwan, editor of the newspaper, will say, "Personally, we received information that he planned very, very big attacks against American interests. We received several warnings like this. We did not take it so seriously, preferring to see what would happen before reporting it." ([Ruppe 9/12/2001](#); [Gumbel 9/17/2001](#)) The Washington Post will similarly report just after 9/11, "Interviewed last month in the mountains of southern Afghanistan by a London-based Arab journalist, he boasted—without going into detail—that he and his followers were planning 'a very big one.'" ([Dobbs 9/13/2001](#)) Atwan's comment implies the warning is not published before 9/11. But Senator Diane Feinstein (D) will say shortly after 9/11, "Bin Laden's people had made statements three weeks ago carried in the Arab press in [Britain] that they were preparing to carry out unprecedented attacks in the US." ([Matier and Ross 9/14/2001](#))

Late August 2001: Hussein Puts His Troops on Highest Military Alert Since Gulf War

A Daily Telegraph article later claims that Iraq leader Saddam Hussein puts his troops on their highest military alert since the Gulf War. A CIA official states that there was nothing obvious to warrant this move: "He was clearly expecting a massive attack and it leads you to wonder why." Hussein apparently makes a number of other moves suggesting foreknowledge, and the article strongly suggests Iraqi complicity in the 9/11 attacks. ([Berry, Sherwell, and Wastell 9/23/2001](#)) Iraq will later be sued by 9/11 victims' relatives on the grounds that they had 9/11 foreknowledge but did not warn the US.

Late August 2001: French Warning to US Echoes Earlier Israeli Warning

French intelligence gives a general terrorist warning to the US; apparently, its contents echo an Israeli warning from earlier in the month (see [August 8-15, 2001](#)). ([Cameron 5/17/2002](#))

Late August 2001: Mystery Arab Rap Group Records CD about Terrorism

A mysterious Arab rap band records a CD, which includes songs apparently about upcoming terrorist attacks. The group, called the Arab Assassins, records its songs at the GHC Recording Studio in Sarasota, Florida. According to the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, their lyrics “range from generic references to Palestinian beliefs to verses that could be considered by some as a warning of what unfolded in New York City and Washington, DC” on 9/11. These refer to subjects such as bombings, New York, and fundamentalist Islamic martyrs. Lyrics include, “I know I’m going to die,” “I’m next on God’s list,” “Partners torn, transformed to martyrs,” “to turn wives into widows,” and “the US will remember this.” After 9/11, the recording studio’s owner Chris Musgrave will comment, “There are some weird coincidences here.” The rap group is made up of three brothers who claim to be from Brooklyn. Yet officials with the Recording Industry Association of America later say they have never heard of the Arab Assassins, and none of the large Internet music sites offer any recordings by them. After recording several songs at the studio, the Arab Assassins take six copies of their CD, and then leave a telephone number that is listed as disconnected. The day after 9/11, the local FBI will seize a copy of the CD from the studio, but offer no comments to the press on the band. ([Associated Press 9/13/2001](#); [Bayles 9/13/2001](#)) Some Middle Eastern men will be witnessed in Sarasota early in the morning of 9/11 acting suspiciously, though details of their identities are unknown (see [\(6:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) (see [\(8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Sullivan 9/26/2001](#))

Late August-September 10, 2001: WTC Security Raised, Then Scaled Back, in Weeks Before 9/11 Attack

The Independent reports that in late August, “security [is] abruptly heightened at the World Trade Center with the introduction of sniffer dogs and systematic checks on trucks bringing in deliveries. No explanation has been given for this measure.” ([Gumbel 9/17/2001](#)) Newsday claims that around the same time, security personnel at the WTC begin working extra-long shifts because of numerous phone threats. However, on September 6, bomb-sniffing dogs are abruptly removed. Security further drops right before 9/11. WTC guard Daria Coard says in an interview later on the day of 9/11: “Today was the first day there was not the extra security.” ([Taylor and Gardiner 9/12/2001](#))

Late August-Early December 2001: Fighters from Langley Air Force Base Deployed to Iceland for Operation Northern Guardian

In late August 2001, two-thirds of the 27th Fighter Squadron are sent overseas. Six of the squadron's fighters and 115 people go to Turkey to enforce the no-fly zone over northern Iraq as part of Operation Northern Watch. Another six fighters and 70 people are sent to Iceland to participate in "Operation Northern Guardian." The fighter groups will not return to Langley until early December. ([Frankenfield 7/1/2003](#)) (Note that the word "operation" specifies that Operation Northern Guardian and Northern Watch are not exercises, but actual military actions or missions. ([Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 4/23/1998](#) ³; [US Department of Defense 11/30/2004](#))) Operation Northern Guardian is based at Naval Air Station Keflavik, Iceland, the host command for the NATO base in that country. The US sometimes assists Iceland with extra military forces in reaction to Russian military maneuvers in the region. Approximately 1,800 US military personnel and 100 Defense Department civilians are involved. ([GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 4/9/2002](#); [Prichard 6/4/2004](#); [Iceland Defense Force 6/30/2004](#)) The 27th is one of three F-15 fighter squadrons that make up the 1st Fighter Wing, the "host unit" at Langley Air Force Base in Langley, Virginia. The other two are the 71st and 94th Fighter Squadrons. ([Langley Air Force Base 11/2003](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 8/2/2004](#)) Langley is one of two "alert" sites that can be called upon by NORAD for missions in the northeast region of the US. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Langley's 71st Fighter Squadron also participates in Operation Northern Watch and Operation Northern Guardian at some (unstated) time during 2001. ([Pevey 6/13/2002](#)) Whether this deployment of fighters diminishes Langley's ability to respond on 9/11 is unknown. However, Air Force units are cycled through deployments like operations Northern and Southern Watch by the Aerospace Expeditionary Force (AEF) Center, which is at Langley Air Force Base. ([Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 4/23/1998](#) ³; [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 4/26/2005](#)) And according to NORAD Commander Larry Arnold, "Prior to Sept. 11, we'd been unsuccessful in getting the AEF Center to be responsible for relieving our air defense units when they went overseas." ([Filson 2004, pp. 99](#))

August 31, 2001: US Watch List Calls Almihdhar 'Armed and Dangerous'

According to the 9/11 Commission, on this day "A new listing for [Khalid] Almihdhar was placed in an INS and Customs lookout database, describing him as 'armed and dangerous' and someone who must be referred to secondary inspection." However, this information will only first appear in a little-noticed Commission staff report released one month after the 9/11 Commission Final Report. It will not be explained who determined Almihdhar to be armed and dangerous or what information this was based on. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 31](#) ³) By September 5, 2001, the lookout database will be inexplicably changed and inspectors will be told not to detain Almihdhar after all (see [September 4-5, 2001](#)).

August 31, 2001: Head of Saudi Arabia's Intelligence Service Is Replaced

Prince Turki al-Faisal, head of Saudi Arabia's intelligence service for 24 years, is replaced. No explanation is given. He is replaced by Nawaf bin Abdul Aziz, his nephew and the king's brother, who has "no background in intelligence whatsoever." ([Agence France-Presse 8/31/2001](#); [Henderson 10/22/2001](#); [Seattle Times 10/29/2001](#)) The Wall Street Journal later reports: "The timing of Turki's removal—August 31—and his Taliban connection raise the question: Did the Saudi regime know that bin Laden was planning his attack against the US? The current view among Saudi-watchers is probably not, but that the House of Saud might have heard rumors that something was planned, although they did not know what or when. (An interesting and possibly significant detail: Prince Sultan, the defense minister, had been due to visit Japan in early September, but canceled his trip for no apparent reason less than two days before an alleged planned departure.)" ([Henderson 10/22/2001](#)) It will later come out that Turki's removal takes place during a time of great turmoil in the relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia, though it is not known if there is a connection (see [August 27, 2001](#), [August 29-September 6, 2001](#), and [September 6, 2001](#)). Turki is later sued in August 2002 for his role in 9/11 (see [August 15, 2002](#)), and is later appointed ambassador to Britain (see [October 18, 2002](#)) and then ambassador to the US (see [August 21, 2005](#)).

August 31, 2001: Transportation Department Holds Plane Hijacking Exercise

A tabletop exercise is held at the Department of Transportation (DOT) in Washington, DC, as part of its preparations for the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. According to Ellen Engleman, the administrator of the DOT's Research and Special Programs Administration, this is "actually much more than a tabletop" exercise, though she does not explain how. She will later recount, "During that exercise, part of the scenario, interestingly enough, involved a potentially hijacked plane and someone calling on a cell phone, among other aspects of the scenario that were very strange when twelve days later, as you know, we had the actual event [of 9/11]." ([Mineta Transportation Institute 10/30/2001, pp. 108](#)) Further details of this exercise are unknown. The DOT's Crisis Management Center will be heavily involved in the 9/11 crisis response, acting as a focal point for the transportation response to the attacks (see [9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

Late Summer 2001: American Airlines Develops New Crisis Plan, But Unable to Use it on 9/11

Some time shortly before 9/11, American Airlines revises its crisis communications plan. According to a PR Week magazine article shortly after 9/11, "Those charged with imagining worst-case scenarios laid out contingencies for plane crashes and 1978-style hijackings." However, "They never dreamed of terrorists turning two aircrafts into

weapons of mass destruction, of coordinating disaster communication with another airline in the same predicament, or of working in the shadows of the FBI.” Tim Doke, an American Airlines spokesman, later says, “We realized that nowhere in our plan did we contemplate such a circumstance” as what happened on 9/11. When the 9/11 attacks occur, American Airlines will have to abandon “its freshly minted crisis communications plan almost immediately... because the FBI rushed to American’s Command Center and made it clear who was in charge.” ([Green and Murphy 11/5/2001](#); [Feen 1/2003](#))

Around August 31, 2001: Saudi Intelligence Chief’s Replacement Reportedly Makes CIA Nervous about Almihdhar and Alhazmi

Following the resignation of Prince Turki as head of the Saudi General Intelligence Directorate (GID) (see [August 31, 2001](#)), the CIA becomes nervous about its protection of hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar, according to investigative reporters Joe and Susan Trento. A CIA officer will tell the two reporters that the CIA protected the two hijackers in the US because they were working for the GID, and the CIA did not realize they were loyal to Osama bin Laden, not the regime in Riyadh (see [August 6, 2003](#)). After Turki is replaced, the CIA apparently thinks: “Had Turki been forced out by more radical elements in the Saudi royal family? Had he quietly warned the CIA that he suspected the GID’s assurances about the penetration of al-Qaeda were not as reliable as thought previously? Had al-Qaeda penetrated GID?” This is said to be the reason the CIA allows the passage of more intelligence related to the two men to the FBI around this time (see [August 30, 2001](#)). ([Trento and Trento 2006, pp. 193](#)) However, the 9/11 Commission will not say Almihdhar and Alhazmi were assets of Saudi Arabia’s General Intelligence Directorate or that they were protected by the CIA. The 9/11 Congressional Inquiry will not say they were protected by the CIA. ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#) ²⁸; [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#))

Before September 11, 2001: FBI Squad Builds Antenna to Listen in on KSM’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 the phone calls of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM). The squad builds their own antenna in Madagascar specifically to intercept KSM’s calls. ([Wright 2006, pp. 344](#)) It has not been revealed when this antenna was built or what was learned from this surveillance. However, there have been media reports that the NSA monitored some phone calls between KSM and Mohamed Atta in the summer of 2001 (see [Summer 2001](#)). Further, US intelligence monitored a call between KSM and Atta a day before 9/11 that was the final go-ahead for the attacks (see [September 10, 2001](#)). So presumably the I-49 squad should have known about these calls as well if this antenna did what it was designed to do.

Early September 2001: NSA Intercepts Phone Calls from Al-Qaeda Leader Zubaida to the US

The NSA intercepts “multiple phone calls from Abu Zubaida, bin Laden’s chief of operations, to the United States.” The timing and information contained in these intercepted phone calls has not been disclosed. ([ABC News 2/18/2002](#)) In 2007, author and former CIA officer Robert Baer will comment that “apparently, when Abu Zubaida was captured, telephone records, including calls to the United States, were found in the house he was living in. The calls stopped on September 10, and resumed on September 16 (see [September 16, 2001 and After](#)). There’s nothing in the 9/11 Commission report about any of this, and I have no idea whether the leads were run down, the evidence lost or destroyed.” ([Baer 12/7/2007](#)) US intelligence had just been warned about a week earlier that Zubaida may be planning an attack on the US (see [August 24, 2001](#)). Zubaida’s exact position within al-Qaeda is disputed; he will be captured in 2002 (see [March 28, 2002](#)). It appears that a number of Western intelligence agencies were monitoring Zubaida’s calls since at least late 1998 (see [October 1998 and After](#)), and continue monitoring his calls in the weeks after 9/11 (see [October 8, 2001](#)).

Early September 2001: Defense Department Has Evidence of ‘Kamikaze Bombers’ Trained to Fly in Afghanistan



Sheik Omar Bakri Mohammed. [*Source: Matt Dunham/Reuters*] According to a senior Defense Department source quoted in the book “Intelligence Failure” by David Bossie, Defense Department personnel become aware of a Milan newspaper interview with Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed, a self-designated spokesman for al-Qaeda. In the interview, he brags about al-Qaeda recruiting “kamikaze bombers ready to die for Palestine.” Mohammed boasts of training them in Afghanistan. According to this source, the Defense Department seeks “to present its information [to the FBI], given the increased ‘chatter,’ of a possible attack in the United States just days before [9/11]. The earliest the FBI would see the [Defense Department] people who had the information was on September 12, 2001.” ([Bossie 5/2004](#)) In 1998, Bakri had

publicized a fax bin Laden sent him that listed the four objectives al-Qaeda had in their war with the US. First on the list was: “Bring down their airliners.” (see [Summer 1998](#)) The main focus of FBI agent Ken Williams’s July 2001 memo, warning about Middle Eastern students training in Arizona flight schools, was a member of Bakri’s organization (see [July 10, 2001](#)). In 2004, the US will charge Bakri with 11 terrorism-related crimes, including attempting to set up a terror training camp in Oregon and assisting in the kidnapping of two Americans and others in Yemen. ([MSNBC 5/27/2004](#))

Early September 2001: Phone Call Warning of Big Event in the US in Coming Days Is Just One of Many Such Warnings Recorded by CIA



Mamdouh Habib. [*Source: Public domain*] A few days before 9/11, an Islamic radical named Mamdouh Habib is in Pakistan and calls his wife in Australia. Her phone is being monitored by Australian intelligence. In the conversation he says that something big is going to happen in the US in the next few days. He will be arrested after 9/11 and held by the US in the Guantanamo prison before finally being released in 2005. He will be released because his captors eventually will decide that he did not have any special foreknowledge or involvement in the 9/11 plot. He had been in Afghanistan training camps and had picked up the information there. The New York Times will paraphrase an Australian official, “Just about everyone in Kandahar [Afghanistan] and the Qaeda camps knew that something big was coming, he said. ‘There was a buzz.’” ([Bonner 1/29/2005](#)) Furthermore, according to The Australian, this call “mirrored several other conversations between accused terrorists that were tapped around the same time by the Pakistani Internal Security Department on behalf of the CIA.” This was part of what the CIA called a sharp increase in “chatter” intercepted from operatives in al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the days just before the attacks, alluding to an imminent big event. ([Chulov 2/2/2005](#))

Early September 2001: Bin Laden’s Intercepted Phone Calls Discuss an Operation in the US Around 9/11 Date

According to British inside sources, “shortly before September 11,” bin Laden contacts an associate thought to be in Pakistan. The conversation refers to an incident that will

take place in the US on, or around 9/11, and discusses possible repercussions. In another conversation, bin Laden contacts an associate thought to be in Afghanistan. They discuss the scale and effect of a forthcoming operation; bin Laden praises his colleague for his part in the planning. Neither conversation specifically mentions the WTC or Pentagon, but investigators have no doubt the 9/11 attacks were being discussed. The British government has obliquely made reference to these intercepts: “There is evidence of a very specific nature relating to the guilt of bin Laden and his associates that is too sensitive to release.” These intercepts will not be made public in British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s presentation of al-Qaeda’s guilt because “releasing full details could compromise the source or method of the intercepts.” ([Sunday Times \(London\) 10/7/2001](#))

Early September 2001: Iranian Inmate in Germany Warns of Imminent Attack on WTC

An Iranian man known as Ali S. in a German jail awaiting deportation repeatedly phones US law enforcement to warn of an imminent attack on the WTC in early September. He calls it “an attack that will change the world.” After a month of badgering his prison guards, he is finally able to call the White House 14 times in the days before the attack. He then tries to send a fax to President Bush, but is denied permission hours before the 9/11 attacks. German police later confirm the calls. Prosecutors later will say Ali had no foreknowledge and his forebodings were just a strange coincidence. They will say he is mentally unstable. ([Deutsche Presse-Agentur \(Hamburg\) 9/13/2001](#); [Ananova 9/14/2001](#); [Mackay 9/16/2001](#); [Hunter 9/17/2001](#))

Early September 2001: Bin Laden Moves Training Bases

One article later suggests that bin Laden moves his training bases in Afghanistan “in the days before the attacks.” ([Bowden 9/16/2001](#)) These bases are under close military satellite surveillance.

Early September 2001: Seattle Security Guard Tells Friend of Impending Attack

A few days before 9/11, a Seattle security guard of Middle Eastern descent tells an East Coast friend on the phone that terrorists will soon attack the US. After 9/11, the friend tells the FBI, and passes a lie detector test. The security guard refuses to cooperate with the FBI or take a lie detector test. He is not arrested—apparently the FBI determines that while he may have had 9/11 foreknowledge, he was not involved in the plot. ([Skolnik 10/12/2001](#))

Early September 2001: New York Mosque Warning: Stay Out of Lower Manhattan on 9/11

Shortly before 9/11, people attending an unnamed mosque in the Bronx district of New York City are warned to stay out of lower Manhattan on 9/11. The FBI's Joint Terrorist Task Force interviews dozens of members of the mosque, who confirm the story. The mosque leadership denies any advanced knowledge and the case apparently remains unsolved. ([Smith 10/12/2001](#))

Early September 2001: Rumors in New York City's Arab-American Community About Attacks

A veteran detective involved with post-9/11 investigations later claims that rumors in New York City's Arab-American community about the 9/11 attacks are common in the days beforehand. The story "had been out on the street" and the number of leads turning up later is so "overwhelming" that it is difficult to tell who knows about the attacks from secondhand sources and who knows about it from someone who may have been a participant. After 9/11, tracking leads regarding Middle Eastern employees who did not show up for work on 9/11 are "a serious and major priority." ([Shapiro 10/11/2001](#))

Early September 2001: Pakistani Student Says WTC Towers 'Won't Be Here Next Week'



New Utrecht High School. [*Source: National Geographic*] At New Utrecht High School, in Brooklyn, New York City, about one week before 9/11, a Pakistani student in a bilingual class points at the WTC during a heated political argument and declares, "Look at those two buildings. They won't be here next week." The teacher notifies New York police after 9/11, who in turn notify the FBI. The status of the FBI investigation into this incident is unknown as of early October 2001. ([Smith 10/12/2001](#))

Early September 2001: NYSE Sees Unusually Heavy Trading in Airline and Related Stocks

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) later announces that they are investigating the trading of shares of 38 companies in the days just before 9/11. The San Francisco Chronicle reports that the New York Stock Exchange sees “unusually heavy trading in airline and related stocks several days before the attacks.” All 38 companies logically stand to be heavily affected by the attacks. They include parent companies of major airlines American, Continental, Delta, Northwest, Southwest, United, and US Airways as well as cruise lines Carnival and Royal Caribbean, aircraft maker Boeing and defense contractor Lockheed Martin. The SEC is also looking into suspicious short selling of numerous insurance company stocks, but, to date, no details of this investigation have been released. ([Gordon 10/2/2001](#); [San Francisco Chronicle 10/3/2001](#))

Early September 2001: Sharp Increase in Short Selling of American and United Airlines Stocks

There is a sharp increase in the short selling of American and United Airlines stocks on the New York Stock Exchange prior to 9/11. A short sell is a bet that a particular stock will drop. Short selling increases 40 percent over the previous month for these two airlines, compared to an 11 percent increase for other big airlines and one percent for the exchange overall. United’s stock will drop 43 percent and American 39 percent the first day the market reopens after the attack. ([Jacobs and Atkins 9/20/2001](#); [Berthelsen 9/22/2001](#)) There is also a short spike in the short interest in Dutch airline KLM three to seven days before 9/11, reaching historically unprecedented levels. ([Farrell 9/26/2001](#))

Early September 2001: Almost Irrefutable Proof of Insider Trading in Germany



Ernst Welteke. *[Source: Publicity photo]* German central bank president Ernst Welteke later reports that a study by his bank indicates, “There are ever clearer signs that there were activities on international financial markets that must have been carried out with the necessary expert knowledge,” not only in shares of heavily affected industries such as airlines and insurance companies, but also in gold and oil. ([Sherwell 9/23/2001](#)) His researchers have found “almost irrefutable proof of insider trading.” ([Rosenberg 9/24/2001](#)) “If you look at movements in markets before and after the attack, it makes your brow furrow. But it is extremely difficult to really verify it.” Nevertheless, he believes that “in one or the other case it will be possible to pinpoint the source.” ([Fox News 9/22/2001](#)) Welteke reports “a fundamentally inexplicable rise” in oil prices before the attacks ([Rosenberg 9/24/2001](#)) and then a further rise of 13 percent the day after the attacks. Gold rises nonstop for days after the attacks. ([Sherwell 9/23/2001](#))

Early September 2001: Suspicion of Insider Trading in Many Other Countries

Numerous other overseas investigations into insider trading before 9/11 are later established. There are investigations in Belgium, France, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Monte Carlo, Cyprus, and other countries. There are particularly strong suspicions British markets are manipulated. Italy will later investigate suspicious share movements on the day of the attack, as well as the previous day. Japan will also look into the trading of futures contracts. ([BBC 9/18/2001](#); [Fox News 9/22/2001](#); [Bogdanowicz and Jackson 9/24/2001](#)) The British will take just two weeks to conclude that their markets were not manipulated. ([American Public Media 10/17/2001](#))

Early September 2001: Unusually High Volume Trade of US Treasury Note Purchases

After 9/11, both the SEC and the Secret Service announce probes into an unusually high volume trade of five-year US Treasury note purchases around this time. These transactions include a single \$5 billion trade. The Wall Street Journal explains: “Five-year Treasury notes are among the best investments in the event of a world crisis, especially

one that hits the US. The notes are prized for their safety and their backing by the US government, and usually rally when investors flee riskier investments, such as stocks.” The value of these notes has risen sharply since the events of September 11. The article also points out that with these notes, “tracks would be hard to spot.” ([Gasparino and Zuckerman 10/2/2001](#))

Early September 2001: Accounts Place Three Hijackers on East and West Coasts at the Same Time



ATM video footage of Hani Hanjour. [*Source: FBI*] The standard accounts place hijackers Hani Hanjour, Nawaf Alhazmi, and Khalid Almihdhar on the East Coast for the entire time in the weeks before the attacks (see [August 23-September 10, 2001](#)). ([MacFarquhar 9/21/2001](#); [Associated Press 9/21/2001](#); [Frank 9/23/2001](#); [Feyerick and Hirschhorn 9/26/2001](#); [Freedberg 9/27/2001](#); [Lipka 9/28/2001](#); [van Natta and Zernike 11/6/2001](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) However, neighbors at the San Diego apartment complex where the three lived are clear in their assertions that all three were there until days before 9/11. For instance, one article states, “Authorities believe Almihdhar, Hanjour and Alhazmi... moved out a couple of days before the East Coast attacks.” ([KGTV 10 \(San Diego\) 11/1/2001](#)) Ed Murray, a resident at the complex, said that all three “started moving out Saturday night-and Sunday [September 9] they were gone.” ([KGTV 10 \(San Diego\) 9/14/2001](#); [KGTV 10 \(San Diego\) 9/20/2001](#)) This is the same day that Alhazmi is reportedly seen in an East Coast shopping mall. ([Feyerick and Hirschhorn 9/26/2001](#)) As with previous reports, neighbors also see them getting into strange cars late at night. A neighbor interviewed shortly after 9/11 said, “A week ago, I was coming home between 12:00 and 1:00 A.M. from a club. I saw a limo pick them up. It was not 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.” ([Mcgeary and van Biema 9/24/2001](#)) To add to the confusion, there have been reports that investigators think Almihdhar is still alive and the Chicago Tribune says of Alhazmi, Almihdhar, and Hanjour: “The most basic of facts—the very names of the men—are uncertain. The FBI has said each used at least three aliases. ‘It’s not going to be a terrible surprise down the line if these are not their true names,’ said Jeff Thurman, an FBI spokesman in San Diego.” ([Brandon 9/30/2001](#))

Early September 2001: Al-Marabh Sends Money to Atta, Alshehhi, and Their Supporters in US

Two months after 9/11, the Toronto Sun will report, “[Canadian] and US police probing [Nabil] al-Marabh have learned he had a flurry of phone calls and financial transactions with [Mohamed] Atta and [Marwan] Alshehhi days before the attacks.” ([Godfrey 10/16/2001](#)) Additionally, Canadian authorities will claim that in the days before 9/11, al-Marabh sends money through a Toronto bank account to at least three men who will later be arrested in the US for supporting roles in the 9/11 attacks. The names of the three men have not been released. At least \$15,000 is sent to the men in the days before 9/11. A source close to the investigation will say, “There are several links between this man and others in the US. There was money going back and forth.” Thousands more will be withdrawn from suspicious accounts in the days after 9/11. ([Godfrey 10/4/2001](#); [Godfrey 10/5/2001](#)) US intelligence also intercepts al-Marabh’s associates making post-9/11 phone calls praising the attacks. ([Dimmock and Sands 10/29/2001](#)) Al-Marabh sent money on other occasions. For instance, in May 2001, he made at least 15 monetary transactions, mostly sending money transfers to the US from Toronto. In late June 2001, he transferred \$15,000 to an account in the US. It has not been revealed who he sent these transfers to. ([Risen and Engelberg 10/14/2001](#); [Godfrey 10/16/2001](#)) A Canadian police source will say, “There were a lot of banking activities prior to the attacks. There was a lot of money being moved through accounts, but most were small amounts.” ([Godfrey 10/17/2001](#)) Canadian officials will call al-Marabh a “bureaucratic terrorist,” who provided logistical support, funding, and other services to the hijackers. ([Godfrey 10/30/2001](#))

Early September 2001: Suspicious Trading in Reinsurance Companies

It will later be speculated that, around this time, people with foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks short sell reinsurance company stocks that are insuring either or both the airplanes and the buildings involved in the attacks. Munich Re, the largest European reinsurance company, loses 22 percent of its value in the two month before 9/11, with about half of that taking place in the week before the attacks. German authorities will later alert the Securities and Exchange Commission of “suspect movements” with Munich Re. ([Agence France-Presse 9/17/2001](#)) Suspicious inquiries into the short selling of millions of company shares are made in France days before the attacks. ([Jacobs and Atkins 9/20/2001](#); [Berthelsen 9/22/2001](#)) Munich Re stock will plummet after the attacks, as they claim the attacks will cost them \$2 billion. ([Dow Jones Business News 9/20/2001](#)) There is also suspicious trading activity involving reinsurers Swiss Reinsurance and AXA. These trades are especially curious because the insurance sector “is one of the brightest spots in a very difficult market” at this time. ([Lichtblau, Serrano, and McDonnell 9/19/2001](#)) A source within AXA will later say, “There are indications that the shorting has been going on for some time. People inside the company could not understand why” there had been so much shorting of the stock in recent weeks. “This could give some

explanation why the stocks were going down so much when there seemed to be no apparent reason.” AXA shares drop almost 10 percent in the week before 9/11, and will plummet afterwards. The attacks will cost the company up to \$400 million because of its coverage of both airplanes and buildings. ([Weinstein 9/18/2001](#))

Early September 2001: CIA Assets Penetrated Al-Qaeda Training Camps by This Time

CIA Director George Tenet will claim in his 2007 book that “a group of assets from a Middle Eastern service” is unknowingly working for the CIA by this time. Out of the more than twenty people in this group, one third are working against al-Qaeda. By September 2001, two assets have successfully penetrated al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 145](#)) The name of the Middle Eastern country is not known. It is also not known when this group first started working for the CIA nor when the assets first penetrated the camps. Nor has it been reported what information these assets may have shared with the CIA before 9/11. It is known that bin Laden was dropping hints about the upcoming 9/11 attacks to training camp trainees in the summer of 2001 (see [Summer 2001](#)). Further, US citizen John Walker Lindh was told details of the 9/11 attacks within weeks of joining a training camp that summer (see [May-June 2001](#)).

Early September 2001: Hambali Aware of Attack Date for 9/11 Plot

Hambali, a top al-Qaeda leader in Southeast Asia, appears aware of the date of the 9/11 attacks. Mohammed Mansour Jabarah, a young Canadian citizen who recently joined al-Qaeda, meets Hambali in Karachi, Pakistan, to get instructions in carrying out an attack in Southeast Asia. Hambali tells him, “Make sure you leave before Tuesday” - September 11. Jabarah does heed the warning and flies to Southeast Asian on September 10. He will be arrested in 2002 and deported to Canada, where he will make a full confession about his al-Qaeda contacts (including an unheeded warning about the October 2002 Bali bombing (see [August-September 2002](#)). ([Bell 1/18/2003](#)) Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) is also in Karachi and working with Jabarah and Hambali on future Southeast Asian plots, and KSM also warns Jabarah to travel before September 11. ([McKenna 10/2004](#))

(Early September 2001): Alhazmi and Almihdhar Practice Using Flight Simulator Software

Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar are seen to practice using flight simulator software while at an apartment in San Diego. A neighbor will later say he often saw a computer switched on inside the men’s apartment running a flight simulator program, “I could look in, if the door was open. You could always see a flight simulator type of thing, with

airplanes on it.” According to eyewitnesses, this takes place shortly before 9/11. Alhazmi and Almihdhar lived in San Diego in 2000 (see [January 15-Early February 2000](#) and [February 2000-Early September 2001](#)), but are usually thought to be on the East Coast in the summer of 2001 (see [August 27-September 1, 2001](#) and [September 5-10, 2001](#)). However, there are multiple eyewitness reports of them being seen in the San Diego area around this time, back in the same apartment where they had lived in 2000 (see [Early September 2001](#)). ([KGTV 10 \(San Diego\) 9/14/2001](#); [KGTV 10 \(San Diego\) 9/18/2001](#))

September 1, 2001: American Airlines Issues Internal Memo Warning of Imposters

Around this date, American Airlines sends out an internal memo warning its employees to be on the lookout for impostors after one of its crews had uniforms and ID badges stolen in Rome, Italy, in April. ([Reuters 9/14/2001](#); [Cullen and Ranalli 9/18/2001](#)) Later it will be reported that two of the hijackers on Flight 11 will use these stolen ID's to board the plane. ([Mackay 9/16/2001](#)) On 9/11, a man will be arrested with four Yemen passports (all using different names) and two Lufthansa crew uniforms (see [September 11, 2001](#)). ([Main 9/22/2001](#)) It will also be reported that when Mohamed Atta takes a flight from Portland, Maine, to Boston on the morning of 9/11, his bags will not be transferred to his hijacked flight, and remain in Boston. Later, airline uniforms will be found inside. ([Cullen and Ranalli 9/18/2001](#)) Boston's Logan Airport had been repeatedly fined for failing to run background checks on their employees, and many other serious violations. ([CNN 10/12/2001](#))

Between September 1 and September 7, 2001: Silverstein Properties Takes Over Control of the World Trade Center

In the first week of September 2001, the real estate development and investment firm Silverstein Properties assumes control of the World Trade Center. The company had acquired the lease to operate the Twin Towers from the New York Port Authority in late July (see [July 24, 2001](#)). It has already begun managing the facility with its own executives. Selected Port Authority employees, including Alan Reiss, the director of the World Trade Center, have been assisting the firm during a three-month transition period. But in the weeks prior to 9/11, according to the New York Times, “Silverstein Properties asked Mr. Reiss to let it more fully operate everything from safety systems to tenant relations.” ([Moss and Bagli 9/13/2001](#); [Weiss 2003, pp. 338](#); [9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#).³¹)

September 1-8, 2001: Tenet Briefs Bush Six More Times, Fails to Mention Moussaoui, Alhazmi, or Almihdhar

With President Bush back in Washington after a long vacation, CIA Director George Tenet resumes personally delivering the Presidential Daily Briefing (PDB) to him. Tenet has one meeting with Bush on August 31, 2001, after Bush's return (see [August 17 and 31, 2001](#)), and then briefs him six more times in the first eight days of September. Bush is out of town the next few days, so he is briefed by other CIA personnel. ([Agence France-Presse 4/15/2004](#)) By this time, Tenet has been told about the arrest of suspected terrorist Zacarias Moussaoui (see [August 23, 2001](#)). But there is no evidence he mentions this to Bush before 9/11. Further, on August 23, 2001, the CIA watchlisted 9/11 hijackers Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi and began looking for them in the US (see August 23, 2001), but there's no evidence Tenet or anyone else briefed Bush about this, either.

September 2, 2001: Bush Administration Enthusiastic to 'Take Down Saddam Once and For All'

Time magazine reports, "Enthusiasm is building inside the Administration to take down Saddam once and for all. Powell too would love to see Saddam [Hussein] unhorsed, says an official at State. 'But you need a serious plan that's doable. The question is how many lives and resources you have to risk.'" Powell is said to have doubts about how to remove Hussein, and calls such an idea still "hypothetical." But Time notes that "plenty of others on the Bush team are gung-ho." ([McGeary 9/2/2001](#))

Between September 3, 2001 and September 7, 2001: WTC Structural Engineer Says Trade Center Designed for 707 Crashing Into It



Leslie Robertson. [*Source: Publicity photo*] Leslie Robertson, one of the two original structural engineers for the World Trade Center, is asked at a conference in Frankfurt, Germany what he had done to protect the Twin Towers from terrorist attacks. He replies, "I designed it for a 707 to smash into it," though does not elaborate further. ([Chicago Tribune 9/12/2001](#); [Knight Ridder 9/12/2001](#)) The Twin Towers were in fact the first structures outside the military and nuclear industries designed to resist the impact of a jet airplane. ([Robertson 3/2002](#); [Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 1-17](#)) The Boeing 707 was the largest in use when the towers were designed. Robertson conducted a study in late 1964, to calculate the effect of a 707 weighing 263,000 pounds and traveling at 180 mph crashing into one of the towers. He

concluded that the tower would remain standing. However, no official report of his study has ever surfaced publicly. ([Glanz and Lipton 2004, pp. 138-139, 366](#)) A previous analysis, carried out early in 1964, calculated that the towers would handle the impact of a 707 traveling at 600 mph without collapsing (see [February 27, 1993](#)). In 2002, though, Robertson will write, “To the best of our knowledge, little was known about the effects of a fire from such an aircraft, and no designs were prepared for that circumstance.” ([Robertson 3/2002](#)) The planes that hit the WTC on 9/11 are 767s, which are almost 20 percent heavier than 707s. ([Ashley 10/9/2001](#); [Seabrook 11/19/2001](#))

September 3-5, 2001: Members of Hamburg’s Al-Qaeda Cell Leave for Pakistan

Members of Mohamed Atta’s Hamburg al-Qaeda cell leave Germany for Pakistan. Said Bahaji flies out of Hamburg on September 3. ([Crewdson, Swanson, and Simpson 2/25/2003](#)) German intelligence already has Bahaji under surveillance, and German border guards are under orders to report if he leaves the country, yet the border guards fail to note his departure. ([Schrom and Laabs 2/2/2003](#)) German agents later discover two other passengers on the same flight traveling with false passports who stay in the same room with Bahaji when they arrive in Karachi, Pakistan. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) Investigators now believe his flight companions were Ismail Ben Mrabete and Ahmed Taleb, both Algerians in their late 40s. Three more associates—Mohammed Belfatmi, an Algerian extremist from the Tarragona region of Spain, and the brothers Mohammad Sarwar Joia and Patrick Joia—also travel on the same plane. ([Crewdson, Swanson, and Simpson 2/25/2003](#); [Crewdson, Swanson, and Simpson 2/25/2003](#)) Ramzi bin al-Shibh flies out of Germany on September 5 and stays in Spain a few days before presumably heading for Pakistan. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#)) Some of these men are reported to meet in Karachi around this time, possibly with others (see [September 3-5, 2001](#)).

September 3-5, 2001: Operatives Connected to 9/11 Meet in Karachi

Several al-Qaeda operatives connected to the 9/11 plot appear to have a meeting in Karachi, possibly to finalize details related to the plot. Some of the operatives arrive from Germany, via Istanbul, by plane (see [September 3-5, 2001](#)). They include Said Bahaji, an associate of the hijackers, Afghan brothers Mohammad Sarwar Joia and Patrick Joia, an Algerian named Mohammed Belfatmi who also just arrived from Istanbul and is said to have a role in arranging a meeting in Spain between lead hijacker and Mohamed Atta and Ramzi bin al-Shibh (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)), and men known as Abdellah Hosayni and Ammar Moul. However, these last two may be traveling under false identities and it will later be reported that they are really Ismail Ben Mrabete and Ahmed Taleb, who an informer says later attended the same al-Qaeda training camp as Bahaji. Hosayni is suspected by German investigators of having a “major role” in preparations for 9/11. A Pakistani newspaper will say that, “It was, in all probability, a meeting to tie up loose ends before the countdown to the attack.” Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and Hambali are in

Karachi at this time, although it is unclear whether they meet with Bahaji and the others (see [Early September 2001](#)). The Joia brothers, who are apparently under surveillance by German police around this time, return to Istanbul on October 5 and 16. In Germany in late October, Patrick Joia will even talk to a reporter and admit recently traveling to Pakistan. ([Behar 10/30/2001](#); [MacVicar 10/31/2001](#); [Crewdson, Swanson, and Simpson 2/25/2003](#); [John 8/7/2003](#)) What happens to the Joia brothers after this time is unclear.

September 4, 2001: Secret Embedded Messages Help Show Milan Al-Qaeda Have 9/11 Foreknowledge

At least one member of the al-Qaeda cell in Milan, Italy, apparently uses steganography, a method of encoding messages within computerized photographs. In Milan's Via Quaranta mosque in Milan, frequented by Egyptian al-Qaeda operative Mahmoud Es Sayed, pictures of the World Trade Center that have steganographic messages in them are saved on a computer. A number of other pictures of world leaders and pornography are also manipulated in a similar manner. These pictures will not be discovered until months after 9/11, but they help suggest that some in the Milan cell had foreknowledge of the 9/11 plot. Es Sayed had been wiretapped on previous occasions, and was heard making comments suggesting he had such foreknowledge (see [August 12, 2000](#)) (see [January 24, 2001](#)). His current whereabouts are unknown. ([Salomon 5/8/2003](#))

September 4, 2001: Clarke Memo: Imagine Hundreds of Dead Due to Government Inaction

Hours before the only significant Bush administration Cabinet-level meeting on terrorism before 9/11, counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke writes a critical memo to National Security Adviser Rice. He criticizes the Defense Department for reluctance to use force against al-Qaeda and the CIA for impeding the deployment of unmanned Predator drones to hunt for bin Laden. According to the Washington Post, the memo urges "officials to imagine a day when hundreds of Americans lay dead from a terrorist attack and ask themselves what more they could have done." ([Branigin, Barbash, and Pincus 3/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [Eggen and Pincus 3/25/2004](#))

September 4, 2001: Cabinet-Rank Advisers Discuss Terrorism, Approve Revised Version of Clarke's Eight Month-Old-Plan

President Bush's cabinet-rank advisers discuss terrorism for the second of only two times before 9/11. ([Gellman 5/17/2002](#)) National Security Adviser Rice chairs the meeting; neither President Bush nor Vice President Cheney attends. Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke later says that in this meeting, he and CIA Director Tenet speak passionately about the al-Qaeda threat. No one disagrees that the threat is serious. Secretary of State Powell outlines a plan to put pressure on Pakistan to stop supporting

al-Qaeda. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld appears to be more interested in Iraq. The only debate is over whether to fly the armed Predator drone over Afghanistan to attack al-Qaeda (see [September 4, 2001](#)). ([Clarke 2004, pp. 237-38](#)) Clarke's earlier plans to "roll back" al-Qaeda first submitted on January 25, 2001 (see [January 25, 2001](#)) have been discussed and honed in many meetings and are now presented as a formal National Security Presidential Directive. The directive is "apparently" approved, though the process of turning it into official policy is still not done. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) There is later disagreement over just how different the directive presented is from Clarke's earlier plans. For instance, some claim the directive aims not just to "roll back" al-Qaeda, but also to "eliminate" it altogether. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#)) However, Clarke notes that even though he wanted to use the word "eliminate," the approved directive merely aims to "significantly erode" al-Qaeda. The word "eliminate" is only added after 9/11. ([Eggen and Pincus 3/25/2004](#)) Clarke will later say that the plan adopted "on Sept. 4 is basically... what I proposed on Jan. 25. And so the time in between was wasted." ([Clarke 4/8/2004](#)) The Washington Post will similarly note that the directive approved on this day "did not differ substantially from Clinton's policy." ([Milbank and Eggen 3/27/2004](#)) Time magazine later comments, "The fight against terrorism was one of the casualties of the transition, as Washington spent eight months going over and over a document whose outline had long been clear." ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#)) The primary change from Clarke's original draft is that the approved plan calls for more direct financial and logistical support to the Northern Alliance and other anti-Taliban groups. The plan also calls for drafting plans for possible US military involvement, "but those differences were largely theoretical; administration officials told the [9/11 Commission's] investigators that the plan's overall timeline was at least three years, and it did not include firm deadlines, military plans, or significant funding at the time of the September 11, 2001, attacks." ([Milbank and Eggen 3/27/2004](#); [Holland 4/2/2004](#))

September 4, 2001: Mueller Takes Over as FBI Director; Criticized for BCCI Investigation

Robert Mueller assumes the job of FBI Director. He had been nominated for the job in July 2001 after Louis Freeh's unexpected and sudden resignation (see [May 1, 2001](#)). Thomas Pickard was interim director for three months. Mueller held a variety of jobs in the Justice Department for over a decade prior to his nomination. Most notably, he led Justice Department investigations into the 1991 collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) (see [July 5, 1991](#)) and the 1988 bombing of Pan-Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. ([BBC 7/5/2001](#); [CNN 9/5/2001](#)) Mueller was heavily criticized for his role in the BCCI investigation (see [February 1988-December 1992](#)). For instance, a bipartisan Congressional BCCI investigation led by Senators John Kerry (D) and Hank Brown (R) stated, "Unfortunately, as time has passed it has become increasingly clear that the Justice Department did indeed make critical errors in its handling of BCCI... and moreover masked inactivity in prosecuting and investigating the bank by advising critics that matters pertaining to BCCI were 'under investigation,' when in fact they were not" and also "[hindered] other legitimate investigative efforts, and [failed] to admit that it had made any of these mistakes." ([US Congress 12/1992](#)) Mueller

himself noted in 1991 that there was an “appearance of, one, foot-dragging; two, perhaps a cover-up,” but denied the cover-up claims. A Wall Street Journal editorial notes that “Even George W. Bush bumped up against the outer fringes of the BCCI crowd during his tenure with Harken Energy and in his friendship with Texas entrepreneur James Bath,” and opines, “On general principles, our view is that it would be a mistake to appoint as FBI head anyone who had any role in the failed BCCI probe. Too many important questions remain unanswered...” ([Wall Street Journal 6/26/2001](#))

September 4, 2001: Debate Heats Up Over Using Armed Predator Drone Against Bin Laden; Decision Again Delayed

Attendees to an important cabinet-level meeting on terrorism have a heated debate over what to do with the armed Predator drone, which has been ready for use over Afghanistan since June 2001 (see [Early June-September 10, 2001](#)). Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke has been repeatedly pushing for the use of the Predator over Afghanistan (in either armed or unarmed versions), and he again argues for its immediate use. Everyone agrees that the armed Predator capability is needed, but there are disputes over who will manage and/or pay for it. CIA Director Tenet says his agency will operate the armed Predator “over my dead body.” ([Washington Post 10/2/2002](#)) Clarke recalls, “The Air Force said it wasn’t their job to fly planes to collect intelligence. No one around the table seemed to have a can-do attitude. Everyone seemed to have an excuse.” ([Mayer 7/28/2003](#)) National Security Adviser Rice concludes that the armed Predator is not ready (even though it had been proven in tests during the summer), but she also presses Tenet to reconsider his opposition to immediately resume reconnaissance flights, suspended since September the year before. After the meeting, Tenet agrees to proceed with such flights. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) The armed Predator is activated just days after 9/11, showing that it was ready to be used after all. ([Bridis and Solomon 6/25/2003](#))

September 4, 2001: FBI Search for Hijackers Almihdhar and Alhazmi Finally Begins, But the Search Is Incomplete or Faulty



A portion of Khalid Almihdhar's New York identification card. The address is a Ramada Inn hotel, which was owned by Marriott at the time. *[Source: 9/11 Commission]* The FBI's New York office technically began an investigation to locate Khalid Almihdhar on August 29, but in fact the one inexperienced agent assigned to the search, Robert Fuller, is busy for several days and only begins the search at this time (see [August 29, 2001](#)). Within a day, Fuller identifies connections between Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi and widens the search to look for both of them. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004](#); [Kinkead 11/28/2004](#)) The FBI will later claim that they search aggressively. An internal review shortly after 9/11 will find that "everything was done that could have been done" to find them. ([Drogin, Lichtblau, and Krikorian 10/28/2001](#)) However, FBI agents familiar with the search will later describe it as unhurried and routine. A report by the Office of the Inspector General completed in late 2004 will conclude, "[T]he FBI assigned few resources to the investigation and little urgency was given to the investigation." ([US Department of Justice 11/2004](#)) In conducting his search, Fuller takes the following steps on September 4-5:

- 1 - He requests that Almihdhar's name be added to the INS watch list, called LOOKOUT. He describes Almihdhar as a potential witness in a terrorist investigation. He later claims that he identifies him only as a witness, not a potential terrorist, to prevent overzealous immigration officials from overreacting. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004](#))
- 2 - He contacts the Customs Service and verifies that Almihdhar has been placed on their watch list. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004](#))
- 3 - He requests a local criminal history check on Almihdhar and Alhazmi through the New York City Police Department. The request turns up nothing. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004](#))
- 4 - He claims that he requests a criminal history check in the NCIC, which is a computer database frequently used by every level of law enforcement. However, the Bergen Record reports that he "never performed one of the most basic tasks of a police manhunt. He never ran Almihdhar or Alhazmi through the NCIC computer. That simple act would have alerted local cops to look for the suspected terrorists. It also would have told the agent a local cop... had already spotted Alhazmi in [the New Jersey town of] South Hackensack." ([Pochna 7/11/2002](#); [Kelly 5/18/2004](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004](#))
- 5 - He requests a credit check. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004](#))
- 6 - He requests that a national motor vehicle index be searched. However, for some reason, a speeding ticket issued to Alhazmi in April 2001 that should have been in that index is not detected (see [April 1, 2001](#)). Nor is a recorded interaction between Alhazmi

and local police in Fairfax, Virginia, in May, which could have led investigators to Alhazmi's East Coast apartment. ([Clay and Ellis 1/20/2002](#); [Eckert 9/27/2002](#); [US Congress 7/24/2003](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004](#))

7 - On September 5, Fuller and another agent contact the Marriott hotels in New York City, since Almihdhar had indicated when he entered the US in July 2001 that his destination was a Marriott hotel in New York. Later that same day he is told Almihdhar had never registered as a guest at any of the six Marriott hotels there. ([US Department of Justice 11/2004](#))

8 - He claims that he conducts a search in the ChoicePoint database. ChoicePoint is one of several companies maintaining commercial databases on personal information about US citizens. The FBI has a contract to access the ChoicePoint database, but none of the others. Fuller doesn't find any record on either Alhazmi or Almihdhar. He suggests this is because of variations in the spelling of names. However, the chairman of ChoicePoint will later confirm that although the database did have information on the hijackers before 9/11, the FBI did not ask to search the database until shortly after 9/11. The 9/11 Commission will conclude the database was not searched, and notes, "Searches of readily available databases could have unearthed" their California drivers' licenses, car registrations and telephone listings. Thomas Pickard, acting FBI Director at the time this search is made, will later falsely claim in public testimony before the 9/11 Commission that the FBI was not allowed to search the ChoicePoint database before 9/11. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 539](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004](#); [Kinhead 11/28/2004](#)) There are additional searches he could have made that he apparently fails to do. For instance, he apparently fails to check car registration databases. Alhazmi did own a car, and the 9/11 Commission notes, "A search on [his] car registration would have unearthed a license check by the South Hackensack Police Department that would have led to information placing Alhazmi in the [greater New York City] area and placing Almihdhar at a local hotel for a week in early July 2001. The hijackers actively used the New Jersey bank accounts, through ATM, debit card, and cash transactions, until September 10." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 539](#)) Additionally, even though the two were known to have previously entered the US through Los Angeles, drivers' license records in California are not checked. He also fails to check national credit card or bank account databases. All of these would have had positive results. Alhazmi's name was even in the 2000-2001 San Diego phone book, listing the address where he and Almihdhar may have been living up to as late as September 9, 2001 (see [Early September 2001](#)). ([Lipka 9/28/2001](#); [Drogin, Lichtblau, and Krikorian 10/28/2001](#); [Isikoff and Klaidman 6/2/2002](#)) There appears to be no further mention of any further work on this search after September 5, except for one request to the Los Angeles FBI office made on September 10 (see [September 10, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission will later note, "We believe that if more resources had been applied and a significantly different approach taken, Alhazmi and Almihdhar might have been found. They had used their true names in the United States. Still, the investigators would have needed luck as well as skill to find them prior to September 11... Many FBI witnesses have suggested that even if [they] had been found, there was nothing the agents could have done except follow [them] onto the planes. We believe this is incorrect. Both Alhazmi and Almihdhar could have been held for immigration violations or as material witnesses in the Cole bombing case. Investigation or interrogation of them, and investigation of their travel and financial

activities, could have yielded evidence of connections to other participants in the 9/11 plot. The simple fact of their detention could have derailed the plan. In any case, the opportunity did not arise.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 272](#))

September 4, 2001: FBI Dispatches Vague Message to US Intelligence Community About Moussaoui Investigation

FBI headquarters dispatches a memo to the entire US intelligence community summarizing what has been learned about Zacarias Moussaoui. The memo, written by Mike Maltbie, an agent in the FBI’s Radical Fundamentalist Unit (RFU), reports that the FBI has become suspicious of Moussaoui because he took flight simulation training for a 747 jet, a course normally taken by airline pilots. Moussaoui, who has no flying experience, paid cash for the training, the memo also notes. It also says that Moussaoui has radical Islamic fundamentalist beliefs and has been linked to Chechen militants. However, the memo does not include a threat assessment or indicate that some FBI investigators believe Moussaoui is part of a yet unknown plot to hijack an airplane and use it in a terrorist attack. As a later congressional inquiry will report, the memo fails to “recommend that the addressees take any action or look for any additional indicators of a terrorist attack, nor [does] it provide any analysis of a possible hijacking threat or provide any specific warnings.” ([US Congress 9/24/2002](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004, pp. 175-6](#)) Several days earlier, Maltbie blocked the release of a memo from the FBI’s Minneapolis field office that was addressed to the FAA and did contain a threat assessment (see [August 29-September 4, 2001](#)). When the FAA receives the FBI memo, it decides not to issue a security alert to the nation’s airports in response. An FAA representative later explains to the New York Post, “[Moussaoui] was in jail and there was no evidence he was connected to other people.” ([Lathem 5/21/2002](#)) The FBI memo contrasts sharply with an internal CIA warning sent out on August 24. That memo, which was based on less information, warned that Moussaoui might be “involved in a larger plot to target airlines traveling from Europe to the US” (see [August 24, 2001](#)). ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) It turns out that prior to this time, al-Qaeda operative Ahmed Ressam had started cooperating with investigators. He had trained with Moussaoui in Afghanistan and will willingly share this information after 9/11. The FBI dispatch, with its notable lack of urgency and details, fails to prompt the agents in Seattle holding Ressam to question him about Moussaoui. Had the connection between these two men been learned before 9/11, presumably the search warrant for Moussaoui would have been approved and the 9/11 plot might have unraveled (see [Late August-Early September 2001](#)). ([Sunday Times \(London\) 2/3/2002](#))

September 4, 2001: Mossad Gives Another Warning of Major, Imminent Attack

“On or around” this day, the Mossad give their “latest” warning to the US of a major, imminent attack by al-Qaeda, according to sources close to Mossad. One former Mossad

agent says, "My understanding is that the warning was not specific. No target was identified. But it should have resulted in an increased state of security." US intelligence claims this never happened. ([McGinty 9/16/2001](#))

September 4, 2001: Israeli Company Moves Out of WTC

The Zim-American Israeli Shipping Co. moves their North American headquarters from the 16th floor of the WTC to Norfolk, Virginia, one week before the 9/11 attacks. The Israeli government owns 49 percent of the company. ([O'Brien 9/4/2001](#)) Zim announced the move and its date six months earlier. ([Dinsmore 4/3/2001](#)) More than 200 workers had just been moved out; about ten are still in the building making final moving arrangements on 9/11, but escape. ([Shaviv 9/13/2001](#); [Tirschwell 10/18/2001](#)) The move leaves only one Israeli company, ClearForest, with 18 employees, in the WTC on 9/11. The four or five employees in the building at the time manage to escape. ([Shaviv 9/13/2001](#)) One year later, a Zim ship is impounded while attempting to ship Israeli military equipment to Iran; it is speculated that this is done with the knowledge of Israel. ([Pinto 3/29/2002](#))

September 4, 2001: Army Restricts Access to Fort Belvoir



The Defense Logistics Agency Headquarters Complex at Fort Belvoir. [*Source: US Army*] (click image to enlarge) The US Army sharply restricts public access to Fort Belvoir, one of its installations about 12 miles south of the Pentagon. After being an open post for over 25 years, Belvoir has now erected barriers across many of the roads leading into it, leaving only six guarded gates as points of entry and exit. Twenty access points are being permanently closed. Visitors must now register their vehicles at a visitor's center or get a day pass to enter the base. ([MDW News Service 7/2001](#); [Vogel 8/15/2001](#)) The access restrictions will allow commanders to know who is entering the base 24 hours

a day and adjust security measures immediately if needed. ([Wamble 8/3/2001](#)) All other Military District of Washington (MDW) installations are implementing similar changes, due to Army concerns about terrorism (see [August 15, 2001](#)). Fort Belvoir has about 20,000 workers and is home to many different agencies, including the US Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), plus the headquarters of the Defense Logistics Agency and the Defense Technical Information Service. ([Military District of Washington 8/2000](#); [Vogel 8/15/2001](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 10/21/2001](#)) Occupying over 500 acres at Belvoir is Davison Army Airfield. The 12th Aviation Battalion, which is MDW's aviation-support unit, is stationed at Davison. This operates UH1 "Huey" and UH60 Black Hawk helicopters in support of training and "contingencies" for various MDW units. ([Military District of Washington 8/2000](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 1/5/2002](#)) The Washington Post has reported, "Fort Belvoir will be holding exercises the next two Tuesdays to test the changes" in access to the base. ([Vogel 8/15/2001](#)) This will therefore include September 11 (a Tuesday). Other reports will confirm an antiterrorism exercise being conducted at Belvoir on 9/11 (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

September 4-5, 2001: Almihdhar's Visa Revoked But Inspectors Told Not to Detain Him

On August 31, 2001, Khalid Almihdhar was placed in an INS and Customs lookout database, and described as "armed and dangerous" and someone who must be referred to secondary inspection (see [August 31, 2001](#)). On September 4, the State Department revokes Almihdhar's visa for his "participation in terrorist activities." On September 5, the INS entered the September 4 notice that Almihdhar's visa has been revoked into the INS lookout system. However, it is also noted that the State Department has identified Almihdhar as a potential witness in an FBI investigation, and inspectors are told not to detain him. This information will appear in a little-noticed 9/11 Commission staff report released one month after the Commission's Final Report. It will not be explained why the description of Almihdhar as armed and dangerous and to be referred to secondary inspection has been changed and who made the change. ([9/11 Commission 8/21/2004](#))

September 4-11, 2001: ISI Director Visits Washington for Mysterious Meetings

ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed visits Washington for the second time. On September 10, a Pakistani newspaper reports on his trip so far. It says his visit has "triggered speculation about the agenda of his mysterious meetings at the Pentagon and National Security Council" as well as meetings with CIA Director Tenet (see [September 9, 2001](#)), unspecified officials at the White House and the Pentagon, and his "most important meeting" with Marc Grossman, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. The article suggests, "[O]f course, Osama bin Laden" could be the focus of some discussions. Prophetically, the article adds, "What added interest to his visit is the history of such visits. Last time [his] predecessor was [in Washington], the domestic [Pakistani] politics turned topsy-turvy within days." ([Mateen 9/10/2001](#)) This is a reference to the

Musharraf coup just after an ISI Director's visit on October 12, 1999 (see October 12, 1999).

September 5, 2001: Hijackers Go on Gambling Cruise in Florida

Two or three of the 9/11 hijackers are believed to go out on a gambling cruise ship that sails from Madeira Beach, Florida. According to a company official of SunCruz Casinos, who owns the ship, there are passengers on two of their cruises today who look like some of the men later identified as 9/11 hijackers, and whose names are either similar or the same as the hijackers'. In the days after 9/11, some of the cruise employees recognize a number of the hijackers as former customers. A casino manager on another SunCruz ship that sails from Port Canaveral, Florida, later believes that a former customer, caught on security video, resembles one of the hijackers. According to Michael Hlavsa, chairman of SunCruz Casinos, the hijackers "acted just like normal guests of ours and they were courteous." Following 9/11, SunCruz turns over photographs and documents to FBI investigators. ([Freedberg 9/27/2001](#); [Chachere 9/27/2001](#); [Reid and Lengel 9/27/2001](#)) At the time, SunCruz Casinos is owned by the politically connected Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff and his business associate Adam Kidan. Abramoff and Kidan will later plead guilty to fraud relating to their purchase of the company in 2000. ([Anderson 1/4/2006](#))

September 5, 2001: US Army Bases Implement 'Full Access Control'

Fort Myer and Fort Lesley J. McNair, both within two miles of the Pentagon, implement "full access control," which means they increase the level of military police surveillance of those who enter them. Visitors are now required to register and sign in at a visitor center, and obtain a temporary pass. The measures, part of a security crackdown due to concerns about terrorism, will allow commanders to know who is entering their installations 24 hours a day and adjust their security measures immediately as needed. ([Wamble 8/3/2001](#); [Vogel 8/15/2001](#)) All other Army posts in the Washington, DC area are currently implementing similar access restrictions (see [August 15, 2001](#)).

September 5, 2001: Prisoner in Brazil Tries to Give Warning about 9/11 Attacks

A Moroccan militant in a prison in Brazil apparently makes an unheeded warning about the 9/11 attacks. Gueddan Abdel Fatah was imprisoned in January 2001 after a hold-up attempt. On September 5, 2001, he hands a letter to a lawyer named Edith Espinosa, and asks her to take copies to head of the Brazilian prison system and the US embassy. ([BBC 9/15/2001](#)) Espinosa forgets to deliver the letter. On September 10, he sees her again and says that any warning now would be too late. ([United Press International 10/1/2001](#)) In

the letter, Fatah says, “I need to talk urgently about very important issues.” He says he intends to reveal information about militant groups that are planning attacks, and he makes reference to “two explosions” that could take place in the US. Shortly after 9/11, he will be questioned and says he was working with a group of Muslim militants in the tri-border area between Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay that is a known haven for many Muslim extremist groups. One member of the group had a contact in New York City and “was constantly phoning the United States and holding coded conversations.” This member allegedly told him, “We are waiting for the United States to explode.” ([BBC 9/15/2001](#)) Fatah claims that he visited the US consulates in Argentina and Brazil before his arrest eight months earlier and tried to pass on the warning, but no one paid attention to him. ([United Press International 10/1/2001](#)) Both Osama bin Laden and 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed visited the tri-border area in previous years (see [December 1995](#) and [June 1998](#)).

September 5, 2001: Atta Reportedly Visits Spain Again

According to a report carried by Agence France Presse, Spanish prosecutor Pedro Rubira says that hijacker Mohamed Atta is in Madrid, Spain, on this day. ([Agence France Presse 6/1/2005](#)) He previously met co-conspirator Ramzi bin al-Shibh in Spain in July (see [July 8-19, 2001](#)) and bin al-Shibh is in Madrid at this time (see [September 3-5, 2001](#)). ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#); [McDermott 2005, pp. 230](#)) However, there are no other known reports of Atta being in Madrid in September 2001. For example, no such trip is mentioned in the 9/11 Commission report. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#))

September 5-6, 2001: French Again Warn US About Moussaoui

French and US intelligence officials hold meetings in Paris on combating terrorism. The French newspaper Le Monde claims that the French try again to warn their US counterparts about Zacarias Moussaoui, “but the American delegation... paid no attention... basically concluding that they were going to take no one’s advice, and that an attack on American soil was inconceivable.” The US participants also say Moussaoui’s case is in the hands of the immigration authorities and is not a matter for the FBI. ([Burrell, Gumbel, and Sengupta 12/11/2001](#); [Ridgeway 5/28/2002](#)) The FBI arranges to deport Moussaoui to France on September 17, so the French can search his belongings and tell the FBI the results. Due to the 9/11 attacks, the deportation never happens. ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#))

September 5-10, 2001: Last-Minute Money Transfers Between 9/11 Hijackers and United Arab Emirates

The hijackers in the US return money to Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi, one of their facilitators in the United Arab Emirates:

- September 4: Hijacker Mohamed Atta sends al-Hawsawi a FedEx package from Florida.

([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#), pp. 10.)

The package contains hijacker Faye Ahmed Banihammad's ATM card and checkbook.

([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#), pp. 10.) The FedEx bill will be found shortly after 9/11 in the trash at the hotel Atta stays at on the night before 9/11 (see [September 11-13, 2001](#));

- September 5: \$8,000 is wired from Banihammad's SunTrust bank account to his bank account in the United Arab Emirates, to which al-Hawsawi has access (see [June 25, 2001](#));

- September 8: Mohamed Atta sends \$2,860 to "Mustafa Ahmed" from a Western Union office in Laurel, Maryland;

- September 8: Later that day Atta sends another \$5,000 to "Mustafa Ahmed" from another Western Union office in the same town;

- September 9: Hijacker Waleed Alshehri sends \$5,000 to "Ahamad Mustafa" from a Western Union office at Logan Airport in Boston;

- September 10: Hijacker Marwan Alshehhi sends \$5,400 to "Mustafa Ahmad" from a Western Union office at the Greyhound Bus Station in Boston;

- September 10: Hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Hani Hanjour use the name "Rawf Al Dog" to send an express mail package from Laurel, Maryland, to Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. When the FBI intercepts the package at Dulles Airport after 9/11, they find it contains the debit card and PIN for Khalid Almihdhar's First Union Bank account, which has a balance of \$9,838.31. ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#), pp. 75); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#), pp. 76.)

Atta, Alshehhi, and Alshehri also call al-Hawsawi at this time to give him the numbers for the money they are sending. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#), pp. 10.) Although al-Hawsawi admits receiving this money in a substitution for testimony at the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui in 2006 and again at a Guantanamo Bay hearing (see [March 21, 2007](#)), some detainees are apparently subjected to torture, which has led some to doubt the reliability and validity of their statements (see [June 16, 2004](#)). ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#), pp. 10); [US department of Defense 3/21/2007](#).)

September 5-8, 2001: Raid on Arab Web Hosting Company Precedes 9/11 Attacks



Infocom logo. [Source: *Infocom*] The US Joint Terrorism Task Force conducts a three-day raid of the offices of InfoCom Corporation, a Texas-based company that hosts about 500 mostly Arab websites, including Al Jazeera, the Arab world's most popular news channel. ([Whitaker 9/10/2001](#); [Web Host Industry Review 9/10/2001](#)) Three days after the initial raid, the task force is "still busy inside the building, reportedly copying every hard disc they could find. It is not clear how long these websites remain shut down." ([Whitaker 9/10/2001](#)) InfoCom began to be seriously investigated by the FBI in late 1998 when the name of an employee

was discovered in the address book of bin Laden's former personal secretary. There also was evidence of a financial link between InfoCom and a top Hamas leader (see [October 1994-2001](#)). InfoCom is closely connected to the Holy Land Foundation. Not only are the two organizations across the road from each other in Richardson, Texas, a number of employees work at both organizations. For instance, Ghassan Elashi is both the vice president of InfoCom and chairman of Holy Land. ([Whitaker 9/10/2001](#); [Johnston 12/20/2002](#)) A local bank closes Holy Land's checking accounts totaling about \$13 million around the same time as the raid on InfoCom, but Holy Land's assets are not officially frozen by the government. ([Habal 9/7/2001](#)) The US will shut down Holy Land and freeze their assets two months later (see [December 4, 2001](#)) for suspected ties to Hamas. Holy Land is represented by Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, a Washington, D.C., law firm with unusually close ties to the Bush White House. ([Baker and Khan 12/17/2001](#)) In 2002, the five brothers running InfoCom will be charged of selling computer equipment overseas in violation of anti-terrorism laws and of supporting Hamas by giving money to Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk through 2001. In 2004, the five brothers will be convicted of the first charge, and in 2005, three brothers will be convicted of the second charge. (see [December 18, 2002-April 2005](#)). On a possibly connected note, in the Garland suburb adjoining Richardson, a fifth-grade boy apparently has foreknowledge of 9/11 (see [September 10, 2001](#)). ([Ratcliffe 9/19/2001](#))

Shortly Before September 6, 2001: CIA Secretly Warns FAA about Imminent, Spectacular Attack from Muslim Fundamentalists

The Daily Mail will later report, "US aviation authorities were warned of a terrorist attack by an Islamic group only days before the September 11 atrocities. The CIA issued a confidential warning that Muslim fundamentalists were preparing a spectacular attack imminently, but it was unable to specify the target." Around this time, author Salman Rushdie is traveling in North America to promote a new book. ([Watts 10/7/2001](#)) In 1989, Iranian clerics issued a fatwa (death threat) against Rushdie for perceived insults to Islam, but the fatwa was lifted in 1998 and Rushdie had recently emerged from hiding. ([Jensen 9/23/2001](#)) According to the Daily Mail, aviation regulators conclude Rushdie is the likely target of this CIA warning, and the FAA imposes new restrictions on him on September 6, 2001 (see [September 6, 2001](#)). At least two airlines prevent Rushdie from flying with them at all. ([Watts 10/7/2001](#)) Apparently the FAA takes no other action and gives no other warning except for extra security measures involving Rushdie. The 9/11 Commission will later briefly mention the pre-9/11 restrictions on Rushdie but will not explain what the intelligence was exactly that led to the restrictions. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 56-58](#))

September 6, 2001: FAA Places Severe Flight Restrictions on Author Because of Attack Threat



Salman Rushdie. [Source: Public domain] The FAA places severe flight restrictions on author Salman Rushdie, who is in the US to promote a new book. The restrictions are so strict and costly that at least two airlines refuse to fly him at all. The FAA tells Rushdie's publisher that US intelligence has given warning of "something out there" but fails to give any further details. One newspaper will later state, "The FAA confirmed that it stepped up security measures concerning Mr. Rushdie but refused to give a reason." ([Doran 9/27/2001](#); [Watts 10/7/2001](#)) The Daily Mail will later report that the CIA secretly gave the FAA a "confidential warning that Muslim fundamentalists were preparing a spectacular attack imminently, but it was unable to specify the target." But the only action the FAA takes is to require more security for Rushdie's flights (see [Shortly Before September 6, 2001](#)). Rushdie had been the subject of an Iranian fatwa (death threat) until it was lifted in 1998. ([Jensen 9/23/2001](#))

September 6, 2001: New York Student Forecasts Destruction of WTC

Antoinette DiLorenzo, teaching English to a class of Pakistani immigrants, asks a student gazing out the window, "What are you looking at?" The student points towards the WTC, and says, "Do you see those two buildings? They won't be standing there next week." At the time, nothing is thought of it, but on September 13, the FBI will interview all the people in the classroom and confirm the event. The FBI later places the boy's family under surveillance but apparently is unable to find a connection to the 9/11 plot. An MSNBC reporter later sets out to disprove this "urban myth," but to his surprise, finds all the details of the story are confirmed. The fact that the family members are recent immigrants from Pakistan might mean the information came from Pakistan. ([Alter 10/12/2001](#)) Supposedly, on November 9, 2001, the same student predicts there will be a plane crash on November 12. On that day, American Airlines Flight 587 will crash on takeoff from New York, killing 260 people. Investigators will later determine that the crash is accidental. One official at the school later says many Arab-American students have come forward with their own stories about having prior knowledge before 9/11: "Kids are telling us that the attacks didn't surprise them. This was a nicely protected little secret that circulated in the community around here." ([Shapiro 9/10/2002](#))

September 6, 2001: Bin Laden Allegedly Informed of Exact Attack Date

According to a later interview with would-be hijacker Ramzi bin al-Shibh, a courier sent by bin al-Shibh tells bin Laden on this day when the 9/11 attacks will take place. ([Fouda 9/9/2002](#)) However, there are doubts about this interview (see [April, June, or August 2002](#)).

September 6, 2001: Senator Hart Sees No Sense of Urgency from Rice on Terrorism

Former Senator Gary Hart (D), one of the two co-chairs of a comprehensive, bipartisan report on terrorism released in January 2001, meets with National Security Adviser Rice to see if the Bush administration is implementing the report's recommendations. He later claims to give her a grave warning. He recalls to tone of her response: "She didn't seem to feel a terrible sense of urgency. Her response was simply 'I'll talk to the vice president about it.' ... Even at this late date, nothing was being done inside the White House." ([Talbot 4/2/2004](#))

September 6, 2001: Rumsfeld Threatens Veto If Democrats Allocate More Money to Fight Terrorism

Senator Carl Levin (D), chairman of the Armed Services Committee, seeks to transfer \$600 million to counterterrorism from the missile defense program to fill budgetary gaps. However, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld sends a letter on this day saying he would urge Bush to veto the measure. Levin nonetheless pushes the measure through the next day on a party-line vote. It's unclear if a veto would have followed. ([Gellman 1/20/2002](#); [Elliott 8/4/2002](#); [Johnston and Schmitt 4/4/2004](#))

September 6, 2001: US Considers More Favorable Policy Towards Palestinians; But Change Is Halted by 9/11 Attacks

According to a New York Times article several days later, on this day President Bush holds a National Security Council meeting with Secretary of State Powell, National Security Adviser Rice, and others, to consider how to change his Middle East policy. This potential change in US policy comes after the Saudis threatened to end their alliance with the US because of US policy towards Israel and Palestine (see [August 27, 2001](#) and [August 29-September 6, 2001](#)). It is reported that he is considering meeting with Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat when Arafat is scheduled to come to New York for the opening of the United Nations General Assembly two weeks later. Bush has so far been firm in refusing to meet with Arafat. According to the New York Times, at this meeting,

“Bush discussed the wisdom of changing tack, officials said. While no clear decision was made, there was an inclination to go ahead with a meeting with Arafat if events unfolded in a more favorable way in the next 10 days or so...” Additionally, it is reported that Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres will meet with Arafat in mid-September, in what it is hoped will be “the first of a series that could start a process of serious dialogue” between Palestine and Israel. ([Perlez 9/9/2001](#)) Reporter Bob Woodward will add in 2006, “Bush agreed to come out publicly for a Palestinian state. A big rollout was planned for the week of September 10, 2001.” ([Woodward 2006, pp. 77](#)) But after the 9/11 attacks a few days later, Bush and Peres do not go forward with any meetings with Arafat and US policy does not change. The Nation will later comment, “In the aftermath of [9/11], few people recalled that for a brief moment in the late summer of 2001, the Bush Administration had considered meeting with Arafat and deepening its political involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” ([Rozen 7/14/2005](#)) The leak to the New York Times about this September 6 meeting will result in a wide FBI investigation of Israeli spying in the US (see [September 9, 2001](#)).

September 6-10, 2001: Suspicious Trading of Put Option Contracts on American and United Airlines Occur



A. B. “Buzzy” Krongard. [*Source: Public domain*] Suspicious trading occurs on the stock of American and United, the two airlines hijacked in the 9/11 attacks. “Between 6 and 7 September, the Chicago Board Options Exchange [sees] purchases of 4,744 put option contracts [a speculation that the stock will go down] in UAL versus 396 call options—where a speculator bets on a price rising. Holders of the put options would [net] a profit of \$5 million once the carrier’s share price [dive] after September 11. On September 10, 4,516 put options in American Airlines, the other airline involved in the hijackings, [are] purchased in Chicago. This compares with a mere 748 call options in American purchased that day. Investigators cannot help but notice that no other airlines [see] such trading in their put options.” One analyst later says, “I saw put-call numbers higher than I’ve ever seen in ten years of following the markets, particularly the options markets.” ([Carpenter 9/18/2001](#); [Berthelsen 9/19/2001](#)) “To the embarrassment of investigators, it has also [learned] that the firm used to buy many of the ‘put’ options... on United Airlines stock was headed until 1998 by ‘Buzzy’ Krongard,

now executive director of the CIA.” Krongard was chairman of Alex Brown Inc., which was bought by Deutsche Bank. “His last post before resigning to take his senior role in the CIA was to head Bankers Trust—Alex Brown’s private client business, dealing with the accounts and investments of wealthy customers around the world.” ([Blackhurst 10/14/2001](#))

September 6-10, 2001: Suspicious Trading on Stocks of Two Large WTC Tenants

The Chicago Board Options Exchange sees suspicious trading on Merrill Lynch and Morgan Stanley, two of the largest WTC tenants. In the first week of September, an average of 27 put option contracts in its shares are bought each day. Then the total for the three days before the attacks is 2,157. Merrill Lynch, another WTC tenant, see 12,215 put options bought between September 7-10, when the previous days had seen averages of 252 contracts a day. ([Blackhurst 10/14/2001](#)) Dylan Ratigan of Bloomberg Business News, speaking of the trading on Morgan Stanley and other companies, says, “This would be one of the most extraordinary coincidences in the history of mankind if it was a coincidence.” ([ABC News 9/20/2001](#))

September 7, 2001: Priest Is Told of Plot to Attack US and Britain Using Hijacked Airplanes



Father Jean-Marie Benjamin. [*Source: Public domain*] At a wedding in Todi, Italy, Father Jean-Marie Benjamin is told of a plot to attack the US and Britain using hijacked airplanes as weapons. He is not told specifics regarding time or place. He immediately passes what he knows to a judge and several politicians. He later will state, “Although I am friendly with many Muslims, I wondered why they were telling me, specifically. I felt it my duty to inform the Italian government.” Benjamin has been called “one of the West’s most knowledgeable experts on the Muslim world.” Two days after 9/11, he will meet with the Italian Foreign Minister on this topic. He will say he learned the attack on Britain failed at the last minute. ([Zenit \(Vatican\) 9/16/2001](#)) An al-Qaeda cell based in nearby Milan, Italy, appears to have had foreknowledge of the 9/11

attacks (see [August 12, 2000](#)) and (see [January 24, 2001](#)). It is not known if the Italian government warns the US government of this latest warning before 9/11.

September 7, 2001: French Give ‘Very Specific Information’ about Possible Attack on US Soil

The French newspaper Le Figaro will report in late 2001 that on this day, “According to Arab diplomatic sources as well as French intelligence, very specific information [is] transmitted to the CIA with respect to terrorist attacks against American interests around the world, including on US soil.” A French intelligence report sent to the US this day “enumerates all the intelligence, and specifies that the order to attack [is] to come from Afghanistan.” ([Richard 10/31/2001](#)) It will later be revealed that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed gives Mohamed Atta the final go-ahead in a phone call from Afghanistan the day before 9/11 (see [September 10, 2001](#)).

September 7, 2001: State Department Issues Overseas Warning

The State Department issues a little noticed warning, alerting against an attack by al-Qaeda. However, the warning focuses on a threat to American citizens overseas, and particularly focuses on threats to US military personnel in Asia. ([US Department of State 9/7/2001](#)) In the one-page alert, the State Department says it received information in May 2001 “that American citizens may be the target of a terrorist threat from extremist groups with links to Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda organization. Such individuals have not distinguished between official and civilian targets.... As always, we take this information seriously. US Government facilities worldwide remain on heightened alert.” Such warnings are issued periodically and usually are so vague that few pay them serious attention. In any event, most airlines and officials will claim that they did not see this warning until after 9/11. ([Matier and Ross 9/14/2001](#))

September 7, 2001: Bush’s Plan to Visit Sarasota on 9/11 Is Publicly Announced; Atta and Alshehhi Are Seen in Sarasota that Evening

President Bush’s plan to visit a Sarasota, Florida elementary school on September 11 is publicly announced. According to a later news article, numerous eyewitnesses see hijackers Mohamed Atta and Marwan Alshehhi in Sarasota later that evening. They appear to stay at a Holiday Inn very close to the place Bush will later stay. Atta is seen at the Holiday Inn bar, where he orders one drink, a rum and Coke. He is met by an unidentified male who motions he doesn’t speak English, and then they leave. ([Sullivan 11/21/2001](#))

September 7, 2001: Story of Hijackers Drinking Alcohol Changes Over Time



Shuckums bar and grill, in Hollywood, Florida.

[Source: Patrick Durand/ Corbis] One of the first and most frequently told stories about the hijackers is their visit to Shuckums, a sports bar in Hollywood, Florida, on this day. What is particularly interesting about this story is how it has changed over time. In the original story, first reported on September 12 ([Thomas 9/12/2001](#)), Mohamed Atta, Marwan Alshehhi, and an unidentified man come into the restaurant already drunk. "They were wasted," says bartender Patricia Idrissi, who directs them to a nearby Chinese restaurant. ([Klein et al. 9/13/2001](#)) Later they return and drink—Atta orders five vodka and orange juices, while Alshehhi orders five rum and Cokes. ([Mcgeary and van Biema 9/24/2001](#)) According to manager Tony Amos, "The guy Mohamed was drunk, his voice was slurred and he had a thick accent." Idrissi says they argue about the bill, and when she asks if there was a problem, "Mohamed said he worked for American Airlines and he could pay his bill." ([Thomas 9/12/2001](#)) This story was widely reported through much of September. ([Canedy and Sanger 9/13/2001](#); [Doup and Lipka 9/15/2001](#); [Mackay 9/16/2001](#); [Morgan, Kidwell, and Corral 9/22/2001](#); [Thomas and Hosenball 9/24/2001](#); [Mcgeary and van Biema 9/24/2001](#)) However, beginning on September 15, a second story appears. ([van Rijn 9/15/2001](#)) This story is similar to the first, except that here, Atta is playing video games and drinking cranberry juice instead of vodka, and Alshehhi is the one who argues over the bill and pays. After some coexistence, the second story seems to have become predominant in later September. ([Achenbach 9/16/2001](#); [Finn 9/22/2001](#); [Williams, Dahlburg, and Reza 9/27/2001](#); [Freedberg 9/27/2001](#); [Australian Broadcasting Corporation 11/12/2001](#); [Sunday Times \(London\) 2/3/2002](#))

September 7, 2001: Alshehhi Transfers Money to Other Hijacker's Account in Saudi Arabia

Marwan Alshehhi transfers \$200 from his and Atta's joint account at SunTrust Bank to fellow hijacker Abdulaziz Alomari's account in Buraidah, Saudi Arabia. Alomari's account is with Al Rajhi Banking & Investment Corp, which will later be unsuccessfully sued for allegedly supporting terrorism (see [August 15, 2002](#)). The transfer costs \$50 plus charges. The reason for the transfer is not clear, as Alomari, who also has an account with

the Hudson United Bank in the US (see [June 27-August 23, 2001](#)), had only left Florida the previous day and will be in Boston at the same time as Alshehhi on September 9. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) Records show that Alshehhi completes the transaction just before 4.00 p.m. However, according to some accounts, Alshehhi is drinking at Shuckums bar at this time (see [September 7, 2001](#)). ([Eggen 9/13/2001](#); [Vulliamy et al. 9/16/2001](#))

September 7, 2001: New Security Director Criticizes Poor Security at the World Trade Center

Former FBI counterterrorism chief John O'Neill recently started his new job as director of security at the World Trade Center (see [August 23, 2001](#)). From the outset, he has engrossed himself in discovering what security systems are in place there, and what will be needed in future. On this day, he runs into Rodney Leibowitz, a friend of his, and complains to him about the very poor standard of security at the Twin Towers. For instance, he mentions that, even though the complex receives bomb threats on a daily basis, its telephone system does not feature caller identification. ([Weiss 2003, pp. 354 and 358](#)) The Trade Center has in fact recently been on a heightened security alert, due to numerous phone threats (see [Late August-September 10, 2001](#)). ([Taylor and Gardiner 9/12/2001](#))

September 7-10, 2001: Dubai Banker Claims Al-Qaeda Agent Speculates on Airline and Blue-Chip Stocks

French author Bernard-Henri Levy claims to know an anonymous manager at a Dubai, United Arab Emirates, bank who gives him astute and accurate tips on Arab banking. The manager tells Henri-Levy in 2002, "We know a bank here that made [a put option] transaction between the 8th and 10th of September on certain Dow Jones blue-chip stocks for accounts linked to bin Laden. I know the name of a bank that, by shorting 8,000 shares of United Airlines on the 7th of September, then 1,200 shares of American Airlines on the morning of the 10th, allowed the attack to finance itself." The manager won't name the bank, but he quotes bin Laden from a late September 2001 interview, stating, "al-Qaeda is full of young, modern, and educated people who are aware of the cracks inside the Western financial system, and know how to exploit them. These faults and weaknesses are like a sliding noose strangling the system." ([Laden 9/28/2001](#); [Levy 2003, pp. 312-313](#)) The timing and amount of type of stock speculation mentioned in this account is similar to, but not the same as, previously published reports (see [September 6-10, 2001](#)). Levy suspects the al-Qaeda agent making these transactions is the financially astute Saeed Sheikh, graduate of the London School of Economics. An al-Qaeda agent using the alias Mustafa Ahmad is captured by a surveillance camera entering the Bank of Dubai on September 10, Dubai time, to pick up money sent by Mohamed Atta in previous days, but this video footage has never been publicly released. Levy and others argue that

Mustafa Ahmad and Saeed Sheikh are one and the same (see [September 5-10, 2001](#)). ([Levy 2003, pp. 312-313](#))

September 8, 2001: High Level Air Force Discussions Call for Dismantling NORAD's Alert Sites

The future of “continental air sovereignty” over America is in doubt. Discussions at the Air Force’s highest levels call for the dismantling of NORAD’s seven “alert” sites around the US and its command and control structure. ([Filson 2004, pp. 149](#)) Earlier in the summer of 2001, “a reduction in air defenses had been gaining currency in recent months among task forces assigned by [Defense Secretary] Rumsfeld to put together recommendations for a reassessment of the military.”(see [Summer 2001](#))

September 8-11, 2001: Some Hijackers Sleep with Prostitutes

In the days before the attacks, some of the hijackers (including Waleed Alshehri and/or Wail Alshehri) apparently sleep with prostitutes in Boston hotel rooms, or at least try to do so. A driver working at an “escort service” used by the hijackers claims he regularly drove prostitutes to a relative of bin Laden about once a week until 9/11, when the relative disappeared. Bin Laden has several relatives in the Boston area, most or all of whom returned to Saudi Arabia right after 9/11. ([Wedge 10/10/2001](#)) On September 10, four other hijackers in Boston (Marwan Alshehhi, Fayez Ahmed Banihammad, Mohand Alshehri, and Satam Al Suqami) call around to find prostitutes to sleep with on their last night alive, but in the end decline. Says one official, “It was going to be really expensive and they couldn’t come to a consensus on price, so that was the end of it... Either they thought it was too extravagant [over \$400] or they did not have enough money left.” ([Murphy and Belkin 10/10/2001](#))

September 9, 2001: New York Times Reports Bin Laden ‘Promises More Attacks’; Article Will Be Removed Shortly After 9/11

Just two days before 9/11, the New York Times publishes an article on their website examining the threat of an al-Qaeda attack on US interests. The article focuses on a videotape made by bin Laden which was released in June 2001 (see [June 19, 2001](#)). The article notes that “When the two-hour videotape surfaced last June, it attracted little attention, partly because much of it was spliced from previous bin Laden interviews and tapes. But since then the tape has proliferated on Islamic Web sites and in mosques and bazaars across the Muslim world.” It further notes that in the video, bin Laden “promises more attacks.” Referring to the bombing of the USS *Cole* in Yemen, he says, “The victory of Yemen will continue.” He promises to aid Palestinians fighting Israel, an important shift in emphasis from previous pronouncements. He also praises the Taliban, suggesting

that previous reports of a split between bin Laden and the Taliban were a ruse. The article comments, “With his mockery of American power, Mr. bin Laden seems to be almost taunting the United States.” ([Burns 9/9/2001](#)) Curiously, shortly after 9/11, the New York Times will remove the article from their website archive and redirect all links from the article’s web address,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/09/international/asia/09OSAM.html>, to the address of another article written by the same author shortly after 9/11,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/12/international/12OSAM.html>. (Note the dates contained within the addresses.)

September 9, 2001: Congressman Foresees Something Terrible Will Happen in Wake of Massoud Assassination



Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (right) in Afghanistan in 1988. [*Source: Public domain*] Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R), who has long experience in Afghanistan and even fought with the mujaheddin there, later will claim he immediately sees the assassination of Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud (see [September 9, 2001](#)) as a sign that “something terrible [is] about to happen.” He is only able to make an appointment to meet with top White House and National Security Council officials for 2:30 pm. on 9/11. The events of that morning will make the meeting moot. ([US Congress 9/17/2001](#))

September 9, 2001: Osama Tells His Stepmother That Big News Will Come in Two Days

It will later be reported that on this day, bin Laden calls his stepmother and says, “In two days, you’re going to hear big news and you’re not going to hear from me for a while.” US officials later will tell CNN that “in recent years they’ve been able to monitor some of bin Laden’s telephone communications with his [step]mother. Bin Laden at the time was using a satellite telephone, and the signals were intercepted and sometimes recorded.” ([Shenon and Johnston 10/2/2001](#)) Stepmother Al-Khalifa bin Laden, who raised Osama bin Laden after his natural mother died, is apparently waiting in Damascus, Syria, to meet

Osama there, so he calls to cancel the meeting. ([MacKay 10/7/2001](#)) They had met periodically in recent years. Before 9/11, to impress important visitors, NSA analysts would occasionally play audio tapes of bin Laden talking to his stepmother. The next day government officials say about the call, “I would view those reports with skepticism.” ([Ensor and O'Connor 10/2/2001](#)) Bin Laden gave his natural mother a similar warning some months before that was also overheard by the NSA (see [Spring-Summer 2001](#)).

September 9, 2001: Internet Forum Message Warns of 9/11 Attack

A message is posted on Alsaha.com, a website based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, warning of the 9/11 attack. It proclaims that in the next two days, a “big surprise” is coming from the Saudi Arabian region of Asir, the remote, mountainous province that produced most of the 19 hijackers who struck on September 11. Since 9/11, the FBI and CIA have closely monitored this website as “a kind of terrorist early-warning system” due to its popularity with Muslim fundamentalists. However, it is doubtful if they were monitoring the site before 9/11, or noticed this message. ([Isikoff, Klaidman, and Thomas 5/25/2003](#))

September 9, 2001: Bush’s First Budget Has Gaps for Counterterrorism Funding

President Bush’s first budget calls for \$13.6 billion on counterterrorism programs, compared with \$12.8 billion in President Clinton’s last budget and \$2 billion ten years earlier. However, there are gaps between what military commanders say they need to combat terrorism and what they are slated to receive. These gaps are still unresolved on September 11. ([Savino 9/27/2001](#); [Gellman 1/20/2002](#); [Elliott 8/4/2002](#))

September 9, 2001: Northern Alliance Leader Massoud Is Assassinated in Anticipation of 9/11 Attack



Massoud's two assassins pictured just before their assassination attempt. One holds the rigged video camera. [Source: CNN] General Ahmed Shah Massoud, the leader of Afghanistan's Northern Alliance, is assassinated by two al-Qaeda agents posing as Moroccan journalists. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#)) A legendary mujaheddin commander and a brilliant tactician, Massoud had pledged to bring freedom and democracy to Afghanistan. The BBC says the next day, "General Massoud's death might well have meant the end of the [Northern] alliance" because there clearly was no figure with his skills and popularity to replace him. ([Clark 9/10/2001](#); [NPA 9/10/2001](#)) "With Massoud out of the way, the Taliban and al-Qaeda would be rid of their most effective opponent and be in a stronger position to resist the American onslaught." ([Martin 9/9/2002](#)) It appears the assassination was supposed to happen earlier: the "journalists" waited for three weeks in Northern Alliance territory to meet Massoud. Finally on September 8, an aide says they "were so worried and excitable they were begging us." They were granted an interview after threatening to leave if the interview did not happen in the next 24 hours. Meanwhile, the Taliban army (together with elements of the Pakistani army) had massed for an offensive against the Northern Alliance in the previous weeks, but the offensive began only hours after the assassination. Massoud was killed that day but Northern Alliance leaders pretend for several days that Massoud was only injured in order to keep the Northern Alliance army's morale up, and they are able to stave off total defeat. The timing of the assassination and the actions of the Taliban army suggest that the 9/11 attacks were known to the Taliban leadership. ([Elliott 8/4/2002](#)) Though it is not widely reported, the Northern Alliance releases a statement the next day: "Ahmed Shah Massoud was the target of an assassination attempt organized by the Pakistani [intelligence service] ISI and Osama bin Laden." ([Wesolowsky 9/10/2001](#); [Gardiner and Rayman 9/15/2001](#); [Reuters 10/4/2001](#)) This suggests that the ISI may also have had prior knowledge of the attack plans.

September 9, 2001: Hijacker Jarrah Is Stopped for Speeding but No Red Flag in Computer Records

Hijacker Ziad Jarrah is stopped in Maryland for speeding, ticketed, and released. No red flags show up when his name is run through the computer by the state police, even though he already had been questioned in January 2001 in the United Arab Emirates

[UAE] at the request of the CIA for “suspected involvement in terrorist activities” (see [January 30, 2001](#)) Baltimore’s mayor has criticized the CIA for not informing them that Jarrah was on the CIA’s watch list. ([Crewdson 12/13/2001](#); [Associated Press 12/14/2001](#)) Sen. Bob Graham (D) will later make reference to Jarrah’s detention in the UAE and the fact that an arrest warrant had been put out for Mohamed Atta (see [April 26, 2001](#)), and comment, “Had local law enforcement been able to run the names of Jarrah and Atta against a watch list, it is likely that they would have been arrested and detained, and at least one team of hijackers would no longer have had a pilot.” ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 37](#)) Three other hijackers are also stopped for speeding while they are in the US (see [April 26, 2001](#)).

September 9, 2001: Hijackers Drop Duffle Bag in Front of Mosque

in a motel near a fundamentalist storefront mosque in heavily Pakistani Laurel, Md.” While news accounts do not mention the name of the mosque, the description closely matches the Ayah Dawah mosque. The hijackers drop off some bags, to which the hijackers had affixed a note stating: “gift for the brothers.” According to the 9/11 Commission, the bags contain “fruit, clothing, flight logs, and various other materials.” After 9/11, the FBI will investigate the mosque, asking people if they recognized any of the hijackers. They will determine the imam, Said Rageah, worked part-time raising money for the Global Relief Foundation. Shortly after 9/11, the US will declare this charity a terrorism financier and shut it down. The FBI investigates him for over a year but ultimately cannot find any link to the 9/1 attacks. ([Roig-Franzia and Harris 1/6/2002](#); [Downey and Hirsh 9/30/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 53](#)) Newsweek asks rhetorically, “Who are these mysterious brothers the hijackers left behind when they immolated themselves on September 11? Was that just the usual endearing term that fellow Muslims use for each other? Or is there a deeper connection?” ([Downey and Hirsh 9/30/2002](#))

September 9, 2001: Mohamed Atta Witnessed Behaving Suspiciously at Logan Airport

At Boston’s Logan Airport, during the morning, businesswoman Jan Shineman is checking in for Flight 11 to Los Angeles, when she notices a man resembling Mohamed Atta behaving suspiciously. She later recalls him wearing “summery, holiday-type clothes... and he had no baggage, just a folder with a notebook.” She sees him again at the gate for Flight 11, “taking notes, watching the pilots in the cockpit through the window by the gate. They were running through their pre-flight checks.” She decides, “if he had boarded I would have told the captain about him, he was so odd and frightening.” ([Corbin 7/5/2002](#); [Corbin 2003, pp. 229](#)) Atta will return to Logan Airport and board Flight 11 to Los Angeles on 9/11. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 1-2](#))

September 9, 2001: CIA Director Meets ISI Director about Bin Laden Issue

Pakistani ISI Director Gen. Mahmood Ahmed, who is visiting Washington (see [September 4-11, 2001](#)), meets with CIA Director George Tenet. In his 2007 book, Tenet will claim that he “tried to press” Mahmood to do something about Taliban support for bin Laden, since the Pakistani government has been supporting the Taliban since its creation in 1994. But Mahmood was supposedly “immovable when it came to the Taliban and al-Qaeda.” Tenet will say that Mahmood’s sole suggestion was the US should try bribing key Taliban officials to get them to turn over bin Laden. However, “even then he made it clear that neither he nor his service would have anything to do with the effort, not even to the extent of advising us whom we might approach.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 141-142](#))

September 9, 2001: Media Leak Leads to Investigation into Israeli Spying in US

National Security Adviser Rice, upset with a media leak, orders an investigation that will uncover evidence of widespread Israeli spying in the US. The Saudis had recently threatened to end their close alliance with the US (see [August 27, 2001](#) and [August 29-September 6, 2001](#)), and on September 6, 2001, President Bush held a meeting attended by Rice and others to work on how to appease Saudi concerns (see [September 6, 2001](#)). Just three days after the meeting, there is a story by Jane Perlez in the New York Times accurately detailing what was discussed in the meeting. It will later be reported that Rice is furious about the leak to Perlez and immediately demands a clampdown on leakers. The determination to improve secrecy increases in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. This leak investigation focuses on Israelis in the US. No one is ever prosecuted for the leak to Perlez, but the investigation will take on a life of its own and continue for years. ([Perlez 9/9/2001](#); [Kampeas and Berger 5/17/2005](#); [Rozen 7/14/2005](#)) It appears the FBI had been investigating Israeli spying in the US since at least 1999 (see [April 13, 1999-2004](#)), and there are reports of a discovery of a “massive” Israeli spy operation in the US in 2001 (see [2001](#)) and/or the discovery of the Israeli art student spy ring (see [March 23, 2001](#) and [June 2001](#)). It is unclear if there is any connection between these investigations and this media leak investigation or not.

September 9-11, 2001: NORAD Begins Northern Vigilance Military Operation

NORAD begins Operation Northern Vigilance. For this military operation, it deploys fighters to Alaska and Northern Canada to monitor a Russian air force exercise in the Russian Arctic and North Pacific Ocean, scheduled for September 10 to September 14. The Russian exercise involves its bombers staging a mock attack against NATO planes that are supposedly planning an assault on Russia. ([BBC 2001, pp. 161](#); [NORAD 9/9/2001](#); [Gertz 9/11/2001](#)) The NORAD fighters are due to stay in Alaska and Canada

until the end of the Russian exercise. At some time between 10:32 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. on 9/11, Russian President Vladimir Putin will call the White House to say the Russians are voluntarily halting their exercise. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#)) It is unknown from which bases NORAD sends fighters for Operation Northern Vigilance, and how many US military personnel are involved. However, in December 2000, it took similar action—called Operation Northern Denial—in response to a “smaller scale” Russian “long-range aviation activity in northern Russia and the Arctic.” More than 350 American and Canadian military personnel were involved on that occasion. ([Canadian Chief of Defense Staff 5/30/2001, pp. 6](#); [NORAD 9/9/2001](#))

September 9-11, 2001: 9/11 Plot Facilitators Leave United Arab Emirates

9/11 facilitators Ali Abdul Aziz Ali and Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi leave the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in a hurry. At a hearing held in Guantanamo Bay in 2007 to determine Ali’s combat status, his departure from the UAE just before 9/11 will be included in the facts supporting his designation as an enemy combatant. However, he will deny having foreknowledge of 9/11 and say he had to leave the UAE as his work permit was canceled. ([US Department of Defense 4/12/2007](#)) Al-Hawsawi leaves Dubai on the morning of 9/11 for Karachi. Shortly before, he had learned that the operation for which the hijackers had traveled to the US would take place on September 11, and had been advised by fellow operatives Ramzi bin al-Shibh and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed that he should return to Pakistan. ([US department of Defense 3/21/2007](#)) Before leaving, al-Hawsawi transferred \$40,000 the hijackers had returned to him to his Visa card (see [September 5-10, 2001](#)). He makes six ATM withdrawals on the card in Pakistan two days later and then disappears. ([MSNBC 12/11/2001](#))

Shortly Before September 11, 2001: WTC Tower Has Security Increased

The day after 9/11, Newsday will report that, according to security guard Hermina Jones, bulletproof windows and fireproof doors have recently been installed in a 22nd-floor computer command center in one of the WTC towers. Jones will claim that this was done to secure the tower from aerial attacks, though it is not clear if this is merely her post-9/11 opinion or if she had evidence to believe that was the reason for the improvement. ([Taylor and Gardiner 9/12/2001](#))

September 10, 2001: Alarm Bells Sound over Unusual Trading in US Stock Options Market

According to CBS News, in the afternoon before the attack, “alarm bells were sounding over unusual trading in the US stock options market.” It has been documented that the CIA, the Mossad, and many other intelligence agencies monitor stock trading in real time

using highly advanced programs such as Promis. Both the FBI and the Justice Department have confirmed the use of such programs for US intelligence gathering through at least this summer. This would confirm that the CIA should have had additional advance warning of imminent attacks against American and United Airlines planes. ([CBS News 9/19/2001](#)) There are even allegations that bin Laden was able to get a copy of Promis. ([Fox News 10/16/2001](#))

September 10, 2001: NSA Intercepts: ‘The Match Begins Tomorrow’ and ‘Tomorrow Is Zero Hour’

At least two messages in Arabic are intercepted by the NSA. One states, “The match is about to begin” and the other states, “Tomorrow is zero hour.” Later reports translate the first message as, “The match begins tomorrow.” ([Zakaria 9/9/2002](#)) The messages were sent between someone in Saudi Arabia and someone in Afghanistan. The NSA will claim that they are not translated until September 12, and that even if they had been translated in time, “they gave no clues that authorities could have acted on.” ([ABC News 6/7/2002](#); [Zakaria 6/19/2002](#)) Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee Bob Graham will later confirm that the messages were from al-Qaeda sources—a location or phone number—that made them a high priority, but that they were not from bin Laden or one of his top commanders. ([Graham and Nussbaum 2004, pp. 139](#)) These messages turn out to be only two of about 30 pre-9/11 communications from suspected al-Qaeda operatives or other militants referring to an imminent event. An anonymous official will say of these messages, including the “Tomorrow is zero hour” message: “You can’t dismiss any of them, but it does not tell you tomorrow is the day.” ([Zakaria 9/9/2002](#)) There will be a later attempt to explain the messages away by suggesting they referred to the killing of Afghan opposition leader Ahmed Shah Massoud the day before (see [September 9, 2001](#)). ([Reuters 10/17/2002](#))

September 10, 2001: US Intercepts: ‘Watch the News’ and ‘Tomorrow Will Be a Great Day for Us’

US officials later will admit American agents had infiltrated al-Qaeda cells in the US, though how many agents and how long they had been in al-Qaeda remains a mystery. On this day, electronic intercepts connected to these undercover agents hear messages such as, “Watch the news” and “Tomorrow will be a great day for us.” When asked why these messages did not lead to boosted security or warnings the next day, officials will refer to them as “needles in a haystack.” What other leads may have come from this prior to this day will not be revealed. ([Diamond 6/4/2002](#)) At least until February 2002, the official story will be that the “CIA failed to penetrate al-Qaeda with a single agent.” ([ABC News 2/18/2002](#))

September 10, 2001: US Generals Warned Not to Fly on Morning of 9/11

According to a Newsweek report on September 13, “[t]he state of alert had been high during the past two weeks, and a particularly urgent warning may have been received the night before the attacks, causing some top Pentagon brass to cancel a trip. Why that same information was not available to the 266 people who died aboard the four hijacked commercial aircraft may become a hot topic on the Hill.” ([Hirsh 9/13/2001](#)) Far from becoming a hot topic, the only additional media mention of this story will be in the next issue of Newsweek: “a group of top Pentagon officials suddenly canceled travel plans for the next morning, apparently because of security concerns.” ([Thomas and Hosenball 9/24/2001](#))

September 10, 2001: Intelligence Intercepts Show Al-Qaeda Agents Ordered to Return to Afghanistan by This Date

In a major post-9/11 speech, British Prime Minister Tony Blair will claim that “shortly before September 11, bin Laden told associates that he had a major operation against America under preparation, [and] a range of people were warned to return back to Afghanistan because of action on or around September 11.” His claims will come from a British document of telephone intercepts and interrogations revealing al-Qaeda orders to return to Afghanistan by September 10. ([NPA 10/4/2001](#); [Waller 10/5/2001](#)) However, Blair may have the direction incorrect, since would-be hijacker Ramzi bin al-Shibh later will claim that he is the one who passes to bin Laden the date the attacks will happen and warns others to evacuate. ([Fouda 9/9/2002](#))

September 10, 2001: Dallas Fifth Grader Forecasts World War III

A fifth grader in Dallas, Texas, casually tells his teacher, “Tomorrow, World War III will begin. It will begin in the United States, and the United States will lose.” The teacher reports the comment to the FBI, but does not know if they act on it at the time. The student skips the next two days of school. The event may be completely coincidental, but the newspaper that reports the story also notes that two charities, Holy Land Foundation and InfoCom, located in an adjacent suburb have been under investigation based on suspected fund-raising activities for Islamic militant organizations. One InfoCom employee had his name in the telephone book of Wadih El-Hage, bin Laden’s personal secretary, and he was seen with El-Hage as recently as 1998 (see [September 16, 1998-September 5, 2001](#)). ([Ratcliffe 9/19/2001](#)) The FBI investigates and decides “no further investigation [is] warranted.” ([Houston Chronicle 10/1/2001](#))

September 10, 2001: New Jersey Student Warns Teacher to Stay Away from Lower Manhattan

A sixth-grade student of Middle Eastern descent in Jersey City, New Jersey, says something that alarms his teacher at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School. “Essentially, he [warns] her to stay away from lower Manhattan because something bad [is] going to happen,” says Sgt. Edgar Martinez, deputy director of police services for the Jersey City Police Department. ([Shapiro 9/10/2002](#))

September 10, 2001: Suspicious Trading on United Airlines Stock Occurs at Pacific Exchange

The trading ratio on United Airlines is 25 times greater than normal at the Pacific Exchange. Pacific Exchange officials later decline to state whether this abnormality is being investigated. ([Berthelsen 9/19/2001](#))

September 10, 2001: Trader Makes Suspicious Investments Moves; Later Accused of 9/11 Foreknowledge



Amr “Tony” Elgindy. [*Source: San Diego Union Tribune*] Amr Elgindy orders his broker to liquidate his children’s \$300,000 trust account fearing a sudden crash in the market. He also tells his stockbroker that the Dow Jones average, then at 9,600, will fall to below 3,000. Elgindy is arrested in San Diego in May 2002, along with FBI agents Jeffrey Royer and Lynn Wingate, who, according to government prosecutors, were using their FBI positions to obtain inside information on various corporations. They also questioned whether Elgindy had foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks. ([Berenson 5/23/2002](#); [Ayres 5/30/2002](#); [Barboza and Berenson 6/8/2002](#)) A report published in the San Diego Union-Tribune, however, casts some doubt on the government’s allegations. ([Calbreath 6/16/2002](#)) In 2005, now former FBI agent Jeffrey Royer admits to giving Elgindy confidential details of federal investigations, including a

probe of the 9/11 attacks. Royer claims he did it to use Elgindy's knowledge to help develop evidence of criminal wrongdoing. A court case against Royer and Elgindy continues. ([Associated Press 1/5/2005](#))

September 10, 2001: Likely Hijacker Associates in Florida Predict American Bloodshed Tomorrow



The Pink Pony strip club. [Source: *Durand Patrick / Corbis*] In the Pink Pony strip club in Daytona Beach, Florida the night before the 9/11 attacks, three men make anti-American sentiments and talk of impending bloodshed. One says, "Wait 'til tomorrow. America is going to see bloodshed." These are not any of the hijackers, since they had all left Florida by this time, but it is suspected these men knew the hijackers. ([Associated Press 9/14/2001](#); [Hansen 9/23/2001](#)) Mohamed Atta is said to have regularly frequented the same bar (see [Before September 11, 2001](#)).

September 10, 2001: Rumsfeld Announces Defense Department Cannot Track \$2.3 Trillion in Transactions

In a speech to the Department of Defense, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld announces that the Department of Defense "cannot track \$2.3 trillion in transactions." CBS later calculates that 25 percent of the yearly defense budget is unaccounted for, and quotes a long-time defense budget analyst: "[Their] numbers are pie in the sky. The books are cooked routinely year after year." Coverage of this rather shocking story is nearly nonexistent given the events of the next day. ([Rumsfeld 9/10/2001](#); [CBS News 1/29/2002](#)) In April 2002 it will be revealed that \$1.1 trillion of the missing money comes from the 2000 fiscal year. Auditors won't even quantify how much money is missing from fiscal year 2001, causing "some [to] fear it's worse" than 2000. The Department of the Army will state that it won't publish a stand-alone financial statement for 2001 because of "the loss of financial-management personnel sustained during the Sept. 11 terrorist attack." ([O'Meara 4/29/2002](#)) This \$1.1 trillion plus unknown additional amounts

continues to remain unaccounted for, and auditors say it may take eight years of reorganization before a proper accounting can be done. ([O'Meara 8/21/2003](#))

September 10, 2001: Ashcroft Opposes Counterterrorism Funding

Attorney General Ashcroft rejects a proposed \$58 million increase in financing for the FBI's counterterrorism programs. The money would have paid for 149 new counterterrorism field agents, 200 additional analysts and 54 additional translators. On the same day, he sends a request for budget increases to the White House. It covers 68 programs—but none of them relate to counterterrorism. He also sends a memorandum to his heads of departments, stating his seven priorities—none of them relate to counterterrorism. ([Monbiot 5/21/2002](#); [Risen and Johnston 6/1/2002](#); [Bumiller 6/2/2002](#)) He further proposes cutting a program that gives state and local counterterrorism grants for equipment like radios and preparedness training from \$109 million to \$44 million. Yet Ashcroft stopped flying public airplanes in July due to an as yet undisclosed terrorist threat (see [July 26, 2001](#)), and in a July speech he proclaimed, "Our No. 1 priority is the prevention of terrorist attacks." ([Clymer 2/28/2002](#))

September 10, 2001: Cheney's Domestic Terrorism Task Force Finally Beginning to Hire Staff

The domestic terrorism task force announced by President Bush and Vice President Cheney in May 2001 is just gearing up. Cheney appointed Admiral Steve Abbot to lead the task force in June, but he does not receive his White House security pass until now. Abbot has only hired two staffers and been working full time for a few days prior to 9/11. The task force was to have reported to Congress by October 1, 2001, a date they could not have met. ([Mitchell 12/27/2001](#); [Rood 4/15/2004](#))

September 10, 2001: Review of Counterterrorism Legislation May Take Six Months, Says Cheney Aide

Senator Dianne Feinstein (D), who, with Senator Jon Kyl (R), has sent a copy of draft legislation on counterterrorism and national defense to Vice President Cheney's office on July 20, is told by Cheney's top aide Lewis "Scooter" Libby on this day "that it might be another six months before he would be able to review the material." ([Dianne Feinstein 5/17/2002](#); [Hirsh and Isikoff 5/27/2002](#))

September 10, 2001: Anti-Terrorism Meeting at WTC on 9/11 is Canceled

Silverstein Properties, Larry Silverstein's company which took over the lease of the WTC weeks earlier (see [July 24, 2001](#)), has a meeting planned for the morning of 9/11 in its temporary offices on the 88th floor of the WTC North Tower, along with Port Authority officials. It is to discuss what to do in the event of a terrorist attack. However, this evening the meeting is canceled because one participant cannot attend. ([Sorkin and Romero 9/12/2001](#); [Leibovich-Dar 11/21/2001](#)) Of Silverstein Properties' 160 staff, 54 are in the North Tower when it is hit, and four of them die. ([Saunders et al. 9/7/2002](#))

September 10, 2001: Los Angeles FBI Office Search Assistance Comes Too Late, San Diego FBI Office Not Contacted at All

FBI agent Robert Fuller began looking for Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar on September 4, 2001 (see [September 4, 2001](#)). Within one day, he found that Almihdhar had not stayed at the New York City hotel he listed as a destination when he arrived in the US in July 2001. Alhazmi and Almihdhar had traveled to Los Angeles on January 15, 2000. Immigration records indicated that they claimed to be destined for a Sheraton hotel in Los Angeles. On this day, Fuller drafts an investigative lead for the Los Angeles FBI office, asking that office to search Sheraton hotel records concerning any stays by Almihdhar and Alhazmi in early 2000. However, the lead is not transmitted to Los Angeles until the next day, after the 9/11 attacks have begun. The search will also turn up nothing, since neither of them stayed at a Sheraton hotel. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#); [US Congress 9/20/2002](#); [US Department of Justice 11/2004](#); [Kinkead 11/28/2004](#)) Both men had been living in nearby San Diego for much of the previous two years. The San Diego FBI office is not notified about the need for a search until September 12, and even then, they are only provided with "sketchy" information. ([Drogin and Lichtblau 9/16/2001](#)) The FBI handling agent in San Diego is certain they could have been located quickly had they known where to look. The FBI agent running the San Diego office will claim they could have easily found the two hijackers by looking their names up in the phone book (see [September 11, 2001](#)). ([US Congress 7/24/2003](#)) There is some evidence from eyewitnesses that a few days before 9/11, Almihdhar and two other hijackers are living in the same San Diego apartment that they had been living in off and on for the past two years, the address that was listed for them in the public phone book (see [Early September 2001](#)).

September 10, 2001: NSA Monitors Call as KSM Gives Atta Final Approval to Launch Attacks

Mohamed Atta calls Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) in Afghanistan. Mohammed gives final approval to Atta to launch the attacks. This call is monitored and translated by the US, although it is not known how quickly the call is translated, and the specifics of the conversation haven't been released. ([Buncombe 9/15/2002](#)) Presumably this call was monitored by the NSA, which monitored other calls between KSM and Atta in the summer of 2001 but did not share the information about this with other agencies (see

[Summer 2001](#)). Additionally, it will later be revealed that an FBI squad built an antenna in the Indian Ocean some time before 9/11 with the specific purpose of listening in on KSM's phone calls, so they may have learned about this call to Atta on their own (see [Before September 11, 2001](#)).

September 10, 2001: Pakistan Guards Osama as He Receives Medical Treatment



CBS News footage of the Rawalpindi, Pakistan, hospital where bin Laden was allegedly treated the day before 9/11. [Source: CBS News] CBS later reports that on this day, bin Laden is admitted to a military hospital in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, for kidney dialysis treatment. Pakistani military forces guard bin Laden. They also move out all the regular staff in the urology department and send in a secret team to replace them. It is not known how long he stays there. ([CBS News 1/28/2002](#))

September 10, 2001: Atta and Alomari Make Mysterious Trip to Portland, Maine



Hijacker Abdulaziz Alomari using an ATM in Portland, Maine, on September 10, at 8:41 p.m. Mohamed Atta can be seen further back in the first and last image. [Source: FBI] Hijackers Mohamed Atta and

Abdulaziz Alomari arrive in Portland, Maine, where they spend the night. In October 2001, the FBI will release detailed information and photographs of the two hijackers in the town in an apparent attempt to find out from the public more about what they were doing there. According to the FBI, the pair leave Boston in the afternoon in a blue Nissan Altima and drive to South Portland, where they check into a Comfort Inn around 5:45 p.m. They are caught on security cameras visiting a gas station, two ATMs, and shopping at a Wal-Mart. The next morning they fly back to Boston, where they board the airplane they will hijack. ([Lipka 9/28/2001](#); [Wedge and Farmer 10/5/2001](#); [Portland Press Herald 10/5/2001](#); [Australian Broadcasting Corporation 11/12/2001](#)) In September 2002, the New York Times speculates, “There have been many theories [for going to Portland]: that they made contact with a confederate in Portland who gave them the final go-ahead, or more likely, that by arriving on a connecting flight, they would avoid the security check in Boston. None of those explanations seems entirely satisfactory, given the risk....” ([Bernstein et al. 9/11/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission will later speculate that the most “plausible theory” is that the hijackers make the trip so as to help avoid suspicion that might be created from all ten hijackers departing on Boston flights arriving in the Boston airport at roughly the same time. ([Goo 2/13/2005](#))

September 10, 2001: Three 9/11 Hijackers Stay at Same Hotel as Senior Saudi Official



Sami Omar Hussayen, nephew of Saleh Ibn Abdul Rahman Hussayen. [*Source: Family photo*] Three hijackers, Hani Hanjour, Khalid Almihdhar, and Nawaf Alhazmi, check into the same hotel as a prominent Saudi government official, Saleh Ibn Abdul Rahman Hussayen. ([Schmidt 10/2/2003](#)) Hussayen originally stayed at a different nearby hotel, but moved to this hotel on the same day the hijackers checked in. ([Trento and Trento 2006, pp. 45](#)) Investigators have not found any evidence that the hijackers met with Hussayen, and stress it could be a coincidence. ([Rennie 3/10/2003](#)) However, one prosecutor working on a related case will assert, “I continue to believe it can’t be a coincidence.” ([Barrett and Simpson 10/2/2003](#)) An FBI agent will later say that Hussayen “may have had some connection to the attacks and is likely to have met with those funding the hijackers if not the hijackers themselves.” ([Trento and Trento 2006, pp. 45](#)) Hussayen is interviewed by the FBI shortly after 9/11, but according to testimony from an FBI agent, the interview is cut short when Hussayen “feign[s] a seizure,

prompting the agents to take him to a hospital, where the attending physicians [find] nothing wrong with him.” The agent recommends that Hussayen “should not be allowed to leave until a follow-up interview could occur.” ([Schmidt 10/2/2003](#)) The agent returns to the hotel the next day, but finds Hussayen unhelpful. After she leaves, Hussayen calls the Saudi embassy, which contacts the FBI. Another, less aggressive agent is sent to talk to Hussayen and finds no additional information, so the FBI says he can leave the US. The first agent does not want him to go without answering her questions, but, according to authors Joe and Susan Trento, “Because of pressure from [Saudi ambassador to the US] Prince Bandar on the Bush administration... the agent’s superiors overruled her.” The superiors are not named. ([Trento and Trento 2006, pp. 45](#)) For most of the 1990s, Hussayen was director of the SAAR Foundation, a Saudi charity that is being investigated for terrorism ties and will be raided in early 2002 (see [March 20, 2002](#)). A few months after 9/11 he is named a minister of the Saudi government and put in charge of its two holy mosques. Hussayen had arrived in the US in late August 2001 planning to visit some Saudi-sponsored charities. Many of the charities on his itinerary, including the Global Relief Foundation, Muslim World League, IIRO (International Islamic Relief Organization), IANA (Islamic Assembly of North America), and World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), have since been shut down or investigated for alleged ties to Islamic militant groups. ([Schmidt 10/2/2003](#)) His nephew, Sami Omar Hussayen, will be indicted in early 2004 for using his computer expertise to assist militant groups, and will be charged with administering a website associated with IANA, an organization which expressly advocated suicide attacks and using airliners as weapons in the months before 9/11. Investigators also will claim the nephew was in contact with important al-Qaeda figures. ([Schmidt 10/2/2003](#); [Seattle Post-Intelligencer 1/10/2004](#)) The nephew will be acquitted later in 2004 of the terrorism-related charges. The defense will not dispute that he posted messages advocating suicide bombings, but will argue that he had the Constitutional right to do so. The jury will deadlock on most of the counts. ([Schmidt 6/11/2004](#)) IANA apparently will remain under investigation, as well as the flow of money from the uncle to nephew. ([Rennie 3/10/2003](#)) The uncle is not charged with any crime. ([Barrett and Simpson 10/2/2003](#))

September 10, 2001: Atta Allegedly Visits the WTC to Enter Coordinates Into GPS Device; One Report Claims Mistaken Identity

Credit card receipts later discovered by the FBI apparently show that alleged lead hijacker Mohamed Atta is in Manhattan on this day. According to FBI agents, he visits the observation deck on the 107th floor of the south WTC tower. CNN will report, “Officials speculate Atta may have been in New York... to program the towers’ location into a global positioning system.” A global positioning system (GPS) uses satellite technology to pinpoint any location on Earth. According to the FBI, Atta bought himself such a device, costing about \$500, by mail order. ([ABC News 5/22/2002](#); [Candiotti 5/22/2002](#)) Investigators will reportedly consider this trip necessary, “because they believe the hijackers were too inexperienced to handle the jumbo jets without help.” ([Smith 5/22/2002](#)) BBC reporter Jane Corbin points out that Atta was also witnessed at

Boston's Logan Airport the previous morning (see [September 9, 2001](#)), where he could have entered start-point co-ordinates for his 9/11 flight into the GPS device. ([Corbin 2003, pp. 230](#)) However, there is no mention of Atta's New York visit in the 9/11 Commission Report. According to FBI Director Robert Mueller, Atta spent the previous night at the Milner Hotel in Boston, and then shortly after noon on this day is in Boston where he picks up Abdulaziz Alomari and drives to Portland, Maine. ([US Congress 9/26/2002](#)) The 200-mile journey from Boston to New York takes approximately four hours by car. ([MIT 5/25/2006](#)) So if Mueller's account is correct, it seems difficult to comprehend Atta having time to travel to New York, go up the WTC, make purchases on his credit card, and then return to Boston, all in the space of one morning. An article in the New York Post will in fact claim that the person in Manhattan was "a distinguished renal and gene specialist at Johns Hopkins University Hospital" in Baltimore, Maryland. This man, who is also called Mohamed Atta, happened to have visited New York in the days before 9/11, "for a whirlwind weekend with his new bride." The article claims that it had erroneously been reported that alleged hijacker Mohamed Atta "was casing the Twin Towers days before Sept. 11—even after the FBI concluded it was just the kidney doctor, who had planned to take his wife to Windows on the World for dinner in the North Tower." ([Weiss 5/28/2002](#))

September 10, 2001: Chief US Al-Qaeda Prosecutor Warns Friend Al-Qaeda Will Hit US Again

Patrick Fitzgerald was involved in the prosecution of all the major al-Qaeda legal cases in the US before 9/11. Just before 9/11, he switched to prosecuting political corruption cases and will later become known for prosecuting the leak of CIA agent Valerie Plame's identity. On this day, he sends an e-mail to a colleague who is also switching from working on terrorism cases. He writes, "You can't leave, they're going to hit us again and someone has got to be around to work it." ([Harris 2/12/2006](#))

September 10, 2001: New WTC Security Director Warns of Danger of 'Something Big'

John O'Neill, who is later described by the New Yorker magazine as the FBI's "most committed tracker of Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network of terrorists," recently retired from the bureau and started a new job as director of security at the World Trade Center (see [August 23, 2001](#)). ([Wright 1/14/2002](#)) On this day he meets up with his old friend Raymond Powers, the former New York Police Department chief of operations, to discuss security procedures. Their conversation turns to Osama bin Laden. According to journalist and author Murray Weiss, "just as he had reiterated since 1995 to any official in Washington who would listen, O'Neill said he was sure bin Laden would attack on American soil, and expected him to target the Twin Towers again." He says to Powers, "It's going to happen, and it looks like something big is brewing." ([Weiss 2003, pp. 355 and 359-360](#)) Later on, O'Neill goes out in the evening with his friends Robert Tucker and Jerome Hauer. Again, he starts discussing bin Laden. He tells his friends, "We're due.

And we're due for something big." He says, "Some things have happened in Afghanistan. I don't like the way things are lining up in Afghanistan." This is probably a reference to the assassination of Afghan leader Ahmed Shah Massoud the previous day (see [September 9, 2001](#)). He adds, "I sense a shift, and I think things are going to happen." Asked when, he replies, "I don't know, but soon." ([Wright 1/14/2002](#); [PBS 10/3/2002](#)) O'Neill will be in his office on the 34th floor of the South Tower the following morning when the first attack occurs, and dies when the WTC collapses. ([Weiss 2003, pp. 366](#); [Weiss 8/31/2004](#))

September 10, 2001: Alleged Al-Qaeda Operative Arrives in US

Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri, from Qatar but a legal US resident, arrives in the US with his wife and five children, reportedly to pursue a master's degree in computer science at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. ([Lucian 12/19/2001](#); [Golden and van Natal 6/21/2004](#)) Al-Marri appears to have been sent to the US by 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM). During his interrogation, KSM will identify al-Marri as "the point of contact for al-Qaeda operatives arriving in the US for September 11 follow-on operations." He will describe al-Marri as "the perfect sleeper agent because he has studied in the United States, had no criminal record, and had a family with whom he could travel." ([Thomas 6/15/2003](#)) However, there are doubts about the reliability of KSM's interrogation, which is believed that have been obtained through the use of torture (see [June 16, 2004](#)). Al-Marri also lived in Illinois for part of 2000 under a different name. ([Pienciak 1/11/2003](#)) He apparently is related to Mohamed al-Khatani, who attempted to enter the US in August 2001 to join the 9/11 plot (see [July 2002](#)). ([Golden and van Natal 6/21/2004](#))

Before September 11, 2001: US Military's Special Forces Never Used Against Al-Qaeda Before 9/11

The US military never uses its elite units to hunt bin Laden or any other al-Qaeda leaders. US Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) is said to have less than 1000 operatives, mainly Navy Seals and Army Delta Force, which are the most trained and qualified personnel in the US for hunting fugitives. Professor Richard Shultz at Tufts University's Fletcher School will be commissioned by the Pentagon shortly after 9/11 to research why such special forces were not used before 9/11 to hunt bin Laden or other al-Qaeda leaders. He will find that US military leaders always said they needed better intelligence. They did a lot of planning but took no action. Shultz will say, "It's your strike force, and yet it was never used once for its primary mission before Sept. 11." JSOC forces will have more successes after 9/11, including playing roles in the capture of Saddam Hussein in 2003 and the killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2006 (see [June 8, 2006](#)). ([San Francisco Examiner 3/2/2007](#))

September 10, 2001: President Arrives at Longboat Key Resort; Tight Overnight Security Includes Surface-to-Air Missiles

At 6:30 p.m., President Bush arrives at the Colony Beach and Tennis Resort on Longboat Key, Florida. ([Sammon 2002, pp. 13](#); [Bayles 9/10/2002](#)) He is in Florida as part of a weeklong effort to place a national spotlight on education and reading, and visited a school in Jacksonville earlier in the day. ([ABC News 9/10/2001](#); [Florida Times-Union \(Jacksonville\) 9/10/2001](#)) In preparation for the president's visit to the resort, all guests have been cleared out of the building "to make way for the invasion of White House staffers, aides, communications technicians—even an antiterrorism unit." Overnight, snipers and surface-to-air missiles are located on the roof of the Colony and adjacent structures, to protect the president. "The Coast Guard and the Longboat Key Police Department manned boats that patrolled the surf in front of the resort all night. Security trucks with enough men and arms to stop a small army parked right on the beach. An Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) plane circled high overhead in the clear night sky." ([Sammon 2002, pp. 13 and 25](#); [Bayles 9/10/2002](#)) Whether this is a typical level of security for a presidential visit, or is increased due to recent terror warnings, is unstated.

September 10, 2001: Alleged CIA Informant Warns Syrian Government about 9/11 Attacks; Syria Apparently Fails to Pass on Warning



Luai Sakra. [*Source: Associated Press*] In his 2007 book *At the Center of the Storm*, former CIA Director George Tenet will write that on September 10, 2001, "a source we were jointly running with a Middle Eastern country went to see his foreign handler and basically told him that something big was about to go down. The handler dismissed him." Tenet claims the warning was "frightening but without specificity." ([Tenet 2007, pp. 160](#)) While Tenet will not mention the name of the source, his description perfectly matches a Syrian-born militant named Luai Sakra. Sakra will be

arrested in Turkey in 2005 (see [July 30, 2005](#)) and reportedly will tell interrogators after his arrest, “I was one of the people who knew the 9/11 perpetrators, and I knew the plans and times beforehand.” He claims to have provided the pilots with passports and money (see [September 2000-July 24, 2001](#)). *Der Spiegel* will report, “Western investigators accept Sakra’s claims, by and large, since they coincide with known facts. On September 10, 2001, he tipped off the Syrian secret service... that terrorist attacks were about to occur in the United States. The evidently well-informed al-Qaeda insider even named buildings as targets, and airplanes as weapons. The Syrians passed on this information to the CIA—but only after the attacks.” ([Stark 8/24/2005](#)) In 2007, Sakra will also claim to have trained some of the 9/11 hijackers in Turkey starting in late 1999 (see [Late 1999-2000](#)). If Tenet is referring to Sakra, then it appears Sakra did develop a relationship with the CIA that continued at least through 9/11 (see [2000](#)).

Before September 11, 2001: Tenet Said to Warn Congresspeople about Imminent Attack on the US



Ike Skelton. [*Source: Publicity photo*] On the morning of 9/11, David Welna, National Public Radio’s Congressional correspondent, will say, “I spoke with Congressman Ike Skelton—a Democrat from Missouri and a member of the Armed Services Committee—who said that just recently the Director of the CIA [George Tenet] warned that there could be an attack—an imminent attack—on the United States of this nature. So this is not entirely unexpected.” More details, such as when Tenet said this, who else he may have said it to, and so forth, remain unknown. ([NPR 9/11/2001](#))

Before September 11, 2001: ‘We’re Ready to Go’ and ‘Big Thing Coming’ Intercepts Not Analyzed Until After 9/11

Though the NSA specializes in intercepting communications, the CIA and FBI intercept as well. After 9/11, CIA and FBI officials will discover messages with phrases like, “There is a big thing coming,” “they’re going to pay the price,” and “We’re ready to go.” Supposedly, most or all of these intercepted messages will not be analyzed until after 9/11. ([Thomas 10/1/2001](#))

Before September 11, 2001: US Government Knows of Taliban, Saudi, and Pakistan Connections, but Does Nothing

In June 2004, future 9/11 Commissioner Bob Kerrey will say that before 9/11, “There’s no question the Taliban was getting money from the Saudis... and there’s no question they got much more than that from the Pakistani government. Their motive is a secondary issue for us.” He claims this finding is based almost entirely on information known to the US government before 9/11. “All we’re doing is looking at classified documents from our own government, not from some magical source. So we knew what was going on, but we did nothing.” ([Meyer 7/16/2004](#)) However, the 9/11 Commission will leave such material out of its final report and in fact make the claim in its last staff statement, “There is no convincing evidence that any government financially supported al-Qaeda before 9/11.” ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#))

Before September 11, 2001: Three Countries Hear Bin Laden Tell Wife to Return to Afghanistan; This Warning Sets Off ‘Scramble’ in US and Elsewhere

A month after 9/11, the New York Times will report: “Interpreting intercepted communications, which are cryptic and in code, and sorting through all the rumors present a formidable challenge. One intercept before the Sept. 11 attack was, according to two senior intelligence officials, the first early warning of the assault and it set off a scramble by American and other intelligence agencies. In that call, Mr. bin Laden advised his wife in Syria to come back to Afghanistan. That message, which was intercepted by the intelligence services of more than one country, was passed on to the United States, officials from three countries said.” ([Bonner and Tagliabue 10/21/2001](#)) bin Laden apparently makes a similar phone call to his stepmother in Syria on September 9, 2001 (see [September 9, 2001](#)).

Before September 11, 2001: Echelon Intelligence Network Used on Al-Qaeda



An Echelon station in Menwith Hill, Britain.

[Source: BBC] By the 1980s, a high-tech global electronic surveillance network shared between the US, Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand is gathering intelligence all over the world. The BBC describes Echelon’s power as “astounding,” and elaborates:

“Every international telephone call, fax, e-mail, or radio transmission can be listened to by powerful computers capable of voice recognition. They home in on a long list of key words, or patterns of messages. They are looking for evidence of international crime, like terrorism.” ([Bomford 11/3/1999](#)) One major focus for Echelon before 9/11 is al-Qaeda. For instance, one account mentions Echelon intercepting al-Qaeda communications in Southeast Asia in 1996 (see [Before September 11, 2001](#)). A staff member of the National Security Council who regularly attends briefings on bin Laden states, “We are probably tapped into every hotel room in Pakistan. We can listen in to just about every phone call in Afghanistan.” However, he and other critics will claim one reason why US intelligence failed to stop terrorism before 9/11 was because there was too much of a focus on electronic intelligence gathering and not enough focus on human interpretation of that vast data collection. ([Brzezinski 2/2/2002](#))

Before September 11, 2001: Hijackers Drink Alcohol and Watch Strip Shows, Especially Towards Eve of Attacks



Cheetah's nude bar in San Diego. [Source:

Cheetah's] A number of the hijackers apparently drink alcohol heavily in bars and watch strip shows in the US in the months and especially the days leading up to 9/11.

■ On September 10, three hijacker associates spend \$200 to \$300 apiece on lap dances and drinks in the Pink Pony, a Daytona Beach, Florida strip club. While the hijackers had left Florida by this time, Mohamed Atta is reported to have visited the same strip club, and these men appear to have had foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks (see [September 10, 2001](#)). ([Wedge 10/10/2001](#))

■ Marwan Alshehhi and Mohamed Atta are seen entering the Hollywood, Florida, sports bar Shuckums already drunk. They proceed to drink even more hard alcohol there (see [September 7, 2001](#)).

■ Atta and Alshehhi are seen at Sunrise 251, a bar in Palm Beach, Florida. They spend \$1,000 in 45 minutes on Krug and Perrier-Jouet champagne. Atta is with a tall busty brunette in her late twenties; Alshehhi is with a shortish blonde. Both women are known locally as regular companions of high-rollers. ([Bailey 9/16/2001](#))

■ A stripper at the Olympic Garden Topless Cabaret in Las Vegas, Nevada, recalls Marwan Alshehhi being “cheap,” paying only \$20 for a lap dance. ([Colavecchio 10/16/2001](#))

- Several hijackers reportedly patronize the Nardone's Go-Go Bar in Elizabeth, New Jersey. They are even seen there on the weekend before 9/11. ([Wedge 10/10/2001](#); [Wall Street Journal 10/16/2001](#))
 - Majed Moqed visits a porn shop on three occasions, and rents a porn video. The mayor of Paterson, New Jersey, says of the six hijackers who stayed there: "Nobody ever saw them at mosques, but they liked the go-go clubs." ([Frank 9/23/2001](#); [Thomas 10/15/2001](#))
 - Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar often frequented Cheetah's, a nude bar in San Diego. ([McDermott 9/1/2002](#))
 - Hamza Alghamdi watched a porn video on September 10. ([Wall Street Journal 10/16/2001](#))
- University of Florida religion professor Richard Foltz states, "It is incomprehensible that a person could drink and go to a strip bar one night, then kill themselves the next day in the name of Islam... People who would kill themselves for their faith would come from very strict Islamic ideology. Something here does not add up." ([Benjamin 9/16/2001](#))

Before September 11, 2001: US Government Prepares for Hijackings, Some of Them Involving Multiple-Planes

Based on interviews with FBI officials, the New Yorker reports that, for several years prior to 9/11, the US government plans for "simulated terrorist attacks, including scenarios [involving] multiple-plane hijackings." This presumably refers to more than just the Amalgam Virgo 02 exercise (see [July 2001](#)), which is based on the scenario of two planes being simultaneously hijacked. ([New Yorker 9/24/2001](#)) Similarly, NORAD will state that before 9/11, it normally conducted four major exercises each year at headquarters level. Most of them included a hijack scenario, and some of them were apparently quite similar to the 9/11 attacks (see [Between 1991 and 2001](#)) (see [1999-September 11, 2001](#)). ([Komarow and Squitieri 4/18/2004](#); [Starr 4/19/2004](#)) John Arquilla, an associate professor of defense analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, later says that while "No one knew specifically that 20 people would hijack four airliners and use them for suicide attacks against major buildings... the idea of such an attack was well known, [and] had been war gamed as a possibility in exercises before Sept. 11." ([Howe 7/18/2002](#))

Before September 11, 2001: Atta E-mails US Defense Contractor Employees

At some point, a man later believed to be Marwan Alshehhi buys a pilot's headset from Eastern Avionics, a vendor at the Charlotte County Airport in Punta Gorda, Florida (see [\(2000-August 2001\)](#)). Subsequently, in the months leading up to 9/11, the salesperson receives e-mails, which may have been sent by Mohamed Atta as part of a mass mailing. Some are in Arabic, and appear to express Muslim concerns, with one including a photo taken in the Middle East of a dead child. After 9/11, the FBI will take hold of all these e-

mails. The local sheriff will point out that there are some other people's e-mail addresses that can be gleaned from the messages, although the FBI never publicly reveals the identities of these individuals. ([Arnold 9/21/2001](#); [Arnold 10/2/2001](#); [Oshier 4/24/2002](#)) Investigative reporter Daniel Hopsicker, who later obtains copies of the e-mails, will report that some of the 40 or so addresses Atta sent to belong to employees of US defense contractors. ([Atta 4/24/2002](#); [Hopsicker 2004, pp. 104-105](#))

Just Before September 11, 2001: Deputies Still Putting Final Touches on Three-Year Plan to Stop Al-Qaeda

Another deputies meeting further considers policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan, and makes further revisions to the National Security Presidential Directive regarding al-Qaeda. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) By the end of the meeting, a formal, three-phase strategy is agreed upon. An envoy is to go to Afghanistan and give the Taliban another chance to expel bin Laden. If this fails, more pressure will be put on the Taliban, including more support for the Northern Alliance and other groups. If the Taliban still refuse to change, the US will try to overthrow the Taliban through more direct action. The time-frame for this strategy is about three years. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) CIA Director Tenet is formally tasked to draw up new authorities for the covert action program envisioned, and request funding to implement it. ([9/11 Commission 3/24/2004](#)) The directive is then to be sent to National Security Adviser Rice for approval. President Bush is apparently aware of the directive and prepared to sign it (though he hasn't attended any of the meetings about it), but he does not sign it until October. ([MSNBC 5/16/2002](#); [Drogin 5/18/2002](#); [Wright 4/1/2004](#))

Just Before September 11, 2001: US Has Only 32 Air Marshals and None on Domestic Flights

The number of US air marshals (specially trained, plainclothes armed federal agents deployed on airliners) has shrunk from about 2,000 during the Cold War to 32 by 9/11. None are deployed on domestic flights. The number is later increased to about 2,000, but it would take about 120,000 marshals at a cost of \$10 billion a year to protect all daily flights to, from, or within the US. ([Alonso-Zaldivar 1/14/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 85](#))

Just Before September 11, 2001: Key Counterterrorism Position Still Unfilled

The position of Deputy Secretary for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, the Defense Department post traditionally dealing the most with counterterrorism, still has not been filled since being vacated in January 2001 when Bush became president. Aides to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld later tell the 9/11 Commission that "the new [Defense

Department] team was focused on other issues” and not counterterrorism. ([Isikoff and Hosenball 3/24/2004](#))

Just Before September 11, 2001: CIA, FBI Lack Counterterrorism Resources, and Focus

Just prior to 9/11, the CIA and FBI do not have enough staff working on al-Qaeda. Only 17 to 19 people are working in the FBI’s special unit focusing on bin Laden and al-Qaeda. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) The FBI has a \$4.3 billion anti-terrorism budget, but of its 27,000 employees, just 153 are devoted to terrorism analysis. ([Alcorn 6/8/2002](#)) The FBI’s “analytic expertise has been ‘gutted’ by transfers to operational units” and only one strategic analyst is assigned full time to al-Qaeda. The FBI office in New York is very aware of the threat from bin Laden, but many branch offices remain largely unaware. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) A senior FBI official later tells Congress that there are fewer FBI agents assigned to counterterrorism on this day than in August 1998, when the US embassy bombings in Africa made bin Laden a household name. ([Risen 9/22/2002](#)) The CIA has only about 35 to 40 people assigned to their special bin Laden unit. It has five strategic analysts working full time on al-Qaeda. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) The CIA and FBI later complain that some of these figures are misleading. ([Risen 9/18/2002](#)) “Individuals in both the CIA and FBI units... reported being seriously overwhelmed by the volume of information and workload prior to September 11, 2001.” Despite numerous warnings that planes could be used as weapons, such a possibility was never studied, and a congressional report later blames lack of staff as a major reason for this. ([US Congress 9/18/2002](#)) Senator Patrick Leahy (D) also notes, “Between the Department of Justice and the FBI, they had a whole task force working on finding a couple of houses of prostitution in New Orleans. They had one on al-Qaeda.” ([CBS News 9/25/2002](#))

Just Before September 11, 2001: Core of Al-Qaeda Probably Less Than 1,000 Operatives

Newsweek will report in 2006, “The intelligence community generally agrees that the number of true A-list al-Qaeda operatives out there around the time of 9/11 was no more than about 1,000, perhaps as few as 500, most in and around Afghanistan.” ([Hirsh 6/28/2006](#)) John Arquilla, a Special Operations expert at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, makes a higher end estimate, claiming “there were probably 3,000 core al-Qaeda operatives” around the time of 9/11. ([Thomas 8/28/2007](#))

Before September 11, 2001: Some 9/11 Hijackers Have Same Mailing Address as ‘Blind Sheikh’ and His Associate Did



The Sphinx Trading sign. [Source: *National*

Geographic] Some of the 9/11 hijackers rent mailboxes from a company called Sphinx Trading, which was also used by ‘Blind Sheikh’ Omar Abdul-Rahman and at least one of his associates. The mailboxes are located in Jersey City, New Jersey, four doors down from the mosque where Abdul-Rahman was imam in the early 1990s. El Sayyid Nosair, who assassinated Rabbi Meir Kahane and was linked to the Islamic militant cell Abdul-Rahman headed (see [November 5, 1990](#) and [December 7, 1991](#)), also had a mailbox there before he was arrested in 1990. Sphinx Trading is owned by Waleed al-Noor, who was named an unindicted co-conspirator at the ‘Landmarks’ bomb plot trial (see [June 24, 1993](#)). The hijackers will later obtain fake IDs from al-Noor’s partner, Mohamed el-Atriss. The names of the hijackers who had mailboxes there are never given, but in the summer of 2001 el-Atriss interacts with hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi, Abdulaziz Alomari, Khalid Almihdhar, and Hani Hanjour (see [July-August 2001](#)), at least. ([Hanley 6/25/2003](#); [Schwanberg 10/20/2003](#); [Lance 2006, pp. 372-4](#); [Kelly 9/11/2006](#)) An FBI agent will later comment: “The fact that this location was where Almihdhar, in particular, got his bogus credentials, is not only shocking, it makes me angry. The [Joint Terrorist Task Force] in the [New York Office] had this location back in 1991. In the mid-90s they listed al-Noor, the coowner, as a coconspirator, unindicted in the plot to blow up bridges and tunnels. And now we find out that this is the precise location where the most visible of all the hijackers in the US got his ID? Incredible. All the Bureau’s New York Office had to do was sit on that place over the years and they would have broken right into the 9/11 plot.” ([Lance 2006, pp. 373](#))

Before September 11, 2001: Drug Smuggler Possibly Smuggles Two 9/11 Hijackers into US

In October 2001, an Iranian named Mehrzad Arbane will tell an associate that he may have smuggled two of the 9/11 hijackers into the US. The associate, a known cocaine smuggler, will be so alarmed that he will become a government informant against Arbane. In 2004, Arbane will be convicted of smuggling cocaine from Latin America into the US and it will be reported he is also being investigated for money laundering and smuggling people from the Middle East into the US. It is not known which hijackers he may have smuggled into the US or when this may have taken place. ([Ridgeway 5/25/2004](#)) This runs counter to the 9/11 Commission’s claim, as expressed by one 9/11 Commission staffer, “The plotters all used their own passports to get into the country.” ([Waterman 8/17/2005](#))

Before September 11, 2001: CIA Uses Other Intelligence Agencies to Infiltrate Al-Qaeda

It has been widely reported that the CIA never had any assets near bin Laden before 9/11. For instance, Lawrence Wright will write in his highly regarded 2006 book, *The Looming Tower*, “The fact is that the CIA had no one inside al-Qaeda or the Taliban security that surrounded bin Laden.” ([Wright 2006, pp. 265](#)) But author Ronald Kessler will write in a 2004 book, “Often, the CIA used operatives from Arab intelligence services like those of Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and other countries to infiltrate bin Laden’s organization.” A longtime CIA officer says, “Egyptians, Jordanians, [and] Palestinians penetrated the bin Laden organization for us. It’s B.S. that we didn’t.” Kessler further explains that such operations remain one of the CIA’s best-kept secrets and often occur even with intelligence agencies the CIA is sometimes otherwise at odds with. Kessler says, “In return for help, the CIA provided them with money, equipment, and intelligence on their adversaries. Over the years, the Jordanians, for example, relied on the CIA to alert them to plots against the king. Over time, the Jordanians became so good at the intelligence game that they were better at detecting plots than the CIA.” ([Kessler 2004, pp. 143](#)) Jack Cloonan, an FBI expert on al-Qaeda, will later say, “There were agents run into the camps. But most of them were not very well placed,” and lacked access to the inner circles. ([Waterman 11/27/2006](#)) One example of such an asset may be Khalil Deek, who worked closely with al-Qaeda leader Abu Zubaida (see [1998-December 11, 1999](#)) and was reportedly a mole for Jordanian intelligence (see [Shortly After December 11, 1999](#)). In the months before 9/11, Jordan will warn the US that al-Qaeda is planning a major attack inside the US using aircraft (see [Late Summer 2001](#)), and Egypt will warn the CIA that al-Qaeda has 20 operatives on a mission in the US, some of them training to fly (see [Late July 2001](#)).

September 11, 2001: Suspicious Al-Marabh Associate Arrested with Airline Uniforms and Forged Passports

Nageeb Abdul Jabar Mohammed Al-Hadi is on an airplane from Frankfurt, Germany, to Chicago when the flight is diverted to Toronto, Canada, due to the shutdown of flights to the US in the immediate wake of the 9/11 attacks. Customs officers search his suitcases and find two Lufthansa airline crew uniforms (he was a Lufthansa sales representative in Yemen) and a piece of torn paper with cryptic writing on it sewn into the pocket of a pair of pants. He is also carrying four Yemeni passports, each with a different passport number. Three bear his photograph and variations of his name, while a fourth has the name and photo of another person. He is married to a US woman living in Detroit. He is arrested and detained. ([Clairmont 9/26/2001](#)) Al-Hadi is connected through telephone records to Nabil al-Marabh. ([Godfrey 9/27/2001](#)) In May 2002, it will be reported that Canada has approved his deportation to the US, where he is wanted on several charges of passport forgery. ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 5/7/2002](#)) It appears that in January 2003, he is convicted in the US on the forgery charges. ([Washington Post 6/12/2005](#))

After September 11, 2001: US Steps Up Its Use of Extraordinary Renditions

After the September 11 attacks, there is a dramatic increase in the frequency of US-requested “renditions.” ([Chandrasekaran and Finn 3/11/2002, pp. A01](#); [Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#); [Rotella 2/1/2003](#); [Priest and Stephens 5/11/2004, pp. A01](#) *Sources*: Unnamed Western diplomats, intelligence sources, officials) Officially, the original purpose of renditions was to bring suspected foreign criminals, such as drugpins, to justice (see [1993](#)). But after September 11, it is used predominantly to arrest and detain foreign nationals designated as suspected terrorists and bring them to foreign countries that are willing to hold them indefinitely for further questioning and without public proceedings. ([Chandrasekaran and Finn 3/11/2002, pp. A01](#); [van Natta 3/9/2003](#); [Priest and Stephens 5/11/2004, pp. A01](#); [Priest 1/2/2005, pp. A01](#) *Sources*: Unnamed US officials) According to one CIA officer interviewed by the Washington Post, after September 11, “The whole idea [becomes] a corruption of renditions—It’s not rendering to justice, it’s kidnapping.” ([Priest 1/2/2005, pp. A01](#)) “There was a debate after 9/11 about how to make people disappear,” a former intelligence official will tell the New York Times in May 2004. ([Risen, Johnston, and Lewis 5/13/2004](#) *Sources*: Unnamed former administration official) By the end of 2002, the number of terrorism suspects sent to foreign countries is in the thousands. Many of the renditions involve captives from the US operation in Afghanistan. ([Chandrasekaran and Finn 3/11/2002, pp. A01](#); [Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#); [Rotella 2/1/2003](#); [Priest and Stephens 5/11/2004, pp. A01](#) *Sources*: Unnamed Western diplomats, intelligence sources, officials) The countries receiving the rendered suspects are often known human rights violators like Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco, all of which have histories of using torture and other methods of interrogation that are not legal in the US. The rendition program often ignores local and international extradition laws. ([Chandrasekaran and Finn 3/11/2002, pp. A01](#) *Sources*: Unnamed US officials) In fact, US officials have admitted that the justification for rendition is sometimes fabricated—the US requests that a suspect be rendered, and then the allied foreign government charges the person “with a crime of some sort.” ([Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#); [Rotella 2/1/2003](#) *Sources*: Unnamed US officials) After a suspect is relocated to another country, US intelligence agents may “remain closely involved” in the interrogations, sometimes even “doing [them] together” with the foreign government’s intelligence service. ([Chandrasekaran and Finn 3/11/2002, pp. A01](#); [van Natta 3/9/2003](#); [Priest and Stephens 5/11/2004, pp. A01](#) *Sources*: Unnamed US officials) The level of cooperation with Saudi interrogators is allegedly high. “In some cases,” according to one official, “we’re able to observe through one-way mirrors the live investigations. In others, we usually get summaries. We will feed questions to their investigators.” He adds, however, “They’re still very much in control.” ([Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#)) Joint intelligence task forces, which consist of members from the CIA, FBI, and some other US law enforcement agencies, allegedly control to a large extent the approximately 800 terrorism suspects detained in Saudi Arabia. ([Priest and Stephens 5/11/2004, pp. A01](#))

Countries involved in the practice of rendition -

Egypt - Amnesty International’s 2003 annual report says that in Egypt, “Torture and ill-

treatment of detainees continued to be systematic” during 2002. ([Chandrasekaran and Finn 3/11/2002, pp. A01](#); [Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#); [Amnesty International 2003](#))

Jordan - The State Department’s 2001 annual human rights report states, “The most frequently alleged methods of torture include sleep deprivation, beatings on the soles of the feet, prolonged suspension with ropes in contorted positions, and extended solitary confinement.” US officials are quoted in the Washington Post in 2002 calling Jordan’s interrogators “highly professional.” ([Chandrasekaran and Finn 3/11/2002, pp. A01](#); [Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#))

Morocco - Morocco “has a documented history of torture, as well as longstanding ties to the CIA.” ([Chandrasekaran and Finn 3/11/2002, pp. A01](#); [Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#))

Syria - Amnesty International’s 2003 annual report notes: “Hundreds of political prisoners remained in prolonged detention without trial or following sentences imposed after unfair trials. Some were ill but were still held in harsh conditions. Ten prisoners of conscience were sentenced to up to 10 years’ imprisonment after unfair trials before the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) or the Criminal Court. There were fewer reports of torture and ill-treatment, but cases from previous years were not investigated. At least two people died in custody.” ([Priest and Gellman 12/26/2002](#); [Amnesty International 2003](#))

September 11, 2001: Planned Rice Speech on Threats Contains No Mention of al-Qaeda

National Security Adviser Rice is scheduled to deliver a speech claiming to address “the threats and problems of today and the day after, not the world of yesterday.” The speech is never given due to the 9/11 attacks earlier in the day, but the text is later leaked to the media. The Washington Post calls the speech “telling Insight into the administration’s thinking” because it promotes missile defense and contains no mention of al-Qaeda, bin Laden, or Islamic extremist groups. The only mention of terrorism is in the context of the danger of rogue nations such as Iraq. In fact, there are almost no public mentions of bin Laden or al-Qaeda by Bush or other top Bush administration officials before 9/11, and the focus instead is on missile defense. ([Wright 4/1/2004](#); [unknown 4/1/2004](#))

September 11, 2001: Bush Administration Said to Have No Clear Foreign Policy

An editorial in the Washington Post published hours before the 9/11 attacks reads, “When it comes to foreign policy, we have a tongue-tied administration. After almost eight months in office, neither President Bush nor Secretary of State Colin Powell has made any comprehensive statement on foreign policy. It is hard to think of another administration that has done so little to explain what it wants to do in foreign policy.” ([Abramowitz 9/11/2001](#)) Two months before Bush’s election, many key members of Bush’s future administration signed a Project for the New American Century report that advocates a very aggressive US foreign policy. One British Member of Parliament will

later call it a “blueprint for US world domination”(see [September 2000](#)). Yet there has been little sign of the foreign policy goals advocated in this report in the eight months before 9/11.

(1:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Hours Before Attacks, San Francisco Mayor Receives Warning



Willie Brown. [Source: *San Francisco City Government*] Eight hours prior to the attacks, San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown receives a warning from “my security people at the airport,” advising him to be cautious in traveling. ([Matier and Ross 9/12/2001](#)) Later reports claim that this is because someone saw the State Department warning of September 7 (see [September 7, 2001](#)), which focused on the threat to military personnel in Asia. Brown is scheduled to fly to New York the next morning. ([US Department of State 9/7/2001](#); [Matier and Ross 9/12/2001](#); [Matier and Ross 9/14/2001](#)) The source of the warning, and why it was personally issued to Brown, remains unknown.

(3:40 a.m.-4:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Newspaper Delivery Driver: Suspicious Middle Eastern Men Witnessed at Airport Later Used by Hijackers

Chris Lyons, a newspaper delivery driver, sees four or five Middle Eastern men near the entrance of Portland airport, from where alleged hijackers Mohamed Atta and Abdulaziz Alomari will later take a plane to Boston (see [\(6:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The men are speaking Arabic among themselves and hauling about ten suitcases into the airport. Lyons later says they “stuck out because usually no one is around at that hour.” After 9/11, local police will say they don’t think the men are connected to the attacks. However, Lyons is concerned that they might have been “support people,” because, he says, “It’s just too much of a coincidence that this group of businessmen was leaving Portland the morning of the terrorist attacks.” ([Portland Press Herald 9/22/2001](#); [Walsh 10/21/2001](#))

September 11, 2001: FAA's 'Heightened State of Alert' Only Reported in Canadian Newspaper

On the morning of September 11, 2001, just hours before the 9/11 attacks begin, the Globe and Mail, Canada's largest newspaper, reports a front page story entitled "Air-Travel Ban Keeps Rushdie Out of Canada." The story notes that author Salman Rushdie was not allowed on an Air Canada flight into Canada on September 7, 2001, and he canceled a planned Canadian trip as a result. The article correctly notes that on September 6, the FAA "issued an emergency directive banning Mr. Rushdie from all flights in and out of the United States, reflecting a heightened state of alert" (see [September 6, 2001](#)). Rushdie is also having trouble flying inside the US because of the restrictions and one US flight he had recently scheduled had been canceled. The article says the FAA will not explain why the directive about Rushdie had been issued. ([LeBlanc 9/11/2001](#)) But the Daily Mail will later report that the CIA gave the FAA warning of a spectacular and imminent Muslim fundamentalist attack and the FAA incorrectly guessed this had to do with Rushdie traveling on a book tour (see [Shortly Before September 6, 2001](#)). Rushdie had been the subject of an Iranian fatwa (death threat) until it was lifted in 1998. He was in Houston, Texas, for a book reading as part of a North American book tour and planned to fly to Minneapolis on 9/11. ([Jensen 9/23/2001](#)) This news report about the FAA's heightened state of alert is only reported in the Globe and Mail before the 9/11 attacks begin. A search of the Lexis Nexus database shows articles about it in just six news sources in the weeks after the attacks. ([United Press International 9/11/2001](#); [New York Post 9/21/2001](#); [Jensen 9/23/2001](#); [Doran 9/27/2001](#); [Ananova 9/27/2001](#); [Watts 10/7/2001](#))

5:33 a.m.-5:40 a.m. September 11, 2001: Hijackers Drive to Airport



Abdulaziz Alomari (a passport stamp overlaps part of his face).
[Source: FBI] Having spent the previous night at the Comfort Inn in Portland, Maine (see [September 10, 2001](#)), hijackers Mohamed Atta and Abdulaziz Alomari check out at 5:33 a.m. and drive their rented Nissan to the nearby Portland International Jetport Airport, entering its parking lot at 5:40 a.m. The FBI will later seize their car there. ([Vulliamy et al. 9/16/2001](#); [Portland Press Herald 10/5/2001](#); [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#)

[10/14/2001](#); [Dorman 4/17/2006](#)) Their flight is due to take off for Boston at 6:00 a.m. (see [\(6:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The Boston Globe points out, “Any significant delay would foil [Atta’s] big plans for the day.” ([Zuckoff 9/16/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission later concludes: “The Portland detour almost prevented Atta and Omari from making Flight 11 out of Boston.” ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#))

5:43 a.m. September 11, 2001: Hijackers Check in at Portland Airport; Atta Becomes Angry with Ticket Agent



Michael Tuohey. [*Source: National Geographic*] Mohamed Atta and Abdulaziz Alomari check in at the US Airways counter at Portland International Jetport Airport. ([Portland Press Herald 10/5/2001](#); [Federal Bureau of Investigation 10/14/2001](#)) They are wearing ties and jackets. Atta checks in two bags, Alomari none. Atta is randomly selected for additional security scrutiny by the FAA’s Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System (CAPPS) (see [\(6:20 a.m.-7:48 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). However, the only consequence is that his checked bags will be held off the plane until it is confirmed that he has boarded. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 1](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 2](#); [CNN 3/3/2006](#)) Noting that their flight is soon due to leave, the ticket agent who checks them in, Michael Tuohey, says, “You’re cutting it close.” ([Hench 3/6/2005](#)) Tuohey thinks the pair seems unusual. He notices they both have \$2,500 first-class, one-way tickets. He later comments, “You don’t see many of those.” Atta looks “like a walking corpse. He looked so angry.” In contrast, Tuohey says, Alomari can barely speak English and has “a goofy smile, I can’t believe he knew he was going to die that day.” Tuohey will later recount, “I thought they looked like two Arab terrorists but then I berated myself for the stereotype and did nothing.” ([Smerconish 2/24/2005](#); [Massie 9/11/2005](#); [CNN 3/3/2006](#)) Atta becomes angry when Tuohey informs him he will have to check in again in Boston. He complains that he was assured he would have a “one-step check-in.” ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 2](#); [Associated Press 3/7/2005](#)) Tuohey will be recalled to work later in the day to speak to an FBI agent about his encounter with Atta and Alomari. He is shown video footage of them passing through the airport’s security checkpoint upstairs (see [\(Between 5:45 a.m. and 5:53 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Although recognizing the two men, he notices that in the video they are no longer wearing the jackets and ties they’d had on when checking in just minutes before. He assumes they must have taken these off and tucked them into their carry-on

baggage. He is also informed that the security camera behind his own desk, which should have captured the two hijackers, has in fact been out of order for some time. ([Hench 3/6/2005](#); [CNN 3/3/2006](#))

(Between 5:45 a.m. and 5:53 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Two Hijackers Caught on Video as They Board a Flight to Boston; Footage Shows Two Times



Abdulaziz Alomari, right, and Mohamed Atta, left (in dark shirt), passing through security in the Portland, Maine, airport. Note the different times on the two time stamps, one in the middle, one at the bottom. [Source: *FBI*] Minutes after arriving at the Portland airport, hijackers Mohamed Atta and Abdulaziz Alomari pass through the airport's single security checkpoint, on the way to boarding their 6 a.m. flight to Boston. The checkpoint has a surveillance camera pointing at it, which captures them as they go through. ([Mcgeary and van Biema 9/24/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 2-3](#)) Some reports say the pair passes through at 5:53 a.m. ([Prial 9/14/2001](#); [Risen and van Natta 9/14/2001](#); [Eggen and Slevin 9/14/2001](#)) Other reports put it earlier, at 5:45 a.m. ([Portland Press Herald 10/5/2001](#); [Federal Bureau of Investigation 10/14/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 3](#)) Strangely, when stills from the surveillance camera are later publicly released, they show two time stamps, one of 5:45 and another of 5:53. ([Millar 9/21/2001](#); [Federal Bureau of Investigation 10/14/2001](#)) When they'd checked in just minutes earlier, Atta and Alomari were observed wearing ties and jackets (see [5:43 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). But in the security video footage, they have just open-necked shirts, with no jackets or ties. ([Smerconish 2/24/2005](#); [Hench 3/6/2005](#); [CNN 3/3/2006](#))

(6:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Two Hijackers Fly to Boston

Mohamed Atta and Abdulaziz Alomari's flight from Portland to Boston takes off. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 10/4/2001](#)) Their plane, Colgan Air Flight 5930, is a 19-seat Beechcraft 1900. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 3](#)) Fellow passengers Vincent

Meisner and Roger Quirion later say Atta and Alomari board separately, keep quiet, and do not draw attention to themselves. ([Chicago Sun-Times 9/16/2001](#); [Gugliotta 9/16/2001](#)) Quirion, says, “They struck me as business travelers. They were sitting down, talking, seems like they were going over some paperwork.” ([CBS News 10/12/2001](#))

(6:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Two Hours Before Attacks, Israeli Company Employees Receive Warnings



Odigo's logo. [*Source: Odigo*] Two employees of Odigo, Inc., an Israeli company, receive warnings of an imminent attack in New York City about two hours before the first plane hits the WTC. Odigo, one of the world's largest instant messaging companies, has its headquarters two blocks from the WTC. The Odigo Research and Development offices where the warnings were received are located in Herzliyya, a suburb of Tel Aviv. Israeli security and the FBI were notified immediately after the 9/11 attacks began. The two employees claim not to know who sent the warnings. “Odigo service includes a feature called People Finder that allows users to seek out and contact others based on certain interests or demographics. [Alex] Diamandis [Odigo vice president of sales and marketing] said it was possible that the attack warning was broadcast to other Odigo members, but the company has not received reports of other recipients of the message.” ([Dror 9/26/2001](#); [Washington Post 9/27/2001](#)) Odigo claims the warning did not specifically mention the WTC, but the company refuses to divulge what was specified, claiming, “Providing more details would only lead to more conjecture.” ([Washington Post 9/28/2001](#)) However, a later newspaper report claims that the message declared “that some sort of attack was about to take place. The notes ended with an anti-Semitic slur. ‘The messages said something big was going to happen in a certain amount of time, and it did—almost to the minute,’ said Alex Diamandis, vice president of sales for the high-tech company... He said the employees did not know the person who sent the message, but they traced it to a computer address and have given that information to the FBI.” ([Fallis and Cha 10/4/2001](#)) Odigo gave the FBI the Internet address of the message's sender so the name of the sender could be found. ([Deutsche Presse-Agentur \(Hamburg\) 9/26/2001](#)) Two months later, it is reported that the FBI is still investigating the matter, but there have been no reports since. ([Griffith 11/20/2001](#))

(6:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Interview or Assassination Attempt?

President Bush has just spent the night at the Colony Beach and Tennis Resort on Longboat Key, Florida. ([Bayles 9/10/2002](#)) He wakes up around 6:00 a.m. and is

preparing for his morning jog. ([Sack 9/16/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [MSNBC 10/27/2002](#)) A van occupied by men of Middle Eastern descent arrives at the Colony Beach Resort, stating they have a “poolside” interview with the president. They do not have an appointment and are turned away. ([Sullivan 9/26/2001](#)) Some question whether this was an assassination attempt modeled on the one used on Afghan leader Ahmed Massoud two days earlier (see [September 9, 2001](#)). ([Time 8/4/2002](#)) Longboat Key Fire Marshal Carroll Mooneyhan was reported to have overheard the conversation between the men and the Secret Service, but he later denies the report. The newspaper that reported this, the Longboat Observer stands by its story. ([Martin 7/4/2004](#)) Witnesses recall seeing Mohamed Atta in the Longboat Key Holiday Inn a short distance from where Bush was staying as recently as September 7, the day Bush’s Sarasota appearance was publicly announced. ([Sullivan 11/21/2001](#); [Martin 7/4/2004](#))

(6:20 a.m.-7:48 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Hijackers Arrive at Airports and Board Flights; Computer Screening Program Fails to Stop Them

All the alleged 9/11 hijackers reportedly check in at the airports from where they board Flights 11, 175, 77, and 93. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 1-4](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 27, 89, 93](#).) Since 1998, the FAA has required air carriers to implement a program called the Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System (CAPPS). This identifies those passengers who might be a security risk, based upon suspicious behavior such as buying one-way tickets or paying with cash. CAPPS also randomly assigns some passengers to receive additional security scrutiny. If a particular passenger has been designated as a “selectee,” this information is transmitted to the airport’s check-in counter, where a code is printed on their boarding pass. At the airport’s security checkpoints, selectees are subjected to additional security measures. ([Satchell 4/1/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#); [US Congress 3/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 2, 85](#).) Their baggage is to be screened for explosives or held off the plane until they have boarded. Supposedly, the thinking behind this is that someone smuggling a bomb onto a plane won’t get onto that same flight. According to the 9/11 Commission, nine of the 19 hijackers are flagged by the CAPPS system before boarding Flights 11, 175, 77, and 93. ([Goo and Eggen 1/28/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 84](#); [United States of America v. Zacarias Moussaoui, a/k/a Shaqil, a/k/a Abu Khalid al Sahrawi, Defendant 3/6/2006](#)) In addition, Mohamed Atta was selected when he checked in at the airport in Portland, for his earlier connecting flight to Boston (see [5:33 a.m.-5:40 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). All of the hijackers subsequently pass through security checkpoints before boarding their flights. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 1-4](#))

(6:20 a.m.-7:27 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Hijackers Check In at Airport and Board Plane; None Selected for Additional Security Scrutiny

All five Flight 175 hijackers reportedly check in at Boston's Logan Airport, pass through a security checkpoint, and board their plane during this period. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 89](#)) The FAA has a program in place called CAPPs, which selects passengers for more thorough security screening based on suspicious behavior such as buying a one-way ticket or paying with cash (see [\(6:20 a.m.-7:48 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Although reports claim that between two and five of the Flight 175 hijackers have one-way tickets, none are selected by CAPPs. ([Sperry 4/24/2002](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [US Congress 9/26/2002](#); [Goo and Eggen 1/28/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 18](#)) Two of them have problems answering security questions at the ticket counter (see [\(6:20 a.m.-6:53 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). At the security checkpoint, all five would pass through a walk-through metal detector, and an X-ray machine would screen their carry-on luggage. But Logan Airport has no video surveillance of its checkpoints (see [1991-2000](#)), so there is no documentary evidence of exactly when they go through, or how they are processed. Jennifer Gore, the young supervisor overseeing the checkpoint, is later unable to recall seeing any of them. The Globe and Mail will explain, "[S]he was trained to look for metal bits in bags and in clothes, not people." ([Saunders et al. 9/7/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 2](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 18](#))

(6:20 a.m.-6:53 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Two Flight 175 Hijackers Check in at United Airlines Ticket Counter; Uncertainty Over Their Identities

Two of the Flight 175 hijackers approach a customer service representative at the United Airlines ticket counter at Boston's Logan Airport. The two appear unaccustomed to traveling. One tells the representative, Gail Jawahir, that he needs a ticket, though upon examining his documents she finds he already has one. Both men have problems answering standard security questions, which Jawahir has to repeat very slowly until they give the routine, reassuring answers. There is conflicting evidence over their identities. Jawahir will place her encounter with the men at "shortly before 7 a.m." Shown photos of the alleged hijackers after 9/11, she will indicate that one of the two she encountered resembled Mohand Alshehri, suggesting the two were Alshehri and Fayez Ahmed Banihammad, who checked in at 6:53 a.m. Yet she recalls the two having the same last name and having assigned seats on Row 9 of the plane, suggesting they were Ahmed and Hamza Alghamdi, who checked in at 6:20 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 2, 451](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 17-18, 89](#))

(6:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD on Alert for Emergency Exercises



NORAD's war room in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado [Source: *Val Gempis*] Lieutenant Colonel Dawne Deskins and other day shift employees at NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) in Rome, NY, start their workday. NORAD is conducting a week-long, large-scale exercise called Vigilant Guardian. ([Seely 1/25/2002](#)) Deskins is regional mission crew chief for the Vigilant Guardian exercise. ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) Vigilant Guardian is described as "an exercise that would pose an imaginary crisis to North American Air Defense outposts nationwide"; as a "simulated air war"; and as "an air defense exercise simulating an attack on the United States." According to the 9/11 Commission, it "postulated a bomber attack from the former Soviet Union." ([Seely 1/25/2002](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 55 and 122](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 458](#)) Vigilant Guardian is described as being held annually, and is one of NORAD's four major annual exercises. ([GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 4/14/2002](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 41](#); [Arkin 2005, pp. 545](#)) However, another report says it takes place semi-annually. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) Accounts by participants vary on whether 9/11 was the second, third, or fourth day of the exercise. ([Code One Magazine 1/2002](#); [Seely 1/25/2002](#); [Kampouris 9/11/2002](#)) Vigilant Guardian is a command post exercise (CPX), and in at least some previous years was conducted in conjunction with Stratcom's Global Guardian exercise and a US Space Command exercise called Apollo Guardian. ([US Congress n.d.](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 4/14/2002](#); [Arkin 2005, pp. 545](#)) All of NORAD is participating in Vigilant Guardian on 9/11. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) Vanity Fair reports that the "day's exercise" (presumably Vigilant Guardian) is "designed to run a range of scenarios, including a 'traditional' simulated hijack in which politically motivated perpetrators commandeer an aircraft, land on a Cuba-like island, and seek asylum." ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) However, at NEADS, most of the dozen or so staff on the operations floor have no idea what the exercise is going to entail and are ready for anything. ([Cooper 8/5/2004](#)) NORAD is currently running a real-world operation named Operation Northern Vigilance (see [September 9-11, 2001](#)). It may also be conducting a field training exercise calling Amalgam Warrior this morning (see [9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). NORAD is thus fully staffed and alert, and senior officers are manning stations throughout the US. The entire chain of command is in place and ready when the first hijacking is reported, except, apparently, its commander, General Eberhart: "The commander of NORAD works from Peterson Air Force Base, and the trip to Cheyenne Mountain can be time-consuming if traffic is bad. On Sept. 11, 2001, Colorado newspapers have reported, the commander spent 45 minutes on the road between his office at Peterson [Air Force Base] and his communications center under the mountain

while the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were taking place.” ([Reid 7/29/2006](#)) As to NORAD readiness, one article says, “In retrospect, the exercise would prove to be a serendipitous enabler of a rapid military response to terrorist attacks on September 11.” ([Scott 6/3/2002](#); [Kelly 12/5/2003](#)) Colonel Robert Marr, in charge of NEADS, says, “We had the fighters with a little more gas on board. A few more weapons on board.” ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) However, Deskins and other NORAD officials later are initially confused about whether the 9/11 attacks are real or part of the exercise. (see [\(8:38 a.m.-8:43 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

Early Morning September 11, 2001: Medic Is Studying Medical Emergency Disaster Plan for Plane Crash at Pentagon

Sergeant Matt Rosenberg, an army medic at the Pentagon, is studying “a new medical emergency disaster plan based on the unlikely scenario of an airplane crashing into the place.” ([Maraniss 9/16/2001](#)) The day before, Rosenberg later recalls in an interview with the Office of Medical History, he called the FBI with questions about who would have medical jurisdiction if such an event were to take place. “Believe it or not, the day prior to the incident, I was just on the phone with the FBI, and we were talking ‘so who has command should this happen, who has the medical jurisdiction, who does this, who does that,’ and we talked about it and talked about it, and he helped me out a lot. And then the next day, during the incident, I actually found him. He was out there on the incident that day.” ([Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 9](#))

(6:31 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Goes Jogging



The Colony Beach and Tennis Resort, where Bush stays the night before 9/11. [*Source: Colony Beach and Tennis Resort*] President Bush goes for a four-mile jog around the golf course at the Colony Beach and Tennis Resort. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [Sammon 10/7/2002](#); [MSNBC 10/27/2002](#))

6:45 a.m. September 11, 2001: Hijacker’s Connecting Flight Arrives in Boston

Mohamed Atta and Abdulaziz Alomari’s Portland-Boston flight arrives on time at Boston’s Logan Airport. ([Der Spiegel 2002](#)) They cross a parking lot on their way to the

departure terminal for Flight 11, and are observed asking for directions. The other three Flight 11 hijackers arrive at Logan in a rented car around this same time (see [\(6:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 5](#))

(6:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Hijackers Cause Trouble at Logan Airport; Have Flight Training Manuals in Car

Flight 11 hijackers Waleed Alshehri, Wail Alshehri, and Satam Al Suqami arrive at Boston's Logan Airport in a rental car, which they park in the airport's central parking lot. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 5](#)) According to the News of the World, a man who arrives at Logan at "about 6:30 a.m." for an early flight, has an argument with several Middle Eastern men over a parking space, before moving on. Some early press reports say his confrontation is with five men. ([Fenton and Ball 9/13/2001](#); [ABC News 9/14/2001](#); [News of the World 9/16/2001](#)) However, the 9/11 Commission will later describe the incident differently. It says there are just three Middle Eastern men, and the man ends up parked next to them. One of them opens his car door to get out then spends time "fiddling with his things," thus trapping the man in his car. Eventually he has to force his way out, but the Middle Eastern men are completely unresponsive to him, saying nothing. The man will report the incident to authorities after hearing of the attacks. However, whether he identifies the men as Flight 11 hijackers is unstated. The hijackers' car, which is associated with either Wail or Waleed Alshehri, will be found in the lot later in the day of 9/11. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 85](#)) Inside the car, a Mitsubishi sedan rented from National Rental Car, are found Arabic-language flight training manuals. ([Harpaz 9/12/2001](#); [Hayward, Farmer, and Macero 9/12/2001](#); [Fenton and Ball 9/13/2001](#))

(6:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Israeli Company Given Two Hours' Notice of Attack

"Approximately two hours prior to the first attack," at least two workers at Odigo, an Israeli-owned instant messaging company, receive messages warning of the attack. Odigo's US headquarters are located two blocks from the WTC. The source of the warning is unknown. ([Dror 9/26/2001](#); [Washington Post 9/28/2001](#))

(6:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Ziad Jarrah Makes Final Phone Call to Girlfriend in Germany

About an hour before boarding Flight 93, Ziad Jarrah phones his girlfriend, Aysel Senguen, who is currently recovering from a minor operation in a hospital in Germany, where she lives. ([Williams 10/23/2001](#); [Bennett 8/22/2004](#)) Senguen will later recount, "[H]e was very brief. He said he loved me three times. I asked what was up. He hung up shortly afterwards.... It was so short and rather strange him saying that repeatedly."

([Blenkinsop 11/19/2002](#); [Vasagar 11/20/2002](#)) Some accounts say Jarrah makes this call from his hotel, the Days Inn in Newark. Other accounts claim he makes it from a payphone at the airport, although he does not actually check in there until later on, at 7:39 a.m. ([PBS 1/17/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 532](#); [Bennett 8/22/2004](#); [Crichton 8/22/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 35](#).)

(6:45 a.m.-7:40 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Three Flight 11 Hijackers Selected for Additional Screening When They Pass through Airport Security

During this period, all five Flight 11 hijackers check in at Boston's Logan Airport and board their plane, bound for Los Angeles. The FAA has a program in place called the Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System (CAPPS), which is designed to identify those passengers most likely requiring additional scrutiny by airport security (see [\(6:20 a.m.-7:48 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Ticket records will show that CAPPS selects three of the Flight 11 hijackers at Logan: Since Waleed Alshehri checks no bags his selection has no consequences; Wail Alshehri and Satam Al Suqami have their bags scanned for explosives, but are not stopped. All five hijackers would need to pass through a security checkpoint to reach the departure gate for their flight. Each would have been screened as they walked through a metal detector calibrated to detect items with at least the metal content of a small-caliber handgun. If they'd set this off, they would have been screened with a handheld metal detector. An X-ray machine would have screened their carry-on luggage. However, Logan Airport has no video surveillance of its security checkpoints (see [1991-2000](#)), so there is no documentary evidence of exactly when they pass through them, or if alarms are triggered. According to the 9/11 Commission, none of the checkpoint supervisors later recall seeing any of the Flights 11 hijackers, or report anything suspicious having occurred. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 1-2](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 5-6](#).) However, a WorldNetDaily article will claim that some Logan staff members recall seeing Mohamed Atta (see [\(6:50 a.m.-7:40 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Sperry 9/21/2001](#)) The Boston Globe will later comment, "aviation 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. At the time, the knives and box-cutters they were carrying were permitted." ([Carroll 10/17/2001](#))

6:47 a.m. September 11, 2001: WTC Building 7 Alarm Not Operating

According to later reports, the alarm system in WTC 7 is placed on "TEST" status for a period due to last eight hours. This ordinarily happens during maintenance or other testing, and any alarms received from the building are generally ignored. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 6/2004, pp. 28](#).)

(6:50 a.m.-7:40 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Mohamed Atta Observed at Logan Airport Running Late for Plane?

According to an article on the conservative news website WorldNetDaily, alleged lead hijacker Mohamed Atta almost misses Flight 11 and has to rush to the departure gate at Boston's Logan Airport. The article is based on the account of an unnamed American Airlines employee at Logan, and claims Atta is running late because his connecting flight from Portland was delayed (see [\(6:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). However, the 9/11 Commission claims that this plane was "on time," and says Atta is observed at Logan with Abdulaziz Alomari, asking for directions in a parking lot (see [6:45 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). The employee says that at the baggage check-in, when asked security questions, Atta claims he does not speak English. A supervisor is called for, who just sends him towards the departure gate, as it is close to his plane's take-off time. Atta rushes through the security checkpoint, then down to the gate, where he shows up perspiring. The employee comments, "The nitwit. You know, they'd been planning it for five years, and he's running late for the flight." An American Airlines spokeswoman will refuse to comment on this account, saying all American employees have been ordered not to speak to the press. ([Sperry 9/21/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 3, 5](#))

6:52 a.m.-6:55 a.m. September 11, 2001: Call Placed from Payphone at Logan to Atta's Cell Phone

A three-minute call is made from a payphone at Boston's Logan Airport, in the gate area from where Flight 175 will later depart, to Mohamed Atta's cell phone. The 9/11 Commission will report, "We presume Shehhi [i.e., Marwan Alshehhi] made the call, but we cannot be sure." According to the commission, this is Atta and Alshehhi's final conversation. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 1, 451](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 4](#)) According to other reports, though, they later speak again briefly by cellphone while waiting for their planes to take off (see [\(Before 7:59 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([van Natta, and Zernike 11/4/2001](#); [Elliot 8/4/2002](#))

(Shortly Before 7:00 a.m.-7:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Cheney Receives Daily Intelligence Briefing; Heads to White House



The Vice President's Residence. [Source: David Bohrer/ White House] Just before 7:00 a.m., Vice President Dick Cheney sits in the library of the vice president's residence at the Naval Observatory in Washington, DC, for his regular CIA briefing. His solo briefing is more detailed than the president's because he asks for more material. According to journalist and author Stephen Hayes, the briefing is "unremarkable." Cheney typically sets off for the three-mile drive to the White House at 7:30 a.m. He usually joins the president for his intelligence briefing, but with Bush away in Florida, there is no briefing at the White House on this day. ([Hayes 2007, pp. 327-328](#))

(7:00 a.m.-7:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Computer Screening Program Selects Some Hijackers; Fails to Stop Them

Sometime during this period, the hijackers pass through airport security checkpoints at the various airports. The FAA has a screening program in place called the Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System (CAPPS). CAPPS automatically targets passengers for additional screening based on suspicious behavior such as buying one-way tickets or paying with cash. If a passenger is selected, their bags are thoroughly screened for explosives, but their bodies are not searched. ([Goo and Eggen 1/28/2004](#)) CAPPS selects three of the five Flight 11 hijackers. Since Waleed Alshehri checked no bags, his selection had no consequences. Wail Alshehri and Satam Al Suqami have their bags scanned for explosives, but are not stopped. No Flight 175 hijackers are selected. Only Ahmad Alhaznawi is selected from Flight 93. His bag is screened for explosives, but he is not stopped. The 9/11 Commission later concludes that Alhaznawi and Ahmed Alnami, also headed to Flight 93, have suspicious indicators and that they could have been linked to al-Qaeda upon inspection, but it has not been explained why or how. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#); [Sullivan 1/27/2004](#)) Screening of the Flight 77 hijackers is described below.

(7:03 a.m.-7:48 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Hijackers Check in at Airport and Board Plane; Only One Selected for Additional Screening

According to the 9/11 Commission, between 7:03 a.m. and 7:39 a.m. the four alleged Flight 93 hijackers check in at the United Airlines ticket counter at Newark (New Jersey) Liberty International Airport. Only Ahmad Alhaznawi is selected for additional scrutiny by airport security under the FAA's CAPPs program (see [\(6:20 a.m.-7:48 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The only consequence is that his checked bag is screened for explosives, and not loaded onto the plane until it is confirmed that he has boarded. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 4](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 35](#).) On their way to boarding the plane, all four would pass through a security checkpoint, which has three walk-through metal detectors, two X-ray machines, and explosive trace detection equipment. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 97](#).) The 9/11 Commission later claims Newark Airport has no video cameras monitoring its security checkpoints, so there is no documentary evidence showing when the hijackers passed through the checkpoint or what alarms may have been triggered. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 4](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 35](#).) However, Michael Taylor, the president of a security company, who has done consulting work for the New York Port Authority (which operates the airport), claims that Newark does use security cameras at the time of 9/11. ([Hanchett and Washington 9/29/2001](#)) All of the screeners on duty at the checkpoint are subsequently interviewed, and none report anything unusual or suspicious having occurred. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 4](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 35](#).) The 9/11 Commission later concludes that the passports of Ahmad Alhaznawi and fellow Flight 93 hijacker Ahmed Alnami have suspicious indicators and could have been linked to al-Qaeda, but it does not elaborate on this. ([Sullivan 1/27/2004](#))

(7:15 a.m.-7:18 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Hijack Suspects Set Off Airport Alarms; Allowed to Board Anyway



Hijackers in a Dulles Airport, Washington, security checkpoint, from left to right: Nawaf Alhazmi gets searched, Khalid Almihdhar, and Hani Hanjour. [*Source: FBI*] (click image to enlarge) Around 7:15 a.m., Flight 77 hijackers Majed Moqed and Khalid Almihdhar check in at the American Airlines ticket counter at Washington's Dulles International Airport. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 2-3](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 27](#).) The FAA has a computer system in place, called CAPPs, which identifies those passengers most likely requiring additional scrutiny by airport security (see [\(6:20 a.m.-7:48 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). CAPPs selects both men, but the only consequence is that Moqed's luggage is not loaded onto Flight 77 until after his boarding is confirmed. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 27-28](#).) Dulles Airport has surveillance cameras monitoring its security checkpoints, and video later viewed by the 9/11 Commission shows the two

passing through the Main Terminal's west security screening checkpoint at 7:18 a.m. When they go through, their carry-on bags fail to set off any alarms, but both men set off the alarm when they pass through the first metal detector. They are directed to a second metal detector, where Almihdhar passes, but Moqed fails again. He is subjected to a personal screening with a metal detection hand wand. This time he is cleared and permitted to pass through the checkpoint. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 3](#)) The other three Flight 77 hijackers pass through the security checkpoint about 20 minutes later (see [\(7:25 a.m.-7:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission later concludes that Almihdhar's passport was "suspicious" and could have been linked to al-Qaeda, but it does not explain why or how. ([Sullivan 1/27/2004](#))

(7:25 a.m.-7:36 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Remaining Three Flight 77 Hijackers Check In at Airport; Allowed to Board Despite Security Checkpoint Problems



Hijacker brothers Salem (white shirt) and Nawaf Alhazmi (dark shirt) pass through security in Dulles Airport in Washington. [*Source: FBI*] (click image to enlarge) The 9/11 Commission estimates that Flight 77 hijacker Hani Hanjour checks in at the American Airlines ticket counter at Washington's Dulles International Airport some time between 7:25 a.m. and 7:35 a.m. (American Airlines will be unable to locate information confirming his check-in time.) ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 93](#)) He is selected for additional scrutiny by airport security under the FAA's CAPPS program (see [\(6:20 a.m.-7:48 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), but this has no consequences. The final two Flight 77 hijackers, brothers Nawaf and Salem Alhazmi, check in at approximately 7:29 a.m. The customer service representative makes both of them CAPPS selectees, because one of them cannot provide photo identification and seems unable to understand English, and he finds both of them suspicious. However, the only consequence is that Salem Alhazmi's luggage is not loaded onto the plane until it is confirmed that he has boarded. Surveillance cameras monitor the security checkpoints at Dulles Airport. According to the 9/11 Commission's review of security footage, Hani Hanjour passes through the Main Terminal's west security

screening checkpoint at 7:35 a.m. He proceeds through the metal detector without setting off the alarm, and his two carry-on bags set off no alarms when placed on the X-ray belt. The Alhazmis arrive at the same checkpoint a minute later. Salem Alhazmi successfully clears the metal detector, and is permitted through the checkpoint. Nawaf Alhazmi sets off the alarms for both the first and second metal detectors and is subsequently subjected to a personal screening with a metal detection hand wand before being passed. His shoulder bag is swiped by an explosive trace detector and returned without further inspection. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 3](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 27-28](#).) Immediately after the attacks, when the FAA's local civil aviation security office investigates the security screening at Dulles on 9/11, it finds the airport's screeners recall nothing out of the ordinary, and cannot recall any of the passengers they screened having been CAPPS selectees. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 3](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 93](#).) The 9/11 Commission later concludes that the Alhazmi brothers' passports are "suspicious" and could have been linked to al-Qaeda, but it does not explain why or how. ([Sullivan 1/27/2004](#))

(Before 7:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Inter Flight Phone Call Between Hijackers

Hijacker Mohamed Atta on Flight 11 calls hijacker Marwan Alshehhi in Flight 175 as both planes sit on the runway. They presumably confirm the plot is on. ([Time 8/4/2002](#))

(7:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Hijack Suspects' Bags Contain Airline Uniforms

Mohamed Atta and Abdulaziz Alomari board Flight 11. Atta's bags are not loaded onto the plane in time and are later found by investigators. Investigators later find airline uniforms and many other remarkable items. ([Cullen and Ranalli 9/18/2001](#)) It is later reported that at least two other hijackers on Flight 11 use stolen uniforms and IDs to board the plane. ([Mackay 9/16/2001](#))

(7:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Is Late Taking Off



1 - Otis Air Force Base, flight path Deployed 8:52, reaches NYC approx. 9:25	5 - Andrews Air Force Base Fighters deployed at 10:42
2 - Langley Air Force Base, flight path Deployed 9:30, reaches WDC approx. 10:00	5a - Andrews fighters off the coast of N.C. Begin patrolling Washington at 10:45
3 - Selfridge Air National Guard, Mt. Clemens, MI Already in the air at time of attacks Redeployed some time after 10:06	6 - N.Y. Air National Guard, Hancock Field, Syracuse, NY, Deployed 10:44
4 - Ohio Air National Guard, Toledo Express Airport Deployed 10:17	7 - Atlantic City Air National Guard Already in the air at time of attacks Reaches Washington 11:00 or after
	8 - Richmond, Virginia, base unknown Deployed approx. 11:00 or after

A map of the paths all hijacked planes and relevant fighters take on the morning of 9/11.

[Source: Yvonne Vermillion/ MagicGraphix.com] (click image to enlarge) Flight 11 takes off from Boston's Logan Airport, 14 minutes after its scheduled 7:45 departure time.

([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/17/2001](#); [Lichtblau 9/20/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [ABC News 7/18/2002](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [Adcock 9/10/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(Shortly Before 8:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Two Passengers Allegedly Get Off Flight 93 Just Before Take-off

Two passengers leave Flight 93 after hearing an announcement that there will be a five-minute delay in the plane pushing back from the gate. This is according to Terry Tyksinski, a longtime flight attendant with United Airlines, who says a customer service supervisor who witnessed the incident told her about it six months after 9/11. The two first-class passengers are reportedly of dark complexion, “kind of black, not black.” According to Tyksinski, the supervisor notes their names and is subsequently twice interviewed by the FBI. ([Longman 2002, pp. xiii-xiv](#)) No other accounts, including the 9/11 Commission Report, mention this incident. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#)) And while Flight 93 is delayed on the ground until 8:42 a.m., reports state that it pushes back from the gate just one minute later than its scheduled departure, rather than there being a five-minute delay as Tyksinski suggests. ([Johnson 11/23/2001](#); [Pauley 9/11/2006](#)) There will only be 37 passengers on Flight 93, including the four hijackers. This is 20 percent of the plane’s passenger capacity of 182 and, according to the 9/11 Commission, “is considerably below the 52 percent average load factor for Flight 93 for Tuesdays in the three-month period prior to September 11.” ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 36](#))

(8:00 a.m.-8:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Holds Breakfast Meeting at Pentagon; Key Military Figures Present



Thomas White. [*Source: US Department of Defense*] Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld hosts a breakfast meeting in his private dining room at the Pentagon. ([Burns 9/12/2001](#); [Rumsfeld 12/5/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#)) The meeting, which is attended by several members of Congress, is intended to discuss the Department of Defense’s Quadrennial Defense Review. As well as the secretary of defense, others in attendance include Rumsfeld’s senior military assistant, Navy Vice Admiral Edmund Giambastiani Jr.; Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz; and Republican Representatives John Mica, Mark Kirk, Mac Thornberry, Roger Wicker, Robin Hayes, Kay Granger, John Shimkus, Randy “Duke” Cunningham, and Christopher Cox. ([Hasson 3/31/2003](#); [Wolfowitz 5/9/2003](#); [Rumsfeld 9/10/2004](#); [Miles 9/8/2006](#))

Secretary of the Army Thomas White, who is at the meeting, appears to say it is also attended by numerous key military figures, later telling PBS, “Don Rumsfeld had a breakfast, and virtually every one of the senior officials of the Department of Defense—service chiefs, secretary, deputy, everybody, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And as that breakfast was breaking up, the first plane had hit the World Trade tower.” ([White 10/26/2004](#); [PBS 10/26/2004](#)) By “chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” he presumably means Richard Myers, who is the acting chairman on this day, in place of Henry Shelton who is out of the country. ([Garamone 9/8/2006](#)) During the course of the meeting Rumsfeld predicts that some kind of “shocking” world event will occur in the near future (see [\(Before 8:46 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Most accounts suggest the meeting is adjourned soon after the time the first WTC tower is hit, presumably around 8:50 a.m., though one report says it ends at about 9 a.m. Just prior to the meeting ending, Rumsfeld is handed a note informing him of the crash (see [Shortly After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Edmund Giambastiani also sees this note. Whether the other people in attendance are notified of the crash at this time is unknown. ([Rumsfeld 12/5/2001](#); [Rumsfeld 8/12/2002](#); [PBS 10/26/2004](#); [Miles 9/8/2006](#)) Thomas White says, “We all went on with the day’s business,” after leaving the meeting. He heads off to give a speech at the nearby Army Navy Country Club. ([White 10/26/2004](#)) Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Giambastiani return to their offices. ([Wolfowitz 5/9/2003](#); [Miles 9/8/2006](#)) The members of Congress leave the building. ([Rumsfeld 1/9/2002](#)) If Richard Myers is at the meeting, as Thomas White appears to say, he must head promptly to Capitol Hill, as he enters another meeting in the offices of Senator Max Cleland (D) before the time when the second tower is hit (see [Shortly Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Armed Forces Radio And Television Service 10/17/2001](#); [Rhem 10/23/2001](#))

8:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: President Bush Briefly Meets Local Law Enforcement Officials



Charlie Wells. [*Source: Publicity photo*] Having returned to the Colony Beach and Tennis Resort after his morning jog, President Bush meets for a brief chat in his penthouse suite with Manatee County Sheriff Charlie Wells, Sarasota County Sheriff Bill Balkwill, Sarasota Police Chief Gordon Jolly, and Manatee County Sheriff’s Colonel Ken Pearson. Wells later recalls the president was “totally unsuspecting

about what is to happen.... It looked like, to me, he's saying, 'Glad to see you, but I'm ready to get on to the school and meet the kids.'" The four law enforcement officials will later travel to the Sarasota school in the president's motorcade. ([Sammon 2002, pp. 36; Bayles 9/10/2002](#))

(8:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Intelligence Committee Chairs Meet with ISI Head and Possible 9/11 Attack Funder as the Attack Occurs



From left to right: Senator Bob Graham (D), Senator Jon Kyl (R), and Representative Porter Goss (R). [*Source: US Senate, National Park Service, US House of Representatives*] At the time of the attacks, ISI Director Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed is at a breakfast meeting at the Capitol with the chairmen of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, Senator Bob Graham (D) and Representative Porter Goss (R) (Goss is a 10-year veteran of the CIA's clandestine operations wing). The meeting is said to last at least until the second plane hits the WTC. ([Leiby 5/18/2002](#)) Graham and Goss later co-head the joint House-Senate investigation into the 9/11 attacks, which has made headlines for saying there was no "smoking gun" of Bush knowledge before 9/11. ([Priest and Eilperin 7/11/2002](#)) Note that Senator Graham should have been aware of a report made to his staff the previous month (see [Early August 2001](#)) that one of Mahmood's subordinates had told a US undercover agent that the WTC would be destroyed. Evidence suggests that attendee Mahmood ordered that \$100,000 be sent to hijacker Mohamed Atta. Also present at the meeting were Senator Jon Kyl (R) and the Pakistani ambassador to the US, Maleeha Lodhi. (All or virtually all of the people in this meeting had previously met in Pakistan just a few weeks earlier.) Senator Graham says of the meeting: "We were talking about terrorism, specifically terrorism generated from Afghanistan." The New York Times reports that bin Laden was specifically discussed. ([Sergeant 9/12/2001](#); [Tapper 9/14/2001](#); [Risen 6/3/2002](#))

(8:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Larry Silverstein Doesn't Go to WTC Due to Doctor's Appointment

WTC leaseholder Larry Silverstein is supposed to be working today in the temporary offices of his company, Silverstein Properties, on the 88th floor of the North Tower. However, at his Park Avenue apartment, Silverstein's wife reportedly "laid down the law: The developer could not cancel an appointment with his dermatologist, even to meet with tenants at his most important property." ([McGeveran 3/17/2003](#); [Kolker 4/18/2005](#)) He is

therefore not at the WTC when it is hit, and first hears of the attacks when an associate calls him from the lobby of one of the WTC buildings. ([Elliott 1/2004](#)) Two of Silverstein's children—his son, Roger, and daughter, Lisa—work for his company and have been regularly attending meetings with WTC tenants at Windows on the World (the restaurant at the top of the North Tower). Yet this morning they are running late. According to the New York Observer, “If the attack had happened just a little later, Mr. Silverstein's children would likely have been trapped at Windows.” ([McGeveran 3/17/2003](#)) Fifty-four of Silverstein Properties' 160 staff are in the North Tower when it is hit, and four of them die. ([Saunders et al. 9/7/2002](#)) Silverstein signed the lease on the WTC less than two months previously, and later will attempt to get \$7 billion in insurance for the destruction of the towers (see [July 24, 2001](#)).

(8:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Former President George H. W. Bush Heads off After Spending Night at the White House

Former President George H. W. Bush, along with former First Lady Barbara Bush, leaves Washington, DC, by private jet, bound for a speaking engagement in St. Paul, Minnesota. The Bushes spent the previous night at the White House. They had flown to Washington the previous day to attend several meetings and a dinner. One of the meetings attended by the former president was the annual investor conference of the Carlyle Group, which was also attended by Shafiq bin Laden, one of Osama bin Laden's brothers (see [\(9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). They are later informed of the WTC attacks while on their jet. Due to all planes being grounded, they have to land in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. ([CBS News 11/1/2002](#); [CNN 10/25/2003](#); [Bush 10/27/2003](#))

(8:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Computer Specialists in WTC for 'Emergency Drill'

An “emergency drill” has been scheduled for today, to take place on the 97th floor of the WTC South Tower. ([Dwyer 3/31/2006](#); [Dwyer 4/1/2006](#)) A team of technology consultants from California is visiting investment firm Fiduciary Trust for this drill. (Fiduciary Trust has offices on the 97th floor.) ([USA Today 9/13/2001](#); [Dwyer and Flynn 2005, pp. 77](#); [Dwyer 3/30/2006](#)) No further details are reported as to what it entails, or who the technology consultants are. However, California-based software company Oracle Corp. will later report that six of its consultants were working on the 97th floor of the South Tower on 9/11 and are subsequently missing. So presumably these were the workers involved with the drill. ([Cowley 9/13/2001](#); [Associated Press 9/14/2001](#))

Shortly After 8:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Bush Receives Daily Intelligence Briefing

Just after 8 a.m., President Bush sits down at his hotel on Longboat Key, Florida, for his daily intelligence briefing with Mike Morell, his CIA briefer. They discuss developments in the Middle East, and particularly the Palestinian situation. According to the London Telegraph, “The president’s briefing appears to have included some reference to the heightened terrorist risk reported throughout the summer,” but it contains nothing serious enough to cause Bush to call National Security Adviser Rice, who is currently on her way from her home to her office at the White House. However, journalist and author Ronald Kessler will contradict this, claiming, “Bush placed a call to Condoleezza Rice and asked her to follow up on a few points.” The briefing ends by around 8:15 a.m. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Kessler 2004, pp. 136](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 165](#))

8:01 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Is Delayed for 41 Minutes; Cause Uncertain

Flight 93 is delayed for 41 minutes on the runway at Newark Airport, New Jersey. It will take off at 8:42 a.m. ([Breslau 9/22/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) Apparently, it has to wait in a line of about a dozen planes before it can take off. ([Levin 8/11/2002](#)) According to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, the delay is partly due to a fire at the airport the previous afternoon that had led to the runways being closed for 34 minutes. ([CNN 9/10/2001](#); [Sforza 9/11/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#)) But the 9/11 Commission says it is “because of the airport’s typically heavy morning traffic.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 10](#)) And the Boston Globe later reports that United Airlines “will not explain why” Flight 93 was delayed on the runway. ([Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) NBC News comments, “That delay would give passengers on Flight 93 the time to realize that this was a suicide mission and the chance to thwart it.” ([Pauley 9/11/2006](#)) CNN adds that it therefore “likely saved the White House or the US Capitol from destruction.” ([CNN 9/11/2006](#))

September 11, 2001: The 9/11 Attack: 3,000 Die in New York City and Washington, D.C.



The September 11, 2001 attacks. From left to right: The World Trade Center, Pentagon, and Flight 93 crash. *[Source: unknown]* (click image to enlarge) The 9/11 attack: Four planes are hijacked, two crash into the WTC, one into the Pentagon, and one crashes into the Pennsylvania countryside. Nearly 3,000 people are killed.

8:13 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Makes Its Last Communication with Air Traffic Control

The last routine communication takes place between air traffic control and the pilots of Flight 11 at 8:13 and 29 seconds. Boston Center air traffic controller Pete Zalewski is handling the flight, and instructs it to turn 20 degrees to the right. Pilot John Ogonowski immediately acknowledges the instruction, but seconds later he fails to respond to a command to climb to 35,000 feet. Zalewski repeatedly tries to reach the pilot over the next ten minutes, even using the emergency frequency, but gets no response (see [8:14 a.m.-8:24 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission concludes that Flight 11 is hijacked at 8:14, or shortly afterwards (see [8:14 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([New York Times 10/16/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 4](#))

(8:13 a.m.-9:28 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Pilots of All Four Hijacked Planes Fail to Dial Standard Distress Code

In the event of a hijacking, all airline pilots are trained to key an emergency four-digit code into their plane's transponder. This would surreptitiously alert air traffic controllers, causing the letters "HJCK" to appear on their screens. ([CNN 9/13/2001](#); [Adcock 9/13/2001](#); [Missing 8/3/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 17-18](#)) The action, which pilots should take the moment a hijack situation is known, only takes seconds to perform. ([Grier 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/12/2001](#)) Yet during the hijackings of flights 11, 175, 77, and 93, none of the pilots do this. ([CNN 9/11/2001](#))

(Between 8:13-8:21 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Transponder Turned Off

Shortly after flight controllers ask Flight 11 to climb to 35,000 feet, the transponder stops transmitting. A transponder is an electronic device that identifies a plane on a controller's screen and gives its exact location and altitude. Among other vital functions, it is also used to transmit a four-digit emergency hijack code. Flight control manager Glenn Michael later says, "We considered it at that time to be a possible hijacking." ([Clayton 9/13/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/15/2001](#); [LeBlanc 8/12/2002](#)) Initial stories after 9/11 suggest the transponder is turned off around 8:13 a.m., but Pete Zalewski, the flight controller handling the flight, later says the transponder is turned off at 8:20 a.m. ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission places it at 8:21 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Colonel Robert Marr, head of NEADS, claims the transponder is turned off some time after 8:30 a.m. where the Flight 11 hijack was first detected a.m. ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#))

8:14 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Takes Off 16 Minutes Late

Flight 175 takes off from Boston's Logan Airport, 16 minutes after its scheduled 7:58 departure time. ([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/17/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [Adcock 9/10/2002](#))

8:14 a.m.-8:24 a.m. September 11, 2001: Air Traffic Controller Repeatedly Tries to Contact Flight 11

After Flight 11 fails to respond to an instruction from air traffic control to climb to 35,000 feet (see [8:13 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), the controller handling it, Pete Zalewski, tries to regain contact with the aircraft. Over the following ten minutes, he makes numerous attempts but without success. (Zalewski says he makes 12 attempts; the 9/11 Commission says nine.) He tries reaching the pilot on the emergency frequency. Zalewski later recalls that initially, "I was just thinking that it was, you know, maybe they—pilots weren't paying attention, or there's something wrong with the frequency.... And at first it was pretty much, you know, 'American 11,' you know, 'are you paying attention? Are you listening?' And there was still no response." He says, "I went back to the previous sector to see if the pilot had accidentally flipped the switch back over on the—on the radio." But as Zalewski is repeatedly unable to get any response from Flight 11, he recalls, "I even began to get more concerned." However, Zalewski claims, it is not until he sees the plane's transponder go off at around 8:21 that he suspects something is "seriously wrong," and calls his supervisor for assistance (see [8:21 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). And it is not until about 8:25 that he realizes for sure that he is dealing with a hijacking (see [8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). It is only then that Boston Center starts notifying its chain of command that Flight 11 has been hijacked (see [8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([New York Times 10/16/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 18](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 7 and 10-11](#).)

8:14 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Is Hijacked, but Pilot Makes No Distress Call

The 9/11 Commission will later conclude that Flight 11 is hijacked at 8:14 or shortly after. It will state, "Information supplied by eyewitness accounts indicates that the hijackers initiated and sustained their command of the aircraft using knives (as reported by two flight attendants); violence, including stabbing and slashing (as reported by two flight attendants); the threat of violence (as indicated by a hijacker in radio transmissions received by air traffic control); Mace (reported by one flight attendant); the threat of a bomb, either fake or real (reported by one flight attendant); and deception about their intentions (as indicated by a hijacker in a radio transmission received by air traffic control)." ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 8](#).) The Commission says, "We do not know exactly how the hijackers gained access to the cockpit; FAA rules required that the doors

remain closed and locked during flight.... Perhaps the terrorists stabbed the flight attendants to get a cockpit key, to force one of them to open the cockpit door, or to lure the captain or first officer out of the cockpit. Or the flight attendants may just have been in their way.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 5](#)) Pilots are trained to handle hijackings by staying calm, complying with any requests, and, if possible, dialing an emergency four-digit code on their plane’s transponder. It only takes a few seconds to dial this code. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#)) Yet, as the Boston Globe notes, “It appears that the hijackers’ entry was surprising enough that the pilots did not have a chance to broadcast a traditional distress call” (see [\(8:13 a.m.-9:28 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) The Los Angeles Times reports that, when flight attendant Amy Sweeney makes a phone call from the plane, she says the hijackers have “just gained access to the cockpit.” ([Lichtblau 9/20/2001](#)) Yet her first attempted call is not until 8:22, and, according to official accounts, her first call that stays connected is at 8:25, well past when the 9/11 Commission says the hijacker takeover occurs. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 9-10](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) According to an employee at the FAA’s Boston Center, Flight 11 is hijacked while it is over Gardner, Massachusetts, about 45 miles northwest of Boston. ([Associated Press 9/13/2001](#); [McKeon 9/13/2001](#))

(After 8:14 a.m.-8:38 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Pilot Repeatedly Pushes Talk Back Button



John Ogonowski. [*Source: Associated Press*] At some unknown point after the hijacking begins, Flight 11’s talkback button is activated, which enables Boston flight controllers to hear what is being said in the cockpit. It is unclear whether John Ogonowski, the pilot, activates the talkback button, or whether a hijacker accidentally does so when he takes over the cockpit. A controller later says, “The button [is] being pushed intermittently most of the way to New York.” An article later notes that “his ability to do so also indicates that he [is] in the driver’s seat much of the way” to the WTC. Such transmissions continue until about 8:38 a.m. ([Clayton 9/13/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/15/2001](#)) However, Ogonowski fails to punch a four-digit emergency code into the plane’s transponder, which pilots are taught to do the moment a hijack situation is known (see [\(8:13 a.m.-9:28 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Grier 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/13/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#))

8:15 a.m. September 11, 2001: Bush Prolongs Briefing About Planned School Visit



Sandy Kress. *[Source: Publicity photo]* Sandy Kress, Bush's unpaid education adviser, meets with the president in his hotel on Longboat Key, Florida, to brief him on their planned 9 a.m. visit to the Emma E. Booker Elementary School in nearby Sarasota. With them are Secretary of Education Rod Paige, Bush's senior adviser Karl Rove, and White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card. Kress goes over some key points for the talk Bush is due to give to the press after reading with the students at the school. However, Kress will later recall that the "president is a very punctual person," and "I've never known him to be late." Yet, "we finished the briefing on that fateful day, and we continued to talk for another ten minutes about people and politics in Texas. The time to leave came and passed." Kress adds, "That struck me as unusual." ([Kessler 2004, pp. 136-137](#); [Kress 9/10/2006](#)) According to the official schedule, the president is supposed to leave the resort at 8:30 a.m. for the drive to the school. ([Martin 7/4/2004](#)) Yet, according to one account, he will not leave until as late as 8:39 (see [\(8:35 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Sammon 10/7/2002](#))

(8:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight Controllers Cannot Contact Flight 11



Lino Martins. *[Source: NBC]* Two Boston flight controllers, Pete Zalewski and Lino Martins, discuss the fact that Flight 11 cannot be contacted. Zalewski

says to Martins, “He won’t answer you. He’s nordo [no radio] roger thanks.” ([CNN 9/17/2001](#); [New York Times 10/16/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#))

(8:16 a.m.-8:28 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Four Calls Made From Flight 11 by Unknown Individual, Possibly Flight Attendant Sara Low



Sara Low. [*Source: Family photo / Associated Press*] According to a computer presentation put forward as evidence in the 2006 trial of Zacarias Moussaoui, an unknown person—or persons—makes four calls from Flight 11. These are at 08:16:50, 08:20:11, 08:25:31, and 08:28:33. The calls do not appear to have gone through properly: they are each described as “On button pressed, no call made.” Though the trial exhibit identifies the caller(s) only as “Unknown Caller,” other evidence suggests that at least one of the calls is made by—or on behalf of—Sara Low, who is one of the plane’s flight attendants. Her father, Mike Low, later says he learned from FBI records that his daughter had given her childhood home phone number in Arkansas to another of the flight attendants, Amy Sweeney, for her to report the hijacking. Low speculates that the reason his daughter gave this particular number was that she had just moved home, and so, in the stress of the hijacking, her childhood phone number was the only one she could remember. The Moussaoui trial presentation lists Sweeney as making five calls from the plane. However, it says these are all to the American Airlines office at Boston’s Logan Airport. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#); [Hartocollis 9/4/2007](#)) Sara Low lets Sweeney use her father’s calling card in order to make these five calls from an Airfone (see [8:22 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Sheehy 6/17/2004](#))

8:19 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Attendant On Phones in Hijack Report, Officials Doubt Validity



Betty Ong. [Source: *The Eagle-Tribune*] Flight 11 attendant

Betty Ong calls Vanessa Minter, an American Airlines reservations agent at its Southeastern Reservations Office in Cary, North Carolina, using a seatback Airfone from the back of the plane. Ong speaks to Minter and another employee, Winston Sadler, for about two minutes. Then, at 8:21 a.m., supervisor Nydia Gonzalez is patched in to the call as well. Ong says, “The cockpit’s not answering. Somebody’s stabbed in business class and... I think there’s mace... that we can’t breathe. I don’t know, I think we’re getting hijacked.” Asked what flight she is on, she mistakenly answers, “Flight 12,” though a minute later she corrects this, saying, “I’m number three on Flight 11.” She continues, “And the cockpit is not answering their phone. And there’s somebody stabbed in business class. And there’s... we can’t breathe in business class. Somebody’s got mace or something... I’m sitting in the back. Somebody’s coming back from business. If you can hold on for one second, they’re coming back.” As this quote shows, other flight attendants relay information from the front of the airplane to Ong sitting in the back, and she periodically waits for updates. She goes on, “I think the guys are up there [in the cockpit]. They might have gone there—jammed the way up there, or something. Nobody can call the cockpit. We can’t even get inside.” Ong’s emergency call will last about 25 minutes, being cut off around 8:44 a.m. (see [\(8:44 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). However, the recently installed recording system at the American Airlines reservations center contains a default time limit, and consequently only the first four minutes of it will be recorded. Gonzalez later testifies that Ong was “calm, professional and in control” all through the call. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#); [Sheehy 2/11/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 5 and 453](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 8-9](#)). 9/11 Commissioner Bob Kerrey, who will hear more recordings than are made public, later says that some officials on the ground greeted Ong’s account skeptically: “They did not believe her. They said, ‘Are you sure?’ They asked her to confirm that it wasn’t air-rage. Our people on the ground were not prepared for a hijacking.” ([Johnston and Dwyer 4/18/2004](#)
Sources: [Bob Kerrey](#))

(8:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Israeli Special-Ops Passenger Shot or Stabbed by Hijackers?



Daniel Lewin. [Source: Akamai Technologies] An FAA memo written on the evening of 9/11, and later leaked, suggests that a man on Flight 11 was shot and killed by a gun before the plane crashed into the WTC. The “Executive Summary,” based on information relayed by a flight attendant to the American Airlines Operation Center, stated “that a passenger located in seat 10B [Satam Al Suqami] shot and killed a passenger in seat 9B [Daniel Lewin] at 9:20 am.” (Note that since Flight 11 crashed at 8:46, the time must be a typo, probably meaning 8:20). A report in Israeli newspaper Ha’aretz on September 17 identifies Lewin as a former member of the Israel Defense Force Sayeret Matkal, Israel’s most successful special-operations unit. ([United Press International 3/6/2002](#)) Sayeret Matkal is a deep-penetration unit that has been involved in assassinations, the theft of foreign signals-intelligence materials, and the theft and destruction of foreign nuclear weaponry. Sayeret Matkal is best known for the 1976 rescue of 106 passengers at Entebbe Airport in Uganda. ([Hersh 10/29/2001](#)) Lewin founded Akamai, a successful computer company, and his connections to Sayeret Matkal remained hidden until the gun story became known. ([Schofield 9/15/2001](#)) FAA and American Airline officials later deny the gun story and suggest that Lewin was probably stabbed to death instead. ([Eggen 3/2/2002](#); [United Press International 3/6/2002](#)) Officials assert that the leaked document was a “first draft,” and subsequently corrected, but declines to release the final draft, calling it “protected information.” However, an FAA official present when the memo was drafted will dispute the FAA’s claim, asserting that “[t]he document was reviewed for accuracy by a number of people in the room, including myself and a couple of managers of the operations center.” ([Sperry 3/7/2002](#))

8:20 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 11 IFF Signal Transmission Stops

Flight 11 stops transmitting its IFF (identify friend or foe) beacon signal. ([CNN 9/17/2001](#))

(8:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Veers Off Course

Flight 11 starts to veer dramatically off course. It now heads in a northwesterly direction toward Albany, New York. ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#))

8:20 a.m. September 11, 2001: American Airlines Dispatcher Learns of Problem With Flight 11

At the American Airlines operations center in Fort Worth, Texas, the flight dispatcher responsible for transatlantic flights receives a communication from an American Airlines flight traveling from Seattle to Boston, informing her that air traffic control has asked the aircraft to try and contact Flight 11. Under FAA rules, dispatchers licensed by the agency are responsible for following aircraft in flight. Once a plane is in the air, a dispatcher must monitor its progress, relay safety information to the captain, and handle any problems. American Airlines assigns a dispatcher to each of its flights. This is the first indication the dispatcher receives notice of any problem on Flight 11. ([Morris 6/13/2002](#); [Wald 6/14/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 9 and 86](#).) However, Flight 11 is not a transatlantic flight, so why this particular dispatcher is notified is unclear.

(8:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Boston Flight Control Thinks Flight 11 May Be Hijacked?



FAA, €™s Boston Center [Source: ABC

News] According to some reports, Boston flight control decides that Flight 11 has probably been hijacked, but apparently, it does not notify other flight control centers for another five minutes, and does not notify NORAD for approximately 20 minutes. ([Wald 9/15/2001](#); [Adcock, Donovan, and Gordon 9/23/2001](#)) ABC News will later say, “There doesn’t seem to have been alarm bells going off, [flight] controllers getting on with law enforcement or the military. There’s a gap there that will have to be investigated.” ([ABC News 9/14/2001](#)) (Note the conflicting account at 8:21 a.m. (see [\(8:21 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)))

(8:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Takes Off 10 Minutes Late

Flight 77 departs Dulles International Airport near Washington, ten minutes after its 8:10 scheduled departure time. ([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/17/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(8:21 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Attendant Ong's Hijacking Account Forwarded to American Airlines Operations Center



Nydia Gonzalez. [*Source: 9/11 Commission*] Nydia Gonzalez, an American Airlines supervisor with expertise on security matters, is patched in to a call with flight attendant Betty Ong on Flight 11. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#)) At 8:21 a.m., according to the 9/11 Commission (or 8:27 a.m., according to the Wall Street Journal), Gonzalez calls Craig Marquis, a manager at the American Airlines System Operations Control (SOC) in Fort Worth, Texas. Gonzalez holds the phone to Ong to one ear, and the phone to Marquis to the other. ([Mccartney and Carey 10/15/2001](#); [Sheehy 2/11/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 5](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 9](#)) Marquis quickly says, "I'm assuming they've declared an emergency. Let me get ATC [air traffic control] on here. Stand by.... Okay, we're contacting the flight crew now and we're... we're also contacting ATC." Gonzalez relays that Ong is saying the hijackers from seats 2A and 2B are in the cockpit with the pilots, and that there are no doctors on board. Gonzalez talks to Marquis continuously until Flight 11 crashes. While only the first four minutes of Ong's call from Flight 11 are recorded by American Airlines (see [8:19 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), all of Gonzalez's call to Marquis will be recorded. Four minutes, of what is apparently a compilation from it, are later played before the 9/11 Commission. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#))

(8:21 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Boston Controller Suspects Something Seriously Wrong with Flight 11, but NORAD Not Notified



Tom Roberts. [Source: *NBC News*] Boston flight controller Pete Zalewski, handling Flight 11, sees that the flight is off course and that the plane has turned off both transponder and radio. Zalewski later claims he turns to his supervisor and says, "Would you please come over here? I think something is seriously wrong with this plane. I don't know what. It's either mechanical, electrical, I think, but I'm not sure." When asked if he suspected a hijacking at this point, he replies, "Absolutely not. No way." According to the 9/11 Commission, "the supervisor instructed the controller [presumably Zalewski] to follow standard operating procedures for handling a 'no radio' aircraft once the controller told the supervisor the transponder had been turned off." Another flight controller, Tom Roberts, has another nearby American Airlines Flight try to contact Flight 11. There is still no response. The flight is now "drastically off course" but NORAD is still not notified. ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Note that this response contradicts flight control manager Glenn Michael's assertion that Flight 11 was considered a possible hijacking as soon as the transponder was discovered turned off.

8:22 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Attendant Sweeney Phones in Hijacking Details



Flight attendants Karen Martin and Barbara Arestegui are apparently stabbed early in the hijacking of Flight 11. [Source: *Family photos*] Flight 11 attendant Amy (Madeline) Sweeney borrows a calling card from flight attendant Sara Low and uses an Airfone to try to call the American Airlines flight services office at Boston's Logan Airport. She makes her first attempt at 8:22 a.m., but this quickly disconnects, as does a second attempt at 8:24. Further attempts at 8:25 and 8:29 are cut off after she reports someone hurt on the flight. The respondent to the call

mistakenly thinks Sweeney's flight number that she reports is 12. Hearing there is a problem with an American Airlines plane, Michael Woodward, an American Airlines flight service manager, goes to American's gate area at the airport with a colleague, and realizes Flight 12 has not yet departed. He returns to the office to try to clarify the situation, then takes the phone and speaks to Sweeney himself. Because Woodward and Sweeney are friends, he does not have to verify the call is not a hoax. The call is not recorded, but Woodward takes detailed notes. According to the 9/11 Commission, the call between them lasts about 12 minutes, from 8:32 a.m. to 8:44 a.m. Accounts prior to the 9/11 Commission report spoke of one continuous call from around 8:20. ([ABC News 7/18/2002](#); [Sheehy 2/11/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 453](#)) Sweeney calmly tells Woodward, "Listen, and listen to me very carefully. I'm on Flight 11. The airplane has been hijacked." ([ABC News 7/18/2002](#)) According to one account, she gives him the seat locations of three hijackers: 9D, 9G, and 10B. She says they are all of Middle Eastern descent, and one speaks English very well. ([Sheehy 2/11/2004](#)) Another account states that she identifies four hijackers (but still not the five said to be on the plane), and notes that not all the seats she gave matched up with the seats assigned to the hijackers on their tickets. ([Lichtblau 9/20/2001](#); [ABC News 7/18/2002](#)) She says she cannot contact the cockpit, and does not believe the pilots are flying the plane any longer. ([Sheehy 2/11/2004](#)) According to a later Los Angeles Times report, "Even as she was relating details about the hijackers, the men were storming the front of the plane and 'had just gained access to the cockpit,'" (Note that Sweeney witnesses the storming of the cockpit at least seven minutes after radio contact from Flight 11 stops and at least one of the hijackers begins taking control of the cockpit.) ([Lichtblau 9/20/2001](#)) She says the hijackers have stabbed the two first-class flight attendants, Barbara Arestegui and Karen Martin. She adds, "A hijacker cut the throat of a business-class passenger [later identified as Daniel Lewin], and he appears to be dead (see [8:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#))." She also says the hijackers have brought a bomb into the cockpit. Woodward asks Sweeney, "How do you know it's a bomb?" She answers, "Because the hijackers showed me a bomb." She describes its yellow and red wires. Sweeney continues talking with Woodward until Flight 11 crashes. ([Johnson 11/23/2001](#); [Sheehy 2/11/2004](#))

(Between 8:22 a.m. and 8:44 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Sweeney's Call Reaches American Headquarters, but Managers Cover Up the News



Amy (Madeline) Sweeney. [Source: *Telegraph of Nashua/ Getty Images*] American Airlines Flight service manager Michael Woodward is listening to Flight 11 attendant Amy Sweeney on the telephone, and he wants to pass on the information he is hearing from her. Since there is no tape recorder, he calls Nancy Wyatt, the supervisor of pursers at Logan Airport. Holding telephones in both hands, he repeats to Wyatt everything that Sweeney is saying to him. Wyatt in turn simultaneously transmits his account to the airline's Fort Worth, Texas, headquarters. The conversation between Wyatt and managers at headquarters is recorded. All vital details from Sweeney's call reach American Airlines' top management almost instantly. However, according to victims' relatives who later hear this recording, the two managers at headquarters immediately begin discussing a cover-up of the hijacking details. They say, "don't spread this around. Keep it close," "Keep it quiet," and "Let's keep this among ourselves. What else can we find out from our own sources about what's going on?" One former American Airlines employee who has also heard this recording recalls, "In Fort Worth, two managers in SOC [Systems Operations Control] were sitting beside each other and hearing it. They were both saying, 'Do not pass this along. Let's keep it right here. Keep it among the five of us.'" Apparently, this decision prevents early and clear evidence of a hijacking from being shared during the crisis. Gerard Arpey, American Airlines' executive vice president for operations, soon hears details of the hijacking from flight attendant Betty Ong's phone call (see [8:19 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) at 8:30 a.m. (see [\(8:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), but apparently, he does not learn of Sweeney's call until much later. Victims' relatives will later question whether lives could have been saved if only this information had been quickly shared with other airplanes. ([Sheehy 6/17/2004](#))

8:23 a.m.-8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001: American Airlines Operations Center Tries to Contact Flight 11, But Gets No Response

At 8:23 a.m., a flight dispatcher at the American Airlines operations center in Fort Worth, Texas sends an ACARS text message to Flight 11. ACARS, meaning Aircraft Communications and Reporting System, is an e-mail system enabling company personnel

on the ground to rapidly communicate with those in the cockpit of an in-flight aircraft. The message says, “Good morning... ATC [air traffic control] looking for you on [radio frequency] 135.32.” No response is received from Flight 11. Two minutes later, an American Airlines air traffic control specialist at the operations center sends another ACARS message to Flight 11. This says, “Plz contact Boston Center ASAP... They have lost radio contact and your transponder signal.” Again, no response is received from the plane. Subsequent ACARS messages also receive no reply. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 9-10](#))

(8:24 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Boston Flight Controllers Hear Flight 11 Hijacker: ‘We Have Some Planes’



Pete Zalewski. [*Source: NBC*] Because the talkback button on Flight 11 has been activated, Boston flight controllers can hear a hijacker on board say to the passengers: “We have some planes. Just stay quiet and you’ll be OK. We are returning to the airport.” Flight controller Pete Zalewski recognizes this as a foreign, Middle Eastern-sounding voice, but does not make out the specific words “we have some planes.” He responds, “Who’s trying to call me?” Seconds later, in the next transmission, the hijacker continues, “Nobody move. Everything will be OK. If you try to make any moves you’ll endanger yourself and the airplane. Just stay quiet.” Zalewski asks for an assistant to help listen to the transmissions coming from the plane, and puts its frequency on speakers so others at Boston Center can hear. Because Zalewski didn’t understand the initial hijacker communication from Flight 11, the manager of Boston Center instructs the center’s quality assurance specialist to “pull the tape” of the transmission, listen to it carefully, and then report back. They do this, and by about 9:03 a.m. a Boston manager will report having deciphered what was said in the first hijacker transmission (see [\(9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Fellow Boston controller Don Geoffroy also hears the tape of the hijacker transmissions, though he doesn’t state at what time. He says, “I heard exactly what Pete [Zalewski] heard. And we had to actually listen to it a couple of times just to make sure that we were hearing what we heard.” ([New York Times 9/12/2001](#); [Channel 4 News \(London\) 9/13/2001](#); [Wald and Sack 10/16/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) At some point, Ben Sliney, the national operations manager at the FAA’s Herndon Command Center, gets word of the “We have some planes” message, and later says the phrase haunts him all morning.

American Airlines Executive Vice President for Operations Gerard Arpey is also informed of the “strange transmissions from Flight 11” at some point prior to when it crashes at 8:46 a.m. ([Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#)) Boston Center will receive a third transmission from Flight 11 about ten minutes later (see [\(8:34 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(Before 8:26 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Hijackers Identified by Seat Locations

Having been told by flight attendant Amy Sweeney the seat locations of three hijackers (see [8:22 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), American Airlines Flight service manager Michael Woodward orders a colleague at Boston’s Logan Airport to look up those seat locations on the reservations computer. The names, addresses, phone numbers, and credit cards of these hijackers are quickly identified: Abdulaziz Alomari is in 9G, Mohamed Atta is in 9D, and Satam Al Suqami is in 10B. 9/11 Commissioner Bob Kerrey notes that from this information, American Airlines officials monitoring the call would probably have known or assumed right away that the hijacking was connected to al-Qaeda. ([ABC News 7/18/2002](#); [Sheehy 2/11/2004](#))

8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001: Boston Flight Control Tells Other Centers About Hijack, But Not NORAD

Boston flight control reportedly “notifies several air traffic control centers that a hijack is taking place.” ([Ellison 10/17/2001](#)) This is immediately after Boston controllers heard a transmission from Flight 11, declaring, “We have some planes” (see [\(8:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and would be consistent with a claim later made to the 9/11 Commission by Mike Canavan, the FAA’s associate administrator for civil aviation security. He says, “[M]y experience as soon as you know you had a hijacked aircraft, you notify everyone.... [W]hen you finally find out, yes, we do have a problem, then... the standard notification is it kind of gets broadcast out to all the regions.” ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) An early FAA report will say only that Boston controllers begin “inter-facility coordination” with New York air traffic control at this time ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#)), but the New York Times reports that controllers at Washington Center also know “about the hijacking of the first plane to crash, even before it hit the World Trade Center.” ([Wald 9/13/2001](#)) However, the Indianapolis flight controller monitoring Flight 77 claims to not know about this or Flight 175’s hijacking twenty minutes later at 8:56 a.m. (see [\(8:56 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Additionally, the flight controllers at New York City’s La Guardia airport are never told about the hijacked planes and learn about them from watching the news. ([Kelly 1/4/2004](#)) Boston Center also begins notifying the FAA chain of command of the suspected Flight 11 hijacking at this time (see [8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), but it does not notify NORAD for another 6-15 minutes, depending on the account (see [\(8:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001: Boston Center Starts Notifying Chain of Command

Boston flight control begins notifying the chain of command that a suspected hijacking of Flight 11 is in progress. Those notified include the center's own facility manager, the FAA's New England Regional Operations Center (ROC) in Burlington, Massachusetts, and the FAA Command Center in Herndon, Virginia (see [8:28 a.m.-8:32 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 11](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission, this is consistent with FAA protocol: "From interviews of controllers at various FAA centers, we learned that an air traffic controller's first response to an aircraft incident is to notify a supervisor, who then notifies the traffic management unit and the operations manager in charge. The FAA center next notifies the appropriate regional operations center (ROC), which in turn contacts FAA headquarters." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 458](#)) But according to Ben Sliney, the national operations manager at the FAA's Command Center, "the protocol was in place that the center that reported the hijacking would notify the military.... I go back to 1964, where I began my air traffic career, and they have always followed the same protocol." ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Yet Boston Center supposedly will not contact NORAD about Flight 11 until about 12 minutes later (see [8:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Already about ten minutes have passed since controllers first noticed a loss of contact with Flight 11 (see [8:15 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Boston reportedly also contacts several other air traffic control centers about the suspected hijacking at this time (see [8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(8:25 a.m.-8:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Office of Management and Budget Deputy Director Speaks with Cheney Neither Can Later Recall What They Discuss



Sean O'Keefe. [*Source: Bill Ingalls / NASA*] Sean O'Keefe, the deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, stops by Vice President Dick Cheney's White House office for an unscheduled visit. According to journalist and author Stephen Hayes, Cheney's colleagues have learned to keep any impromptu sessions with him short and succinct. Yet O'Keefe spends more than 20 minutes with the vice president. Cheney is scheduled to meet John McConnell, his chief speechwriter, at 8:30 a.m. Yet McConnell is left waiting outside the office while the vice president is deep in discussion with

O'Keefe. According to Hayes, while the topic of O'Keefe and Cheney's conversation seems urgent at present, "In time, neither man would be able to recall what it was that had been so important." ([Hayes 2007, pp. 328-330](#)) O'Keefe is a former Pentagon comptroller, and had been a close confidant of Dick Cheney's when he was the secretary of defense, in the early 1990s. He was also secretary of the navy from 1992 to 1993. ([Schmitt 7/7/1992](#); [Nagourney 2/3/2003](#))

(8:25 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Boston Realizes For Sure Flight 11 Has Been Hijacked

According to Terry Biggio, the operations manager at Boston flight control, the center initially thought Flight 11 "was a catastrophic electrical failure and... was diverting to New York" (see [\(8:21 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Federal Aviation Administration 10/19/2002](#)) However, at about 8:24 a.m., controllers heard two radio transmissions from it, with the voice of a hijacker declaring, "We have some planes" (see [\(8:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Pete Zalewski, who is handling Flight 11, says that after the second of these, "I immediately knew something was very wrong. And I knew it was a hijack." He alerts his supervisor. Lino Martins, another Boston air traffic controller, says, "the supervisor came over, and that's when we realized something was serious." ([Clayton 9/13/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Right away, the center begins notifying the chain of command that a suspected hijacking is taking place (see [8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#) ⁹) However, some reports claim that controllers decided Flight 11 was probably hijacked earlier than this, by about 8:20 a.m. (see [\(8:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(8:26 a.m.-8:29 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Turns, Many Watch It on Primary Radar

At 8:26, Flight 11, which is already way off course, makes an unplanned 100-degree turn to the south over Albany, New York. A minute later, it turns right, to the south-southwest. Then, two minutes on, at 8:29, it turns left to the south-southeast. Boston air traffic controllers never lose sight of the flight, though they can no longer determine altitude as the transponder is turned off. Its last known altitude was 29,000 feet. ([Clayton 9/13/2001](#); [Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#) ⁹; [National Transportation Safety Board 2/19/2002](#) ⁹; [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#)) Before this turn, the FAA had tagged Flight 11's radar dot for easy visibility and, at American Airlines' System Operations Control (SOC) in Fort Worth, Texas, "All eyes watched as the plane headed south. On the screen, the plane showed a squiggly line after its turn near Albany, then it straightened." ([Mccartney and Carey 10/15/2001](#)) Boston air traffic controller Mark Hodgkins later says, "I watched the target of American 11 the whole way down." ([Ross and Rackmill 9/6/2002](#)) However, apparently, NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) has different radar. When they are finally told about the flight, they cannot find it (see [After 8:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). NEADS has to repeatedly phone the FAA, airlines, and others, for clues as to the plane's location. NEADS will eventually focus on a radar blip they believe might be

Flight 11, and watch it close in on New York. ([Seely 1/25/2002](#); [Scott 6/3/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#))

(Between 8:27 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Ong Gives Flight 11 Details; Seating Accounts Differ

Nydia Gonzalez, an American Airlines supervisor at its Southeastern Reservations Office, is relaying information to Craig Marquis, a manager at the American Airlines System Operations Control (SOC) in Fort Worth (see [\(8:21 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to Marquis, “She said two flight attendants had been stabbed, one was on oxygen. A passenger had his throat slashed and looked dead and they had gotten into the cockpit.” Marquis later recollects that Ong said the four hijackers had come from first-class seats: 2A, 2B, 9A, and 9B. She’d said the wounded passenger was in seat 10B. ([Mccartney and Carey 10/15/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) Note that this conflicts with the seats flight attendant Amy Sweeney gave for the hijackers at about the same time: 9D, 9G, and 10B (see [\(Before 8:26 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). At around 8:30 a.m., this information is passed to Gerard Arpey, the effective head of American Airlines this morning (see [\(8:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 12](#)). By 9:59 a.m., counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke and other top officials receive the information. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 13-14](#))

8:28 a.m.-8:32 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Centers Have Hijacking Conference Call; Military Not Notified



The FAA Command Center, the center of daily management of the US air traffic system. On 9/11 it is managed by Ben Sliney (not pictured here). [*Source: CNN*] At 8:28 a.m., Boston flight control calls the FAA Command Center in Herndon and tells them that they believe Flight 11 has been hijacked and it is heading toward New York airspace. At 8:32 a.m., the Command Center shares this with the Operations Center at FAA headquarters. Headquarters replies that they have just begun discussing the hijack situation with the main FAA New England office. But, according to the 9/11 Commission, although “FAA headquarters began to follow the hijack protocol,” it does “not contact the NMCC [the National Military Command Center

in the Pentagon] to request a fighter escort.” The Herndon Command Center immediately establishes a teleconference between the Boston, New York, and Cleveland flight control centers so that Boston can help the others understand what is happening. Even though, since 8:25 a.m., Boston has been certain that Flight 11 is hijacked (see [\(8:25 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), they still supposedly do not contact NORAD (as well as the NMCC) to request fighter support. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 19](#))

(8:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: American Airlines Vice President Informed of Hijacking, But Unable to Contact Company President



Gerard Arpey. [*Source: American Airlines*] Gerard Arpey, American Airlines' executive vice president for operations, is in his office at the company's headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas. During a routine call to the airline's nearby System Operations Control (SOC), he learns from manager Joe Burdepelly that Flight 11 may have been hijacked. Burdepelly tells Arpey that another manager, Craig Marquis, is in contact with flight attendant Betty Ong on the hijacked flight. Arpey learns that Ong said two other attendants have been stabbed, that two or three passengers are in the cockpit, and more. Arpey then tries, unsuccessfully, to contact American Airlines' president Don Carty to inform him of the situation. He leaves a message for him to call back as soon as possible. Carty has not arrived at his office yet, meaning Arpey is the effective head of American Airlines during the early phase of the crisis. Arpey then sets out to the SOC, which is located about a mile from headquarters, and will arrive there some time between 8:35 and 8:40 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 12](#)). At some point before Flight 11 crashes, he is told about the strange hijacker transmissions coming from this plane (see [\(8:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#))

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Hijack Coordinator Responsible for Contacting Military is Out of Contact



Mike Canavan testifying before the 9/11 Commission. [Source: C-SPAN] Protocols in place on 9/11 state that if the FAA requests the military to go after an airplane, “the escort service will be requested by the FAA hijack coordinator by direct contact with the National Military Command Center (NMCC).” ([Federal Aviation Administration 11/3/1998](#)) Acting FAA Deputy Administrator Monte Belger states essentially the same thing to the 9/11 Commission, “The official protocol on that day was for the FAA headquarters, primarily through the hijack coordinator... to request assistance from the NMCC if there was a need for DOD assistance.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) However, the hijack coordinator, FAA Office of Civil Aviation Security Director Mike Canavan, is in Puerto Rico and claims to have missed out on “everything that transpired that day.” The 9/11 Commission fails to ask him if he had delegated that task to anyone else while he was gone. ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 17](#)) Monte Belger will later say simply that “an FAA security person” runs the “hijack net” open communication system during 9/11. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Rookie in Command of the NMCC



Captain Charles Leidig. [Source: US Navy] Captain Charles Leidig, the deputy for Command Center operations at the NMCC, takes over temporarily from Brigadier General Montague Winfield and is effectively in charge of NMCC during the 9/11 crisis. Winfield had requested the previous day that Leidig stand in for him on September 11. Leidig had started his role as Deputy for Command Center Operations two months earlier and had qualified to stand in for Winfield just the previous month. Leidig remains in charge from a few minutes before the 9/11 crisis begins until about 10:30 a.m., after the last hijacked plane crashes. He presides over an important crisis response teleconference that has a very slow start, not even beginning until 9:39 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(8:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Some US Leaders Are Scattered; Others in D.C.



Secretary of State Colin Powell leaves his Lima, Peru hotel after hearing the news. [Source: *Agence France-Presse*] Just prior to learning about the 9/11 attacks, top US leaders are scattered across the country and overseas:

- President Bush is in Sarasota, Florida. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))
- Secretary of State Powell is in Lima, Peru. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))
- General Henry Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is flying across the Atlantic on the way to Europe. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))
- Attorney General Ashcroft is flying to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))
- Federal Emergency Management Agency Director Joe Allbaugh is at a conference in Montana. ([ABC News 9/14/2002](#)) Others are in Washington:
- Vice President Cheney and National Security Adviser Rice are at their offices in the White House. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))
- Defense Secretary Rumsfeld is at his office in the Pentagon, meeting with a delegation from Capitol Hill. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))
- CIA Director Tenet is at breakfast with his old friend and mentor, former senator David Boren (D), at the St. Regis Hotel, three blocks from the White House. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))
- FBI Director Mueller is in his office at FBI Headquarters on Pennsylvania Avenue. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))
- Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta is at his office at the Department of Transportation. ([US Congress 9/20/2001](#))
- Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke is at a conference in the Ronald Reagan Building three blocks from the White House. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 1](#))

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Army Base Near Pentagon Holds Terrorist Attack Exercise

At Fort Belvoir, an army base 12 miles south of the Pentagon, Lt. Col. Mark R. Lindon is conducting a “garrison control exercise” when the 9/11 attacks begin. The object of this exercise is to “test the security at the base in case of a terrorist attack.” Lindon later says,

“I was out checking on the exercise and heard about the World Trade Center on my car radio. As soon as it was established that this was no accident, we went to a complete security mode.” Staff Sgt. Mark Williams of the Military District of Washington Engineer Company at Fort Belvoir also later says: “Ironically, we were conducting classes about rescue techniques when we were told of the planes hitting the World Trade Center.” Williams’ team is one of the first response groups to arrive at the site of the Pentagon crash and one of the first to enter the building following the attack. ([Hagee 9/5/2002](#)) A previous MASCAL (mass casualty) training exercise was held at Fort Belvoir a little over two months earlier (see [June 29, 2001](#)). It was “designed to enhance the first ready response in dealing with the effects of a terrorist incident involving an explosion.” ([Passino 7/5/2001](#)) Located at Fort Belvoir is Davison Army Airfield, from where UH-1 “Huey” and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters fly. Davison’s mission includes maintaining “a readiness posture in support of contingency plans,” and providing “aviation support for the White House, US government officials, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, and other government agencies.” ([Fahrig 5/7/1999](#); [Military District of Washington 8/2000](#))

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: US Military Holding ‘Practice Armageddon’ Nationwide Training Exercise



Offutt Air Force Base control tower during Global Guardian 1998. [Source: Jeffery S. Viano] As the 9/11 attacks are taking place, a large military training exercise called Global Guardian is said to be “in full swing.” It has been going on since the previous week. ([Dejka 2/27/2002](#); [Buttry 9/10/2002](#)) Global Guardian is an annual exercise sponsored by US Strategic Command (Stratcom) in cooperation with US Space Command and NORAD. One military author defines Stratcom as “the single US military command responsible for the day-to-day readiness of America’s nuclear forces.” ([Arkin 2005, pp. 59](#)) Global Guardian is a global readiness exercise involving all Stratcom forces and aims to test Stratcom’s ability to fight a nuclear war. It is one of many “practice Armageddons” that the US military routinely stages. ([Arkin 11/1/1997](#); [Ruff 2/21/2002](#); [Dejka 2/27/2002](#); [Buttry 9/10/2002](#)) It links with a number of other military exercises, including Crown Vigilance (an Air Combat Command exercise), Apollo Guardian (a US Space Command exercise), and

NORAD exercises Vigilant Guardian and Amalgam Warrior ([US Department of Defense 5/1997](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 10/10/2002](#)) Global Guardian is both a command post and field training exercise, and is based around a fictitious scenario designed to test the ability of Stratcom and its component forces to deter a military attack against the US. Hundreds of military personnel are involved. ([US Congress n.d.](#); [Wasiak 12/1999](#); [Villafuerte 9/8/2002](#)) According to a 1998 Internet article by the British American Security Information Council—an independent research organization—Global Guardian is held in October or November each year. ([Kristensen 10/1998](#)) In his book “Code Names,” NBC News military analyst William Arkin dates this exercise for October 22-31, 2001. ([Arkin 2005, pp. 379](#)) And a military newspaper reported in March 2001 that Global Guardian was scheduled for October 2001. ([Space Observer 3/23/2001, pp. 2](#)) If this is correct, then some time after March, the exercise must have been rescheduled for early September. Furthermore, there may be another important facet to Global Guardian. A 1998 Defense Department newsletter reported that for several years Stratcom had been incorporating a computer network attack (CNA) into Global Guardian. The attack involved Stratcom “red team” members and other organizations acting as enemy agents, and included attempts to penetrate the Command using the Internet and a “bad” insider who had access to a key command and control system. The attackers “war dialed” the phones to tie them up and sent faxes to numerous fax machines throughout the Command. They also claimed they were able to shut down Stratcom’s systems. Reportedly, Stratcom planned to increase the level of computer network attack in future Global Guardian exercises. ([Parker 6/1998](#)) It is not currently known if a computer attack was incorporated into Global Guardian in 2001 or what its possible effects on the country’s air defense system would have been if such an attack was part of the exercise.

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Preparations Underway for IMF/World Bank Meeting in Washington, DC

Preparations are already underway for the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which are scheduled to take place in Washington, DC on September 29-30, 2001. Many of the agencies that will be involved in the emergency response to the Pentagon attack, including the Arlington County Fire Department, are engaged in preparations for the IMF/World Bank event. ([United Press International 9/6/2001](#); [US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. A-4](#); [9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 314](#)) The meetings have been designated as a National Special Security Event (NSSE). ([New York Times 8/18/2001](#); [Best 9/1/2001](#)) The Secret Service is in charge of security for NSSEs. ([United States Secret Service n.d.](#)) The FBI and FEMA also have key roles. ([Scalet 9/2004](#); [Lowy 1/11/2005](#)) There are questions about how preparations for an NSSE might have affected security around Washington. When preparing for such an event, the Secret Service carries out “a tremendous amount of advance planning and coordination in the areas of venue and motorcade route security, communications, credentialing, and training.” It conducts a “variety of training initiatives,” including “simulated attacks and medical emergencies, inter-agency tabletop exercises, and field exercises.” ([United States Secret Service n.d.](#)) According to former FBI Director Louis Freeh, in 2000 and 2001 the use of airplanes by

terrorists in suicide missions is “part of the planning” for NSSEs. ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#)) Also, the Secret Service is mandated to create capabilities for achieving “airspace security” over NSSEs. ([US Congress 3/30/2000](#)) But whether it has such capabilities already in place around Washington is unknown. Though there are only about four or five NSSEs each year, preparations also happen to be underway in New York for another possible NSSE (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Homeland Security 7/9/2003](#); [US Department of Homeland Security 11/8/2004](#)) The IMF/World Bank event will be cancelled due to the 9/11 attacks. ([CBS News 9/17/2001](#))

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Preparations Underway in New York for UN General Assembly



UN General Assembly Hall. [Source: *UN*] Preparations are underway in New York City for the upcoming meeting of the United Nations General Assembly. ([US Congress 4/23/2002](#)) The Secret Service has an additional 100 employees in the city for this event. ([PCCW Newsletter 3/2006](#)) Four communications soldiers from the 1108th Signal Brigade are also temporarily assigned to New York to support the Secret Service. ([Fleming-Michael 10/18/2001](#)) Presumably, the specific event being prepared for is the General Assembly’s annual gathering of world leaders, scheduled for September 24 to October 5, which President Bush is due to address on September 24. ([Reuters 9/12/2001](#); [Associated Press 10/29/2001](#)) For example, one report says Secret Service Officer Craig Miller is in New York today “to do advance security work for President Bush’s then upcoming visit to the United Nations General Assembly.” ([American Rifleman 2/2002](#); [United States Secret Service 4/29/2002](#)) The General Assembly is designated as a National Special Security Event (NSSE). ([Baker 11/10/2001](#); [US Congress 7/9/2002](#); [US Department of Homeland Security 7/9/2003](#)) Since 1998, the National Security Council has been authorized to designate important upcoming events as NSSEs (see [May 22, 1998](#)), which puts the Secret Service in charge of the planning and implementation of security. ([United States Secret Service n.d.](#)) It is unclear whether the UN General Assembly received NSSE status prior to 9/11, or is later designated as an NSSE due to the attacks. However, the UN’s previous ‘Millennium Summit’ in New York in September 2000 was an NSSE. ([US Department of the Treasury 2000, pp. 177](#); [US Congress 6/29/2000](#); [White House 1/10/2002](#)) And in 2003, Secret Service Director Ralph Basham states: “Each year, the UNGA [United Nations General Assembly] is a manpower and resource intensive effort for the Secret Service.” ([US Congress 5/1/2003](#)) So it seems likely that it was designated as an NSSE before 9/11. There are questions about how preparations for an NSSE could have affected security in New York. The Secret Service says it conducts a “tremendous amount of advance

planning and coordination” for NSSEs, involving a “variety of training initiatives,” which include, “simulated attacks and medical emergencies.” ([United States Secret Service n.d.](#)) Furthermore, former FBI Director Louis Freeh will later tell the 9/11 Commission that in 2000 and 2001, the use of airplanes by terrorists in suicide missions “was part of the planning” for NSSEs. ([9/11 Commission 4/13/2004](#)) Whether any such preparations are taking place in New York on or around 9/11 is unknown. The Secret Service is also mandated to create capabilities for achieving “airspace security” over NSSEs, which include “air interdiction teams” used to detect and identify aircraft that violate the restricted airspace above the event. ([US Congress 3/30/2000](#); [Gips 2/2002](#)) Again, whether such capabilities are already available in New York in advance of the UN General Assembly is unknown. Even though only four or five events per year are designated as NSSEs, preparations are also underway in the Washington, DC area for a separate NSSE (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([US Department of Homeland Security 7/9/2003](#); [US Department of Homeland Security 11/8/2004](#)) The UN General Assembly’s gathering of world leaders will be cancelled due to the 9/11 attacks but is rescheduled for November. ([CBS News 9/19/2001](#); [BBC 11/10/2001](#); [Borger and Wintour 11/10/2001](#))

8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Several Senior Members of FAA Staff Away From Base When Attacks Begin

A number of key senior FAA personnel happen to be away from their usual bases this morning, at the time of the attacks.

■ Bill Peacock, the FAA director of air traffic services, is in New Orleans for a meeting with the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA). Among his many duties, Peacock is “the ultimate manager of all the air traffic controllers in the country’s system.” He will be transported from New Orleans later in the day in an FAA business jet, one of the few aircraft permitted to fly, and only arrive at FAA headquarters shortly after 5:00 p.m. ([Freni 2003, pp. 12 and 70](#))

■ Jack Kies, the FAA’s manager of tactical operations, is in Nashua, New Hampshire for a meeting with representatives of the Canadian air traffic control organization. ([Freni 2003, pp. 65-66](#)) Consequently Linda Schuessler, the deputy director of system operations, has to take his place in charge of the FAA Command Center in Herndon, Virginia. ([Lavey 5/18/2006](#))

■ Tony Ferrante, the manager of the FAA’s air traffic investigation arm, is in Chicago to testify at a hearing. He will become frustrated later in the day about being stuck there, knowing he should be at his post in Washington gathering forensic data on the hijackings and crashes. ([Freni 2003, pp. 7, 19 and 47-48](#))

■ Rick Hostetler, a member of the FAA’s planning and procedures organization, is at the dentist’s in Waldorf, Maryland when the attacks begin. His job includes acting as the FAA’s primary air traffic liaison for the Secret Service, the US Special Operations Command, and the Pentagon. After seeing the second WTC tower hit live on television, reportedly while sitting in the dentist’s chair, he will quickly set out for his duty station at the FAA Command Center. But due to the heavy traffic, his journey will take hours and the attacks will be over by the time he gets there. ([Freni 2003, pp. 27, 47 and 90](#))

■Mike Canavan, the director of the FAA's Office of Civil Aviation Security, is visiting the airport in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He will only make it back to Washington in the evening, on a special Army flight. ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) As part of his job, Canavan is the FAA's hijack coordinator, responsible for requesting military assistance in the event of a hijacking (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 17-18](#))

■FAA Administrator Jane Garvey is in a breakfast meeting at the Department of Transportation, in Washington, DC. She will quickly relocate to FAA headquarters soon after the first attack (see [\(8:48 a.m.-9:05 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Freni 2003, pp. 62-63](#))

Whether the absence of these senior personnel impairs the FAA's ability to respond to the attacks is unknown.

(8:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Navy Commander Describes Need for 'Seminal' Terrorist Event



Kirk Lippold. [*Source: CNN*] At the CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, three senior CIA officers—John Russack, Don Kerr, and Charlie Allen—are having breakfast with Navy Commander Kirk Lippold. Lippold was the commanding officer of the USS *Cole* when it was attacked in Yemen the previous year (see [October 12, 2000](#)). The men's discussion is focused on terrorism. Lippold is upset that the American public still does not recognize the threat it poses, and says that it will take a "seminal event" to awaken them to the problem. Following the breakfast, Lippold heads to the Counterterrorist Center at CIA headquarters for some briefings. Just minutes later, after the WTC is hit, Charlie Allen will contact Lippold and tell him, "The seminal event just happened." ([Tenet 2007, pp. 162-163](#))

(8:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bin Laden Said to Be Listening to Radio for News of Attacks

New Yorker magazine will later report that bin Laden, al-Qaeda number two Ayman al-Zawahiri, and some of their followers evacuated their residences in Kandahar, Afghanistan, and fled into the nearby mountains. By the time the attacks start, they are listening to an Arabic radio station reporting about the 9/11 attacks as they happen. ([Wright 9/9/2002](#))

8:30 a.m.-8:40 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Command Center Informed of Hijacking; NORAD Still Not Notified

The FAA's Command Center in Herndon, Virginia, begins its usual daily senior staff meeting. National Operations Manager Ben Sliney interrupts the meeting to report a possible hijacking in progress, as the Center had been told about the Flight 11 hijacking two minutes earlier. At 8:40am, a supervisor interrupts the meeting to report that a flight attendant on the hijacked aircraft may have been stabbed. The meeting breaks up before the first WTC crash at 8:46 a.m. Apparently, no one in the meeting contacts NORAD. Despite the "intuitive nature of this group of people," none of them will initially consider the first WTC crash to be connected to the hijacking they have been informed of. According to Linda Schuessler, the deputy director of system operations at the Command Center, "something that seemed so bizarre as flying a hijacked plane full of people into a skyscraper didn't seem possible." ([Bond 12/17/2001](#); [Freni 2003, pp. 63](#))

8:33 a.m. September 11, 2001: Betty Ong Reports Death of Flight 11 Passenger

In her emergency phone call from Flight 11, flight attendant Betty Ong reports that someone on the plane might have been killed. The 9/11 Commission says this is "the first indication of a fatality on board." A minute later, Nydia Gonzalez, an American Airlines supervisor who is receiving Ong's call, relays the details to American Airlines manager Craig Marquis: "They think they might have a fatality on the flight. One of our passengers, possibly on 9B, Levin or Lewis, might have been fatally stabbed." She is presumably referring to Daniel Lewin, who was killed at around 8:20 a.m. (see [8:20 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Ong had briefly referred to a stabbing earlier on, saying, "Somebody's stabbed in business class" (see [8:19 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Whether she was referring to Lewin on that occasion, or to the stabbing of a flight attendant or another passenger, is unknown. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 8 and 12](#))

8:34 a.m. September 11, 2001: Boston Air Traffic Control Center Attempts to Contact Air Base Directly



Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Duffy. [Source: CBC/Boston Center

air traffic controllers contact the FAA's Cape Cod facility, located on Otis Air National Guard Base at Cape Cod, Massachusetts. They request that the facility inform the military about Flight 11. Two fighters are on 24-hour alert at Otis Air National Guard Base. According to the 9/11 Commission, by contacting the base directly like this, "Boston Center did not follow the routine protocol in seeking military assistance through the prescribed chain of command." The Commission does not say what the outcome of this call is. ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) It claims, "the first notification received by the military—at any level—that American 11 had been hijacked" is when Boston Center calls NEADS just before 8:38 a.m. (see [8:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 20](#)) According to another account, the call to the Cape Cod facility occurs "around 8:30 a.m.," when the Boston controller tells Otis control tower that Flight 11 has lost its identification signal and appears to be headed toward Manhattan; it looks like a possible hijacking, and fighters are needed fast. The lead pilot at Otis, Lt. Col. Timothy Duffy, later says, "It didn't happen the way it was supposed to... We were the ones who were contacted right away and knew about it before the air defense sector." Major Daniel Nash, another Otis pilot, later complains, "It sounds like the FAA didn't have their [act] together at all when they were calling the [Otis] tower.... To me, it sounded like there was someone who didn't know what they were doing." Duffy says that at "[a]bout 8:30, 8:35" he receives a phone call from one of the sergeants, informing him of the hijacking. He says: "As soon as we heard there was something about a hijacking we got moving.... I called for 'Nasty' (Maj. Dan Nash) and I to suit up right away." According to Duffy, "Halfway to the jets, we got 'battle stations,' and I briefed Nasty on the information I had about the American Airlines flight. About 4-5 min. later, we got the scramble order and took off." ([Scott 6/3/2002](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 47 and 50](#); [Viser 9/11/2005](#))

(8:34 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Atlantic City Fighters Not Reached; Not Redeployed Until Much Later

Around this time, the FAA's Boston Center attempts to contact an Atlantic City, New Jersey, military unit, to send fighters after Flight 11. For decades, the unit had two fighters on 24-hour alert, but this changed in 1998 due to budget cutbacks. Boston Center supposedly is unaware the site has been phased out, and tries in vain to reach someone. Two F-16s from this site are practicing bombing runs over an empty stretch of the Pine

Barrens near Atlantic City. Only eight minutes away from New York City, they are not alerted to the emerging crisis. Shortly after the second WTC crash at 9:03 a.m., the two F-16s will be ordered to land and be refitted with air-to-air missiles, then sent aloft. However, the pilots re-launch more than an hour after the second crash. They are apparently sent to Washington, but do not reach there until almost 11:00 a.m. After 9/11, the Bergen Record questions why NORAD “left what seems to be a yawning gap in the midsection of its air defenses on the East Coast—a gap with New York City at the center.” Had the two Atlantic City fighters been notified at 8:37 a.m. or before, they could have reached New York before Flight 11 hit the WTC. ([Kelly 12/5/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Colin Scoggins, the military liaison at the FAA’s Boston Center, later recalls, “I requested that we take from Atlantic City very early in the [morning], not launch from the ground but those already airborne in Warning Area 107 [the training area] if they were there, which I believe they were.” (However, Scoggins says he only arrives on the floor at Boston Center at around 8:35, so it is unclear if it is him or someone else that makes the initial call to Atlantic City.) He adds, “Atlantic City is [an] ANG [Air National Guard] base. But there are F-16s there, and they schedule every day [in a warning area]. Their first mission every day is usually between 8:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.... They don’t have an intercept mission; it was taken away a long time ago. [But] NEADS could have called them and asked them to cancel their [regular] mission and divert.” ([Griffin 2007, pp. 62 and 335](#))

(8:34 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Boston Flight Control Hears Hijacker Announcement

Flight controllers hear a hijacker on Flight 11 say to the passengers: “Nobody move, please, we are going back to the airport. Don’t try to make any stupid moves.” ([Wald and Sack 10/16/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) This is the third hijacker transmission from Flight 11 heard by Boston Center. Following the previous two transmissions, controller Pete Zalewski had put the plane’s frequency on speakers so that others at the center could hear (see [\(8:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). This is therefore the first time some of them hear the hijacker’s voice. One controller says out loud, “That is really scary.” ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#))

(8:35 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Motorcade Leaves for Elementary School



The destination of Bush's motorcade is Booker Elementary School. [Source: MSNBC] President Bush's motorcade leaves the Colony Beach and Tennis Resort, bound for the Emma E. Booker Elementary School in Sarasota, Florida. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#)) The president had gotten into his Cadillac limousine after "much shaking of hands and posing for pictures and saying pleasant things to local VIPs who had been invited to the Colony to see him off." ([Sammon 2002, pp. 38](#)) According to the official schedule, the president is supposed to leave the resort at 8:30 a.m. ([Martin 7/4/2004](#)) While some accounts say he leaves on time, according to Washington Times reporter Bill Sammon, who is traveling with the president on this day, Bush's limousine does not set off until 8:39. ([Plunket 9/19/2001](#); [Sammon 2002, pp. 38](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [BBC 9/1/2002](#); [Nationwide Speakers Bureau, Inc. 2004](#)) If Sammon's time is correct then this is unusual, as Bush has a reputation for being very punctual. ([CNN 2/2/2001](#); [Baker 6/30/2005](#)) His unpaid education adviser Sandy Kress in fact says that, prior to this day, "I've never known [the president] to be late." ([Kessler 2004, pp. 137](#)) With Bush in town, the police have shut down traffic in both directions along the nine-mile journey to the school, "leaving the roads utterly deserted for Bush's long motorcade, which barreled along at 40 mph, running red lights with impunity." ([Sammon 2002, pp. 38-39](#))

8:35 a.m.-8:36 a.m. September 11, 2001: American Airlines Supervisor Confirms Details of Slightly Misnamed Hijacker

Nydia Gonzalez, a supervisor at the American Airlines Southeastern Reservations Office, is one of the American employees receiving the emergency phone call from Flight 11 attendant Betty Ong (see [8:19 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). At this time, she confirms the details of a report by Ong, regarding the identity of one of the plane's hijackers: "He's the one that's in the—he's in the cockpit. Okay you said Tom Sukani? Okay—Okay and he was in 10B. Okay, okay, so he's one of the persons that are in the cockpit. And as far as weapons, all they have are just knives?" "Tom Sukani" is presumably a mistaken reference to hijacker Satam Al Suqami. Gonzalez is continuously relaying details of Ong's call to Craig Marquis, a manager at the American Airlines operations center in Fort Worth (see [\(8:21 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). At 8:36 a.m., Marquis receives Gonzalez's report about the hijacker Ong referred to as "Tom Sukani." He then initiates a "lockout" procedure for Flight 11 (see [8:36 a.m.-8:38 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 12](#))

(8:35 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Boston Center Military Liaison Makes His First Call to NEADS, Though 9/11 Commission Does Not Mention It

Colin Scoggins, the military liaison at the FAA's Boston Center, claims he makes his first call to NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) regarding Flight 11. He later recalls that he informs NEADS that the aircraft is "20 [miles] south of Albany, heading south at a high rate of speed, 600 knots." ([Griffin 2007, pp. 43](#)) Flight 11 was over Albany at 8:26 (see [\(8:26 a.m.-8:29 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#)) At such a high speed, it would have reached 20 miles south of there around 8:28. However, Scoggins says he is quite certain he only arrives on the floor at Boston Center at around 8:35. He says that although he'd later tried to write up a chronology of events, he "couldn't get a timeline that made any sense." Furthermore, Scoggins claims that even before he'd arrived, Joseph Cooper, a Boston Center air traffic management specialist, had already phoned NEADS about the hijacking. ([Griffin 2007, pp. 43 and 335](#)) The 9/11 Commission makes no mention of either call. It says "the first notification received by the military—at any level—that American 11 had been hijacked" is when Boston Center calls NEADS just before 8:38 a.m. (see [\(8:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 20](#)) However, a report by ABC News is more consistent with Scoggins' claims, indicating that Boston Center contacts NEADS about the hijacking earlier, at around 8:31. ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) (Boston Center also contacts the FAA's Cape Cod facility at 8:34 and requests that it notify the military about Flight 11 (see [8:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Apparently around the same time, it tries contacting a military unit at Atlantic City (see [\(8:34 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).) Scoggins says he makes "about 40 phone calls to NEADS" in total on this day. ([Griffin 2007, pp. 43](#)) NEADS Commander Robert Marr later comments that Scoggins "deserves a lot of credit because he was about the only one that was feeding us information. I don't know exactly where he got it. But he was feeding us information as much as he could." ([Michael Bronner 2006](#))

(8:35 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Sweeney Continues to Provide Flight 11 Updates

Flight attendant Amy Sweeney continues to describe what is happening onboard Flight 11 to Michael Woodward at Logan Airport. At some point prior to this, she explains that flight attendants are giving injured people oxygen. They have made an announcement over the PA system asking if there is a doctor or nurse on board. Sweeney is calling from the rear of the coach section. She explains that the passengers in coach, separated by curtains from the violence in first class, are calm, believing that there is some type of medical emergency at the front of the plane. Then, at this time, the plane suddenly lurches, tilting all the way to one side, then becomes horizontal again. Then she says it begins a rapid descent. She tries to contact the cockpit again, but still gets no response. ([ABC News 7/18/2002](#); [Sheehy 2/11/2004](#))

8:36 a.m.-8:38 a.m. September 11, 2001: American Airlines Conducts ‘Lockout’ of Flight 11

Craig Marquis, a manager at the American Airlines System Operations Control (SOC) in Fort Worth, Texas, initiates actions to “lockout” Flight 11. This procedure, as the 9/11 Commission later describes, “acknowledges an emergency on the flight and isolates information so that the case can be managed by top leadership at the airlines in a way that protects information from being altered or released, and also protects the identities of the passengers and crew.” Within two minutes, American Airlines has completed the lockout. Marquis realized Flight 11 was an emergency situation almost immediately after 8:21 a.m., when he began receiving details of flight attendant Betty Ong’s phone call from it (see [\(8:21 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Since “lockout” is a standard procedure for airlines in safety and security incidents, it is unclear why he did not initiate it sooner. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 5](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 12-13](#) ³⁸)

8:37 a.m.-8:38 a.m. September 11, 2001: American Airlines Reports That Flight 11 Is a Confirmed Hijacking

American Airlines manager Craig Marquis is talking to Nydia Gonzalez, who in turn is talking to flight attendant Betty Ong on Flight 11. Marquis tells Gonzalez, “We contacted air traffic control, they are going to handle this as a confirmed hijacking. So they’re moving all the traffic out of this aircraft’s way.... He turned his transponder off, so we don’t have a definitive altitude for him. We’re just going by... They seem to think that they have him on a primary radar. They seem to think that he is descending.” ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#)) Boston air traffic control had in fact begun notifying its chain of command that Flight 11 was a suspected hijacking at around 8:25 (see [8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

8:37 a.m.-8:38 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Attendants Ong and Sweeney Report Plane Maneuvers and Other Details

On Flight 11, flight attendant Betty Ong reports that all the first class passengers have been moved back to the coach section, leaving the first class cabin empty. She also says the plane is flying erratically again. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 13](#) ³⁹) Another flight attendant, Amy Sweeney, reports that the plane has begun a rapid descent. ([ABC News 7/18/2002](#)) She also says that the hijackers are Middle Easterners. ([San Francisco Chronicle 7/23/2004](#))

8:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Enters New York Control Space



John Hartling. [Source: *NBC News*] Flight 11 passes from Boston flight control airspace into New York flight control airspace. Flight controller John Hartling takes over monitoring the plane. However, when a colleague tells him the flight is hijacked, he is incredulous: “I didn’t believe him. Because I didn’t think that that stuff would happen anymore, especially in this country.” ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#))

8:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Pilots Asked to Look for Flight 11

Flight controllers ask the United Airlines Flight 175 pilots to look for a lost American Airlines plane 10 miles to the south—a reference to Flight 11. They respond that they can see it. They are told to keep away from it. ([Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Apparently, Flight 175 is not told Flight 11 has been hijacked. Flight 175 itself is hijacked a few minutes later (see [8:41 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(8:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Boston Flight Control Notifies NEADS, Against Normal Procedures; Timing Disputed



Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Powell. *[Source: Scott A. Gwilt/ Rome Sentinel]* According to the 9/11 Commission, Boston flight control contacts NEADS at this time. This is apparently the first successful notification to the military about the crisis. Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Powell, a member of the Air National Guard at NEADS, initially takes the call from Boston flight control. ([Seely 1/25/2002](#); [Scott 6/3/2002](#)) Yet according to the 1st Air Force's official history of the response to the 9/11 attacks, "If normal procedures had taken place... Powell probably wouldn't have taken that phone call. Normally, the FAA would have contacted officials at the Pentagon's National Military Command Center who would have contacted the North American Aerospace Defense Command. The secretary of defense would have had to approve the use of military assets to assist in a hijacking, always considered a law enforcement issue." The only explanation it gives for this departure from protocol is that "nothing was normal on Sept. 11, 2001, and many say the traditional chain of command went by the wayside to get the job done." ([Filson 2004, pp. 51](#)) Beginning the call, Boston flight control says, "Hi. Boston [flight control], we have a problem here. We have a hijacked aircraft headed toward New York, and we need you guys to, we need someone to scramble some F-16s or something up there, help us out." Powell replies, "Is this real-world or exercise?" Boston answers, "No, this is not an exercise, not a test." ([BBC 9/1/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Powell gives the phone to Lieutenant Colonel Dawne Deskins. ([Seely 1/25/2002](#)) Deskins recalls, "I picked up the line and I identified myself to the Boston [flight] controller, and he said, we have a hijacked aircraft and I need to get you some sort of fighters out here to help us out." However, the timing of this vital notification is in some dispute. One report claims the call occurred at 8:31 a.m. ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) Another states, "Shortly after 8:30 a.m., behind the scenes, word of a possible hijacking [reaches] various stations of NORAD." ([ABC News 9/14/2002](#)) NORAD on the other hand will initially claim they were first notified at 8:40 a.m., and this will be widely reported in the media prior to the 9/11 Commission's 2004 report. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [BBC 9/1/2002](#); [Adcock 9/10/2002](#)) If the 8:37 a.m. time is accurate, then flight controllers failed to notify the military until approximately 13 minutes after the hijackers in the cockpit clearly stated that the plane had been hijacked at 8:24 a.m.; 17 minutes after the transponder signal was lost and the flight goes far off course; and 24 minutes after radio contact was lost at 8:13 a.m.

After 8:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: NEADS Staff Unable to Locate Hijacked Planes on Radar Screens



Lt. Col. Dawne Deskins. [Source: Newhouse News/*Peter Chen/ Landov*] Members of staff at NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) have difficulty locating Flight 11 and other aircraft on their radar screens. Lt. Col. Dawne Deskins of NEADS says that when the FAA first calls and reports the first hijacking (see [\(8:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), "He [FAA] gave me the latitude and longitude of that track... [but] there was nothing there." ([Brown 9/8/2002](#)) Colin Scoggins, the military liaison at the FAA's Boston Center, later recalls, "I was giving NEADS accurate location information on at least five instances where AA 11 was, yet they could never identify him.... I originally gave them an F/R/D, which is a fix/radial/distance from a known location; they could not identify the target. They requested latitude/longitudes, which I gave them; they still could not identify the AA 11.... I gave them 20 [miles] south of Albany heading south at a high rate of speed, 600 knots, then another call at 50 south of Albany." ([Griffin 2007, pp. 47](#)) Master Sergeant Kevin Foster and Staff Sergeant Mark Rose, also working at NEADS this morning, later complain about their inability to locate the hijacked planes. After being informed of the first hijacking, reportedly, "As they had practiced countless times before, the NEADS team quickly began searching their [radar] screens for the plane. Because they had been informed its transponder was off, they knew to look for a tiny dash instead of the usual dot. But radar systems also use such lines to indicate weather patterns, so NEADS personnel began urgently clicking their computer cursors on each stray line to see if information indicating an aircraft would appear." Yet, after receiving further calls indicating more hijackings, "the inability to find the hijacked planes on the radar, despite their best efforts, was difficult." According to Kevin Foster, "We were trying to find the tracks, and not being able to was very frustrating." ([Cooper 8/5/2004](#)) NEADS Staff Sergeant Larry Thornton says, "Once we were called by the FAA, we could find split-second hits on what we thought we were looking for. But the area was so congested and it was incredibly difficult to find. We were looking for little dash marks in a pile of clutter and a pile of aircraft on a two-dimensional scope." Each fluorescent green pulsating dot on their radar scopes represents an airplane, and there are thousands currently airborne, especially over the busy northeast US. ([Filson 2004, pp. 56](#))

After 8:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Otis Commander Phones NEADS for Authorization to Launch Fighters

Following a call from an FAA controller at Boston to the control tower at Otis Air National Guard Base reporting the possible hijacking of Flight 11 (see [8:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), Lt. Col. Jon Treacy, commander of the 101st Fighter Squadron at Otis, phones NEADS to report the FAA's request for help, and get authorization to launch fighters. By now though, the FAA has already gotten through to NEADS themselves, and reported the hijacking (see [8:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Filson 2004, pp. 50](#))

(8:38 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Pilot Stops Activating Talk Back Button

The talkback button on Flight 11, which has been periodically activated since around 8:14 a.m., stops around this time. Some have suggested that this indicates that the hijackers replace pilot John Ogonowski at this time. ([Clayton 9/13/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/15/2001](#))

(8:38 a.m.-8:43 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD Personnel Mistake Hijacking for Part of an Exercise



Major Kevin Nasypany. [*Source: CBC*] When Boston flight control first contacts NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) to notify it of the hijacking of Flight 11 (see [8:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), personnel there initially mistake it for a simulation as part of an exercise. Lieutenant Colonel Dawne Deskins, mission crew chief for the Vigilant Guardian exercise currently taking place (see [6:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), later says that initially she and everybody else at NEADS thought the call was part of Vigilant Guardian. ([Seely 1/25/2002](#)) Although most of the personnel on the NEADS operations floor have no idea what the day's exercise is supposed to entail, most previous major NORAD exercises included a hijack scenario. ([Komarow and Squitieri 4/18/2004](#); [Cooper 8/5/2004](#)) The day's exercise is in fact scheduled to include a simulated hijacking later on. Major Kevin Nasypany, the NEADS mission crew commander, had helped design it. Thinking the reported hijacking is part of this exercise he actually says out loud, "The hijack's not supposed to be for another hour." In the ID section, at the back right corner of the NEADS operations floor, technicians Stacia Rountree, Shelley Watson, and Maureen Dooley, react to the news. Rountree asks, "Is that real-world?" Dooley confirms, "Real-world hijack." Watson says,

“Cool!” ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) NORAD commander Major General Larry Arnold, who is at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, also says that when he first hears of the hijacking, in the minutes after NEADS is alerted to it, “The first thing that went through my mind was, is this part of the exercise? Is this some kind of a screw-up?” ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) At 8:43 a.m., Major James Fox, the leader of the NEADS Weapons Team, comments, “I’ve never seen so much real-world stuff happen during an exercise.” ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#))

(8:38 a.m.-8:52 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NEADS Calls NORAD Public Affairs Officer



Don Arias [*Source: US Air Force*]/Lt. Col. Dawne Deskins of NEADS twice calls Major Don Arias, the 1st Air Force and Continental United States NORAD Region public affairs officer, who is at the 1st Air Force public affairs office at Tyndall Air Force, Florida. She first calls him after NEADS is informed of the hijacking of Flight 11 (see [\(8:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). She says that NEADS has “a hijacked plane—no, not the simulation—likely heading for JFK [International Airport in New York City].” ([Seely 1/25/2002](#)) The “simulation” refers to a NORAD air defense exercise, presumably Vigilant Guardian, that Arias is involved in. Deskins informs him that fighters are going to be launched after the aircraft. Arias then starts working on a public statement about the incident, but soon after sees the smoking WTC tower on CNN. He says that he thinks, “Wow, I bet that’s the hijacked plane.” ([Florida State Times 11/2001](#); [Seydel 9/2002](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 122](#)) Minutes after the crash, Deskins calls Arias again and tells him, “We think the aircraft that just hit the World Trade Center was American Airlines Flight 11.” According to Deskins, Arias responds, “Oh, God. My brother works in the World Trade Center.” ([Seely 1/25/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [Bamford 2004, pp. 13-14](#)) Arias will quickly contact his brother (see [\(8:53 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(After 8:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD Scramble Order Moves Through Official and Unofficial Channels



NORAD commander Larry Arnold. [Source: *US Air*

Force] NORAD gives the command to scramble fighters after Flight 11 after receiving Boston's call (see [\(8:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Lieutenant Colonel Dawne Deskins at NEADS tells Colonel Robert Marr, head of NEADS, "I have FAA on the phone, the shout line, Boston [flight control]. They said they have a hijacked aircraft." Marr then calls Major General Larry Arnold at the Continental US NORAD Region (CONR) headquarters at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida. Arnold is just coming out of a teleconference with the NORAD staff, and is handed a note informing him of the possible hijacking, and relaying Marr's request that he call him immediately. He goes downstairs and picks up the phone, and Marr tells him, "Boss, I need to scramble [fighters at] Otis [Air National Guard Base]." Arnold recalls, "I said go ahead and scramble them, and we'll get the authorities later." Arnold then calls the operations deputy at NORAD's Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado headquarters to report. The operations deputy tells him, "Yeah, we'll work this with the National Military Command Center. Go ahead and scramble the aircraft." ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 56](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Upon receiving this authorization from Larry Arnold, NEADS orders the scramble and then calls Canadian Captain Mike Jellinek at NORAD's operations center in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, in order to get NORAD commander in chief approval for it (see [\(8.46 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) Yet, according to the 1st Air Force's own book about 9/11, the "sector commander [at NEADS] would have authority to scramble the airplanes." Military controllers at NEADS are only a hot line call away from the pilots on immediate alert. ([Filson 2004, pp. 50-52](#)) Why NEADS calls the CONR headquarters at Tyndall, then NORAD's Colorado operations center, to get authorization to launch fighters after Flight 11, is unclear.

8:39 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Flies Over Nuclear Power Station

While flying south along the Hudson River, Flight 11 passes almost directly over the Indian Point nuclear power plant in Buchanan, NY, about 30 miles north of New York City. ([Herbert 4/4/2002](#); [Ivry and Nussbaum 4/7/2002](#)) The New Yorker will later comment, "An attack on a nuclear power plant would seem to fulfill, almost perfectly, al-

Qaeda's objective of using America's technology against it," and the New York Times will report, "Everyone within at least a 50-mile radius would be in danger if something terrible happened at Indian Point. That 50-mile radius contains more than 7 percent of the entire population of the United States—20 million people." ([Herbert 4/4/2002](#); [Kolbert 2/24/2003](#)) Mohamed Atta supposedly earlier considered targeting a nuclear facility on 9/11, but the other suicide pilots did not like the idea (see [Between July 9 and July 16, 2001](#)).

8:40 a.m. September 11, 2001: NEADS Learns of Threat to Flight 11 Cockpit

The communications team at NEADS is trying to quickly find out all they can about the hijacked plane, such as its flight number, tail number, and where it is. ID tech Shelley Watson calls the management desk at Boston flight control, which had alerted NEADS to the hijacking minutes earlier. The man who answers tells her, "We don't know where he's goin'. He's heading towards Kennedy [International Airport in New York City]. He's... 35 miles north of Kennedy now at 367 knots. We have no idea where he's goin' or what his intentions are." He adds, "I guess there's been some threats in the cockpit." Master Sergeant Maureen Dooley is standing over Watson, relaying any pertinent information she hears to Major Kevin Nasypany. She calls to him, "OK, he said threat to the cockpit!" ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#))

(8:40 a.m.) September 11, 2001: 'Hubbub' at NEADS Headquarters



National Guard troops stationed at NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) in Rome, New York. [*Source: Rome Sentinel*] At NEADS, a huddle of people is gathered around one of their radar scopes. NEADS Commander Robert Marr initially thinks this hubbub is part of the NORAD training exercise (presumably Vigilant Guardian). He says, "I've seen many exercises and as I saw that huddle I said, 'There's got to be something wrong, something is happening here.' You usually see that whenever they find a track on the scope that looks unusual; it's usually an indicator that something is getting ready to kick off." He sends Lt. Colonel Dawne Deskins, the regional mission crew commander for the exercise, to check it out. According to Marr, she comes running back with urgency in her voice: The FAA needs help with a possibly hijacked civilian airliner that has just disappeared from the

radar scope and was heading toward New York. ([Filson 2004, pp. 55](#)) Presumably it is while she is checking out this ‘hubbub’ that Deskins speaks over the phone with FAA’s Boston Control Center about the first hijacking (see [\(8:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to the 9/11 Commission, this call to NEADS begins at 8:37:52 a.m. However, Deskins has given the time for the call at 8:31 a.m.(see [\(8:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

[\(8:40 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Fighter Pilots Unofficially Told to Get Ready to Scramble After Flight 11](#)



Major Daniel Nash. [*Source: Cape Cod Times*] Major Daniel Nash (codenamed Nasty) and Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Duffy (codenamed Duff) are the two F-15 pilots who would scramble after Flight 11. Apparently, they get several informal calls warning to get ready. According to Nash, at this time, a colleague at the Otis Air National Guard Base tells him that a flight out of Boston has been hijacked, and that he should be on alert. ([Dennehy 8/21/2002](#)) NEADS senior technician Jeremy Powell (informed about the hijacking at 8:37 a.m.), says that he telephones Otis Air National Guard Base soon thereafter to tell it to upgrade its “readiness posture.” ([Seely 1/25/2002](#)) Boston flight control had tried calling the Otis base directly at 8:34 a.m., although the result of that call remains unclear. Duffy recalls being warned: “I was just standing up by the ops desk and I was told I had a phone call. I asked who it was and they said the [Boston] tower calling and something about a hijacking. It was Flight American 11, a 767, out of Boston going to California. At the time we ran in and got suited up.” ([Scott 6/3/2002](#); [Dennehy 8/21/2002](#); [BBC 9/1/2002](#)) At NEADS, the mission crew commander Major Kevin Nasypany orders his Weapons Team, which controls the fighters, to put the Otis planes on “battle stations.” This means the two “alert” pilots are “jolted into action by a piercing ‘battle horn.’ They run to their jets, climb up, strap in, and do everything they need to do to get ready to fly short of starting the engines.” ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) NEADS Commander Robert Marr is also reported as having ordered the Otis pilots to battle stations. ([Filson 2004, pp. 55](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 20](#)) Duffy confirms, “Halfway to the jets, we got ‘battle stations’... which means to get ready for

action.” ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) The actual scramble order does not come until the pilots are already waiting in the fighters: “We went out, we hopped in the jets and we were ready to go—standby for a scramble order if we were going to get one.” ([BBC 9/1/2002](#)) Duffy continues, “I briefed Nasty on the information I had about the American Airlines Flight. About four-five minutes later, we got the scramble order and took off.” ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) However, the official notification to scramble these fighters does not come until 8:46 a.m. The six-minute (or more) delay between unofficial and official notification has not been explained.

8:41 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Reports Suspicious Flight 11 Radio Transmission; Hijacked Shortly Thereafter

The pilots of Flight 175 tell ground control about Flight 11, “We figured we’d wait to go to your center. We heard a suspicious transmission on our departure out of Boston. Someone keyed the mic and said, ‘Everyone stay in your seats.’ It cut out.” ([Wald and Sack 10/16/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Adcock 9/10/2002](#)) An alternate version: “We heard a suspicious transmission on our departure from B-O-S [Boston’s airport code]. Sounds like someone keyed the mic and said, ‘Everyone, stay in your seats.’” ([Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) The final transmission from Flight 175, still discussing this message, comes a few seconds before 8:42 a.m. ([Wald and Sack 10/16/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission concludes that Flight 175 is then hijacked within the next four minutes (see [Between 8:42 a.m. and 8:46 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 7](#))

8:41 a.m. September 11, 2001: New York Flight Control Knows Flight 11 Has Been Hijacked



Dave Bottiglia. [*Source: ABC News*] Flight 175 flies into New York flight control airspace. Dave Bottiglia takes over monitoring the flight. Bottiglia has just been told by the pilot of Flight 175 that he has heard threatening communications from Flight 11. Seconds later, a controller sitting next to Bottiglia gets up and points to a radar blip. He says, “You see this target here? This is American 11. Boston [flight control] thinks it’s a hijack.” John Hartling has been watching the hijacked Flight 11 since 8:37 a.m. Bottiglia joins Hartling in watching Flight 11’s blip until it disappears over New

York City. He does not pay attention to Flight 175 for several minutes. ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#)) The New York flight control center was notified of Flight 11's hijacking around 8:25 a.m. (see [8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#)³)

(Between 8:42 a.m. and 8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Hijackers Take Over Flight 175

According to the 9/11 Commission, Flight 175 is hijacked some time between 8:42—when its flight crew make their last communication with the ground—and 8:46. The Commission describes that the hijackers “used knives (as reported by two passengers and a flight attendant), Mace (reported by one passenger), and the threat of a bomb (reported by the same passenger). They stabbed members of the flight crew (reported by a flight attendant and one passenger). Both pilots had been killed (reported by one flight attendant).” These witness accounts come from phone calls made from the rear of the plane, from passengers who'd been assigned seats in the front or middle of the cabin. According to the Commission, this is “a sign that passengers and perhaps crew [are] moved to the back of the aircraft.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 7](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 20](#)⁴) An employee at the FAA's Boston Center later says the hijacking occurs when Flight 175 is above Albany, NY, about 140 miles north of New York City. ([Associated Press 9/13/2001](#); [McKeon 9/13/2001](#)) The first “operational evidence” that something is wrong is at 8:47, when Flight 175's transponder code changes twice within a minute (see [8:46 a.m.-8:47 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 7](#))

(8:42 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Takes Off 41 Minutes Late

Flight 93 takes off from Newark International Airport, bound for San Francisco, California. It leaves 41 minutes late because of heavy runway traffic. ([Breslau 9/22/2001](#); [Hillston 10/28/2001](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [MSNBC 9/3/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

8:43 a.m. September 11, 2001: NORAD Notified That Flight 175 Has Been Hijacked

After 9/11, NORAD and other sources claim that NORAD is notified at this time Flight 175 has been hijacked. ([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/17/2001](#); [North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [Kugler 8/19/2002](#); [Adcock 9/10/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission, however, later concludes that New York flight control gives NEADS its first notification that Flight 175 has been hijacked at 9:03 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) If this earlier account is the accurate one, NEADS technicians learn of the hijacking at the exact same time the flight controllers do. They already have their

headsets linked to Boston flight control to track Flight 11 at this time, and so they learn instantly about Flight 175. ([Seely 1/25/2002](#))

(Shortly After 8:42 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flights 11 and 175 Nearly Crash into Each Other

According to an employee at the FAA's Boston Center in Nashua, New Hampshire, Flight 11 and Flight 175 nearly crash into each other while heading toward their targets in New York. The unnamed employee says, "The two aircraft got too close to each other down by Stewart International Airport, which is in New Windsor, NY, about 55 miles north of New York City. Describing the incident, the Nashua Telegraph says that the terrorists "nearly had their plans dashed when the two planes almost collided." ([Associated Press 9/13/2001](#); [McKeon 9/13/2001](#); [United Press International 9/13/2001](#)) It is unclear exactly when this incident occurs, though it is presumably shortly after 8:42, when Flight 175 has its last communication with air traffic control. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 7](#))

8:44 a.m. September 11, 2001: Other Pilots Notice Flight 175's Emergency Signal

The pilot of US Airlines Flight 583 tells an unidentified flight controller, regarding Flight 175, "I just picked up an ELT [emergency locator transmitter] on 121.5. It was brief but it went off." The controller responds, "O.K. they said it's confirmed believe it or not as a thing, We're not sure yet..." One minute later, another pilot says, "We picked up that ELT, too, but it's very faint." ([New York Times 10/16/2001](#)) Flight 175 appears to have been the only trigger of any emergency signal on 9/11. It is possible the ELT came from Flight 11 instead.

(Before 8:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: American Airlines Tells Crisis Center and Company Leaders of Hijacking, but Not Other Pilots

At American Airlines' System Operations Control (SOC) in Fort Worth, the Command Center is activated. This is a dedicated crisis response facility, located on the floor above the SOC floor, and used in the event of an emergency. In it, top operations officials focus on gathering together as much information about Flight 11 as possible. A page is sent to American's top executives and operations personnel: "Confirmed hijacking Flight 11." However, pilots on other American flights apparently are not notified. Top managers gathered at the Command Center watch the radar blip of Flight 11 until it disappears over New York City. ([Mccartney and Carey 10/15/2001](#); [Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [The 9/11 Commission. \(National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States\) 1/27/2004](#))

(8:44 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight Attendant Betty Ong's Call to American Airlines Ends

For the last 25 minutes, Flight 11 attendant Betty Ong has been speaking by Airfone to three employees at the American Airlines Southeastern Reservations Office in Cary, North Carolina (see [8:19 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). As Flight 11 approaches New York and the World Trade Center, it appears to be quiet on board. Vanessa Minter, one of the employees receiving Ong's call, later recalls, "You didn't hear hysteria in the background. You didn't hear people screaming." In a composed voice, Ong repeatedly says, "Pray for us. Pray for us." Minter and Nydia Gonzalez, the reservations office supervisor, assure her they are praying. Seconds later, the line goes dead. ([ABC News 7/18/2002](#); [Knipp 9/8/2004](#)) At 8:44 a.m., according to the 9/11 Commission, Gonzalez confirms, "I think we might have lost her." ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 14](#) ^ا) Amy Sweeney, another Flight 11 attendant, has also made an emergency phone call from the plane. This also ends at 8:44 a.m. (see [\(8:44 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(8:44 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Attendant Calm as End Approaches

Flight attendant Amy Sweeney is still on the phone with American Airlines flight services manager Michael Woodward, describing conditions on Flight 11. The plane is nearing New York City, but the coach section passengers are still quiet, apparently unaware a hijacking is in progress. Sweeney reports, "Something is wrong. We are in a rapid descent... we are all over the place." Woodward asks her to look out of the window and see if she can tell where they are. According to ABC News, she replies, "I see the water. I see the buildings. I see buildings." She tells him the plane is flying very low. Then she takes a slow, deep breath and slowly, calmly says, "Oh my God!" According to Woodward's account to the 9/11 Commission, Sweeney's reply is, "We are flying low. We are flying very, very low. We are flying way too low." Seconds later, she adds, "Oh my God, we are way too low." These are her last words. Then Woodward hears a "very, very loud static on the other end." Sweeney's call has ended at about 8:44, according to the 9/11 Commission, two minutes before her plane crashes into the WTC. ([Lichtblau 9/20/2001](#); [ABC News 7/18/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 6-7 and 453](#)) At 8:45 a.m., Nancy Wyatt, an American Airlines employee who has been listening to the call between Woodward and Sweeney, reports to the airline's System Operations Control (SOC) in Fort Worth. Contradicting the later claims by Woodward that Sweeney was calm to the end, Wyatt tells the SOC that she had "started screaming and saying something's wrong." Wyatt adds that Woodward "thinks he might be disconnected [from Sweeney]. Okay, we just lost connection." ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 14 and 88](#) ^ا) Betty Ong, another flight attendant, has also made an emergency phone call from Flight 11. This is also terminated around this time (see [\(8:44 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(Before 8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Reportedly Predicts Terror Attacks



John Mica. [Source: *Publicity photo*] Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Representatives Christopher Cox (R) and John Mica (R), and numerous others are meeting in Rumsfeld's private Pentagon dining room, discussing missile defense (see [\(8:00 a.m.-8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Rumsfeld later recalls, "I had said at an eight o'clock breakfast that sometime in the next two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve months there would be an event that would occur in the world that would be sufficiently shocking that it would remind people again how important it is to have a strong healthy Defense Department that contributes to—that underpins peace and stability in our world." ([Rumsfeld 12/5/2001](#)) Wolfowitz recalls, "And we commented to them that based on what Rumsfeld and I had both seen and worked on the Ballistic Missile Threat Commission, that we were probably in for some nasty surprises over the next ten years." ([Wolfowitz 5/9/2003](#)) According to Mica, "the subject of the conversation Donald Rumsfeld was interested in was, the military had been downsized during the '90s since the fall of the Berlin Wall. And what we were going to do about [the] situation if we had another—the word [Rumsfeld] used was 'incident.' ... And he was trying to make certain that we were prepared for something that we might not expect." ([US Congress. House. Oversight and Government Reform Committee 8/1/2007](#)) There are confused accounts that Rumsfeld says, "I've been around the block a few times. There will be another event," just before the Pentagon is hit by Flight 77 (see [\(Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), but such comments may have been made around this time instead. Shortly afterwards, someone walks in with a note informing Rumsfeld that a plane has just hit the WTC (see [Shortly After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Rumsfeld 12/5/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#)) John Mica later comments, "little did we know that within a few minutes of the end of our conversation and actually at the end of our breakfast, that our world would change and that incident that we talked about would be happening." ([Rumsfeld 9/10/2004](#))

(Before 8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: CIA Director Expresses Worry About Al-Qaeda Attack

CIA Director George Tenet is eating breakfast with his mentor, former Senator David Boren (D), at the St. Regis Hotel, three blocks north of the White House. According to

journalist Bob Woodward, Boren asks Tenet, “What are you worried about these days?” Tenet replies, “Bin Laden,” and says he is convinced the al-Qaeda leader is going to do something big. Boren asks him how could one person without the resources of a foreign government be such a threat? Tenet responds, “You don’t understand the capabilities and the reach of what they’re putting together.” ([Woodward 2002, pp. 1 and 3](#); [Neal 12/6/2002](#)) When, shortly afterwards, Tenet learns of the first attack on the World Trade Center, he will immediately say he thinks bin Laden is responsible (see [\(8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(8:45 a.m.-9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: American Airlines Security Director Informs FBI of Flight 11 Hijacking



Larry Wansley. [*Source: Publicity photo*] At 8:45 a.m., Larry Wansley learns of the hijacking of Flight 11. Wansley is the managing director of corporate security for American Airlines, and is at the company’s headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas. He is informed of the hijacking in an urgent phone call from the airline’s Command Center, located on the floor above its System Operations Control (SOC), about a mile away from headquarters (see [\(Before 8:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The SOC learned there was some kind of problem with Flight 11 at 8:20 a.m. (see [8:20 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Since as early as 8:21, details of Flight 11 attendant Betty Ong’s emergency call have been constantly relayed to Craig Marquis, a manager at the SOC (see [\(8:21 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Yet the 8:45 call is apparently Wansley’s first notification of the hijacking. He calls Danny Defenbaugh, the special agent in charge of the Dallas FBI office. Wansley is himself a former undercover FBI agent, and Defenbaugh is a longtime friend of his. This call is “the first step in the well-researched, secret hijack-response plan all commercial airlines have in place.” As Wansley is relaying information, he hears screaming from an adjacent conference room, as several employees watch the aftermath of the first WTC crash on television. The TV in Defenbaugh’s office has been turned on, but reportedly neither of the two men connects the images of the burning tower with the hijacking they are trying to deal with. As they continue discussing their response plans, television shows the second plane hitting the South Tower. No doubt realizing this is a terrorist attack, Defenbaugh says, “The ball game just changed.” Around this time, Wansley learns that the first plane to hit the WTC was the hijacked American Airlines flight. He will subsequently make a hurried drive to the nearby Command Center, where the FBI will already be setting up its own command post (see

[Shortly After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Stowers 11/21/2002](#); [The 9/11 Commission](#). (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States) 1/27/2004; [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004](#), pp. 14.)

(8:45 a.m.-9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Secret Service Does Not Use Its Stinger Missiles to Protect New York and Washington



Soldier firing a Stinger missile. [*Source: US Army*]/In New York, the Secret Service has a Stinger missile secretly stored in the World Trade Center, to be used to protect the president if the city were attacked when he visits it. Presumably it keeps this in WTC Building 7, where its field office is. ([Tech TV 7/23/2002](#); [Weiss 2003, pp. 379](#)) Stinger missiles provide short-range air defense against low-altitude airborne targets, such as fix-winged aircraft, helicopters, and cruise missiles. They have a range of between one and eight kilometers. ([Federation of American Scientists 8/9/2000](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 4/27/2005](#)) Whether the Secret Service makes any attempt at defending New York from the two attacking planes with its Stinger missile is unknown. The agency is also known to have air surveillance capabilities. These include a system called Tigerwall, which provides “early warning of airborne threats” and “a geographic display of aircraft activity” (see [September 2000 and after](#)). And according to Barbara Riggs, who is in the Secret Service’s Washington, DC headquarters on this day, the agency is “able to receive real time information about other hijacked aircraft,” through “monitoring radar and activating an open line with the FAA.” ([US Department of the Navy 9/2000, pp. 28](#); [PCCW Newsletter 3/2006](#); [Wade 6/5/2006](#)) These capabilities would presumably be of use if the Secret Service wanted to defend the World Trade Center. Furthermore, according to the British defense publication Jane’s Land-Based Air Defence, “the American president’s residences in Washington and elsewhere are protected by specialist Stinger teams in case of an aerial attack by terrorist organizations.” ([Jane’s Land-Based Air Defence 10/13/2000](#)) Knight Ridder has previously reported “several sources” telling it, “Stinger missiles are in the Secret Service’s arsenal.” ([Greve and Carroll 9/12/1994](#)) And according to the London Telegraph, the Secret Service is “believed to have a battery of ground-to-air Stinger missiles” ready to defend the White House. ([Wastell and Jacobson 9/16/2001](#)) Flight 77 reportedly comes within four miles of the White House before turning toward the

Pentagon. ([News 10/24/2001](#); [Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#)) Whether the Secret Service makes any attempt at defending the place with its Stinger missiles is unknown. However, the Washington Post will later claim it is an “urban legend that Stinger missiles are mounted on the White House roof.” ([Phillips 4/4/2002](#))

(8:45 a.m.-9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Stratcom Commander and Battle Staff Absent From Command Center Due to Visiting Business Leaders



The US Strategic Command command center. [*Source: US Strategic Command*] At the time the attacks in New York occur, a small group of business leaders are having breakfast at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, Nebraska, where the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) is headquartered. With them is Admiral Richard Mies, the commander in chief of Stratcom. They are in town for an annual charity fundraiser event due to take place later in the day, hosted by the multi-billionaire Warren Buffett. Along with other visitors who have come for the fundraiser, they are scheduled to tour the Stratcom underground command center, located 60 feet below Offutt, and receive an unclassified mission briefing. According to the Omaha World-Herald, staff members have left the command center in advance of their visit. It is only after the second attack occurs, at 9:03, that Admiral Mies excuses himself from the breakfast and the battle staff reconvenes in the center. ([Leuty 2/1/2002](#); [Dejka 2/27/2002](#)) It is unclear what effect the absence of Mies and the members of the battle staff have upon the military's ability to respond effectively to the first attacks. However, the command center does have significant capabilities that would, presumably, be of much use under such a crisis. Stratcom is the military command responsible for the readiness of America's nuclear forces. ([Arkin 2005, pp. 59](#)) The Lincoln Journal Star describes its underground command center as “a military nerve center that collects and assesses information from high-tech ‘eyes and ears’ across—and above—the globe.” ([Walton 10/25/2000](#)) The cavernous room has eight giant video screens and complex communications systems. ([Ruff 2/21/2002](#); [Dejka 2/27/2002](#)) Stratcom itself states that the senior controller in the command center “has a direct line to the National Military Command Center in Washington, DC, and to the other major command headquarters.” This system, called the Joint Chiefs of Staff Alerting Network, allows the commander in chief of Stratcom to make “prompt contact with the president, the secretary of defense, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other unified commanders.” Furthermore, “Through satellites

and radio networks (VLF, LF, UHF and HF), the command center can communicate with aircraft in flight over any part of the world. A principal purpose of these networks is to pass National Command Authority [i.e. the president and secretary of defense] orders to the alert forces.” While only the president can order nuclear strikes, the commander in chief of Stratcom “can launch aircraft for survival.” ([United States Strategic Command 6/22/2001](#)) With the command center’s sophisticated capabilities, after Mies returns to it from his breakfast, the eight video screens there are “loaded up with data,” providing him with “the latest information on the unfolding drama.” ([Dejka 2/27/2002](#)) And at the time President Bush arrives at Offutt, later in the day (see [2:50 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)), the battle staff in the center will reportedly be “watching the skies over the United States” and “tracking a commercial airliner on its way from Spain to the United States.” ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [CBS News 9/10/2003](#))

(8:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Traffic Control Centers Receive False Bomb Threats?

CNN reports that, while Flight 11 is heading toward the World Trade Center, “[S]ources say there were bomb threats called in to air traffic control centers adding to the chaos.” One center receiving such threats is the FAA’s Boston Center, which handles air traffic over New England and monitors flights 11 and 175. Cleveland Center, which will monitor Flight 93, receives similar threats. Whether other centers are threatened is unstated. According to Newsweek, “Officials suspect that the bomb threats were intended to add to the chaos, distracting controllers from tracking the hijacked planes.” ([Breslau 9/22/2001](#); [CNN 9/30/2001](#)) Yet, just weeks after 9/11, the Washington Post will claim, “Federal aviation officials no longer believe that accomplices of the hijackers made phony bomb threats to confuse air traffic controllers on Sept. 11. Sources said reports of multiple threats were apparently the result of confusion during the early hours of the investigation and miscommunication in the Federal Aviation Administration.” ([Reid and Lengel 9/27/2001](#))

8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 11 Hits the North Tower of the World Trade Center



The hole caused by the Flight 11 crash.

[Source: Reuters] Flight 11 slams into the WTC North Tower (Building 1). Seismic records pinpoint the crash at 26 seconds after 8:46 a.m. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [New York](#)

[Times 9/12/2001](#); [North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [Cauchon 12/20/2001](#); [Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 1-10](#); [Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [Adcock 9/10/2002](#); [Dwyer et al. 9/11/2002](#)) The NIST report states the crash time to be 8:46:30. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 19](#).) The 9/11 Commission Report states the crash time to be 8:46:40. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 7](#)) Investigators believe the plane still has about 10,000 gallons of fuel (see [8:57 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Dwyer et al. 9/11/2002](#)) The plane strikes the 93rd through 99th floors in the 110-story building. No one above the crash line survives; approximately 1,360 people die. Below the crash line, approximately 72 die and more than 4,000 survive. Both towers are slightly less than half full at the time of the attack, with between 5,000 to 7,000 people in each tower. This number is lower than expected. Many office workers have not yet shown up to work, and tourists to the observation deck opening at 9:30 A.M. have yet to arrive. ([Cauchon 12/20/2001](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 20-22](#).) The impact severs some columns on the north side of the North Tower. Each tower is designed as a “tube-in-tube” structure and the steel columns which support its weight are arranged around the perimeter and in the core. The plane, which weighs 283,600 lb and is traveling at an estimated speed of around 430 mph (see [October 2002-October 2005](#)), severs 35 of the building’s 236 perimeter columns and damages another two. The damage to the South Tower’s perimeter will be similar (see [9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 5-9, 20, 22](#).) The perimeter columns bear about half of the tower’s weight, so this damage reduces its ability to bear gravity loads by about 7.5 percent. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 6](#).) The actual damage to the 47 core columns is not known, as there are no photographs or videos of it, but there will be much speculation about this after 9/11. It will be suggested that some parts of the aircraft may have damaged the core even after crashing through the exterior wall. According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST): “Moving at 500 mph, an engine broke any exterior column it hit. If the engine missed the floor slab, the majority of the engine core remained intact and had enough residual momentum to sever a core column upon direct impact.” ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 107](#).) According to NIST’s base case computer model, three of the core columns are severed and another ten suffer some damage. ([National Institute of Standards & Technology 9/2005, pp. 189](#).) If this is accurate, it means that the impact damage to the core reduces the Tower’s strength by another approximately 7.5 percent, meaning that the building loses about 15 percent of its strength in total. This damage will be cited after 9/11 by NIST and others researchers as an event contributing to the building’s collapse (see [October 23, 2002](#) and [October 19, 2004](#)). In addition, some of the fireproofing on the steel columns and trusses may be dislodged. The original fireproofing on the fire floors was mostly Blazeshield DC/F, but some of the fireproofing on the flooring has recently been upgraded to Blazeshield II, which is about 20 percent denser and 20 percent more adhesive. ([National Institute of Standards & Technology 9/2005, pp. xxxvi, 83](#).) Photographs and videos of the towers will not show the state of fireproofing inside the buildings, but NIST will estimate the damage to it using a computer model. Its severe case model (see [October 2002-October 2005](#)) will predict that 43 of the 47 core columns are stripped of their fireproofing on one or more floors and that fireproofing is stripped from trusses covering 60,000 ft² of

floor area, the equivalent of about one and a half floors. NIST will say that the loss of fireproofing is a major cause of the collapse (see [April 5, 2005](#)), but only performs 15 tests on fireproofing samples (see [October 26, 2005](#)). ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 23](#)) According to NIST, more fireproofing is stripped from the South Tower (see [9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: First WTC Attack Recorded on Video, but Not Broadcast Until Evening



Flight 11 hits the WTC North Tower at 8:46. This video still is the only well-known image of this crash (from the French documentary). [*Source: Gamma Press*] Two French documentary filmmakers are filming a documentary on New York City firefighters about ten blocks from the WTC. One of them hears a roar, looks up, and captures a distant image of the first WTC crash. They continue shooting footage nonstop for many hours, and their footage is first shown that evening on CNN. ([Feuer 1/12/2002](#)) President Bush later claims that he sees the first attack live on television, but this is technically impossible, as there was no live news footage of the attack. ([Paltrow 3/22/2004](#))

8:46 a.m.-8:47 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Changes Transponder Signal but Remains Easily Traceable

Flight 175 stops transmitting its transponder signal. It is currently flying near the New Jersey-Pennsylvania border. ([Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Adcock 9/10/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) However, the transponder is turned off for only about 30 seconds, and then comes back on as a signal that is not designated for any plane on this day. Then, within the space of a minute, it is changed to another new code. But New York Center air traffic computers do not correlate either of these new transponder codes with Flight 175. Consequently, according to an early FAA report, “the secondary radar return (transponder) indicating aircraft speed, altitude, and flight information began to coast and

was no longer associated with the primary radar return.” Therefore, while controllers are able “to track the intruder easily... they couldn’t identify it.” However, Dave Bottiglia, the New York Center air traffic controller responsible for Flight 175, is currently trying to locate the already-crashed Flight 11, and therefore supposedly does not notice the transponder code changes on Flight 175 until 8:51 a.m. (see [8:51 a.m.-8:53 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#); [Lane, Phillips, and Snyder 9/17/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 21](#)) According to a “Flight Path Study” by the National Transportation Safety Board, the change of Flight 175’s transponder code is the “first indication of deviation from normal routine.” ([National Transportation Safety Board 2/19/2002](#))

(8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Fighters Ordered to Scramble to Flight 11 Nine Minutes after NORAD Notification

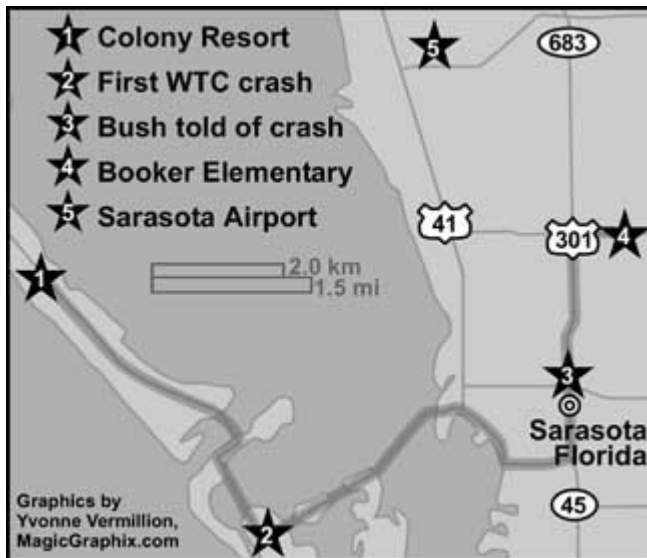
Two F-15 fighters are ordered to scramble from Otis Air National Guard Base in Massachusetts to find Flight 11, approximately 190 miles from the known location of the plane and 188 miles from New York City. ([Channel 4 News \(London\) 9/13/2001](#); [Graham 9/15/2001](#); [CNN 9/17/2001](#); [Gerstenzang and Richter 9/17/2001](#); [North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) On the NEADS operations floor Major Kevin Nasypany instructed Major James Fox, the leader of the Weapons Team, to launch the Otis fighters a minute earlier, at 8:45 a.m. ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) Interestingly, the 9/11 Commission will later state that “Because of a technical issue, there are no NEADS recordings available of the NEADS senior weapons director and weapons director technician position responsible for controlling the Otis scramble.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 459](#)) According to the commission, NORAD makes the decision to scramble after only one phone call, as the decision is made to act first and get clearances later. Yet there is a nine-minute gap between when the 9/11 Commission says NORAD is notified about the hijacking at 8:37 a.m., and when the fighters are ordered scrambled. This delay has not been explained. The pilots had already received several unofficial warnings before this order—possibly as early as 8:34 a.m., 12 minutes earlier. One of the pilots recalls sitting in the cockpit, ready and waiting for the scramble order to come. ([BBC 9/1/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) According to some reports, the Otis fighters only take off six minutes after the scramble order, at 8:52 a.m. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) The fighters’ initial target, Flight 11, is already crashing into the WTC at this time. NEADS Commander Robert Marr later claims, “My intent was to scramble Otis to military airspace while we found out what was going on.” ([Filson 2004, pp. 56](#))

8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: NEADS Staff Believe They See Flight 11 Disappear Over New York

NEADS staff have been desperately trying to track the missing Flight 11 on their radar screens. Despite having great difficulty locating it, Master Sergeant Joe McCain believes

they see Flight 11 when it disappears over New York. He says: “We picked up a search track going down the Hudson Valley, straight in from the north toward New York. It’s very unusual to find a search target, which is a plane with its transponder turned off, in that area. This plane was headed toward New York going faster than the average Cessna and was no doubt a jet aircraft. We had many clues. The plane was fast and heading in an unusual direction with no beacon. We had raw data only. Everything just kind of fit. We watched that track until it faded over New York City and right after that someone came out of the break room and said the World Trade Center had been hit.” ([Filson 2004](#))

(Between 8:46 a.m. and 8:55 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush’s Motorcade Quickly Hears of Flight 11 Crash, but Bush Reportedly Still Unaware



Bush’s travels in the Sarasota, Florida, region, with key locations marked. [Source: Yvonne Vermillion/MagicGraphix.com] When Flight 11 hits the WTC at 8:46 a.m., President Bush’s motorcade is crossing the John Ringling Causeway on the way to Booker Elementary School from the Colony Beach and Tennis Resort on Longboat Key. ([Sammon 10/8/2002](#)) White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer is riding in a motorcade van, along with adviser Karl Rove and Mike Morell, the CIA’s White House briefer. Shortly after the attack, Fleischer is talking on his cell phone, when he blurts out: “Oh, my God, I don’t believe it. A plane just hit the World Trade Center.” (The person with whom he is speaking remains unknown.) Fleischer is told he will be needed on arrival at the school to discuss reports of the crash. ([Grier 9/17/2001](#); [Krueger 9/10/2002](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 165-166](#)) This call takes place “just minutes” after the first news reports of the attack according to one account, or “just before 9:00 a.m.” according to another. ([MSNBC 10/29/2002](#); [Kessler 2004, pp. 138](#)) Fleischer asks Morell if he knows anything about a small plane hitting the World Trade Center. Morell doesn’t, and immediately calls the CIA Operations Center. He is informed that the plane that hit the WTC wasn’t small. ([Kessler 2003, pp. 193](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 165-166](#)) Congressman Dan Miller also says he is told about the crash just before meeting Bush at Booker Elementary School at 8:55

a.m. ([Plunket 9/19/2001](#)) Some reporters waiting for Bush to arrive also learn of the crash just minutes after it happens. ([Minutes 9/11/2002](#)) It would make sense that the president would be told about the crash immediately, at the same time that others hear about it. His limousine has “Five small black antennae sprouted from the lid of the trunk in order to give Bush the best mobile communications money could buy.” ([Sammon 2002, pp. 38](#)) Sarasota Magazine in fact claims that Bush is on Highway 301, just north of Main Street, on his way to the school, when he receives a phone call informing him a plane has crashed in New York City. ([Plunket 9/19/2001](#)) Yet the official story remains that he is not told about the crash until he arrives at the school (see [\(Between 8:55 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Author James Bamford comments, “Despite having a secure STU-III phone next to him in the presidential limousine and an entire national security staff at the White House, it appears that the president of the United States knew less than tens of millions of other people in every part of the country who were watching the attack as it unfolded.” ([Bamford 2004, pp. 17](#))

8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: Fighters Are Training over North Carolina; Not Recalled to Washington Until Much Later

At the time of the first WTC crash, three F-16s assigned to Andrews Air Force Base, ten miles from Washington, are flying an air-to-ground training mission to drop some bombs and hit a refueling tanker, on a range in North Carolina, 207 miles away from their base. However, it is only when they are halfway back to Andrews that lead pilot Major Billy Hutchison is able to talk to the acting supervisor of flying at Andrews, Lt. Col. Phil Thompson, who tells him to return to the base “buster” (as fast as his aircraft will fly). After landing back at Andrews, Hutchison is told to take off immediately, and does so at 10:33 a.m. The other two pilots, Marc Sasseville and Heather Penney, take off from Andrews at 10:42 a.m., after having their planes loaded with 20mm training rounds. These three pilots will therefore not be patrolling the skies above Washington until after about 10:45 a.m. ([Scott 9/9/2002](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 56](#)) F-16s can travel at a maximum speed of 1,500 mph. ([Associated Press 6/16/2000](#)) Traveling even at 1,100 mph (the speed NORAD Major General Larry Arnold says two fighters from Massachusetts travel toward Flight 175 ([MSNBC 9/23/2001](#); [Shuger 1/16/2002](#))), at least one of these F-16s could have returned from North Carolina to Washington within ten minutes and started patrolling the skies well before 9:00 a.m.

(8.46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD Operations Center Receives First Notification of Hijacking; Approves Launching of Fighters

Immediately after ordering the scrambling of fighters after Flight 11, NEADS calls Canadian Captain Mike Jellinek at NORAD’s operations center in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado. It informs him that the FAA is reporting a hijacking and requesting NORAD

support, and asks for NORAD commander-in-chief approval for the scramble. ([Simmie 12/9/2001](#); [Scott 6/3/2002](#)) The Cheyenne Mountain operations center “provides warning of ballistic missile or air attacks against North America.” ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 11/27/1999](#)) Its role is to “fuse every critical piece of information NORAD has into a concise and crystalline snapshot,” and the mandate of its staff is “to respond to any threat in the skies over Canada and the United States.” ([Simmie 12/9/2001](#); [Kampouris 9/11/2002](#)) This is apparently the first time it becomes aware of the morning’s emergency. Mike Jellinek is sitting near Canadian Major General Rick Findley, NORAD’s director of combat operations, who has just completed the night shift. Findley’s staff is “already on high alert” because of Vigilant Guardian and Operation Northern Vigilance, a training exercise and a NORAD operation that are currently in progress. According to some accounts, Findley quickly gives Jellinek “thumbs up” approval for the sending of the fighters after Flight 11. However, Findley tells CNN that after learning of the hijacking, “I just kind of asked the question, OK, folks, open up our checklist, follow our NORAD instruction, which included, at that time, to ask in either Ottawa or Washington is it OK if we use NORAD fighters to escort a potential hijacked aircraft?” Findley also later states, “At that point all we thought was we’ve got an airplane hijacked and we were going to provide an escort as requested. We certainly didn’t know it was going to play out as it did.” ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 11/27/2001](#); [Simmie 12/9/2001](#); [Scott 6/3/2002](#); [Kampouris 9/11/2002](#); [Mertl 9/10/2006](#); [CNN 9/11/2006](#)) Findley remains in charge of the NORAD operations center. His staff feeds information to NORAD Commander-in-Chief Ralph Eberhart, and Findley himself is in phone contact with Eberhart several times during the crisis. Eberhart is in his office at NORAD headquarters, at nearby Peterson Air Force Base, but will relocate to Cheyenne Mountain later in the morning (see [\(Between 9:35 a.m. and 10:35 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Slobodian 10/1/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 465; [Dick 11/2004](#))

(8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Janitor Hears Explosion from WTC Basement



William Rodriguez [*Source: Publicity photo*] According to a WTC janitor, there is an explosion in the basement of the North Tower just before the plane hits up above. William Rodriguez has worked at the World Trade Center for 20 years, including the time of the 1993 bombing, and is responsible for cleaning three stairwells in

the North Tower. He is talking to his supervisor in an office in the B-1 level in the basement when, he says, "I heard this massive explosion below, on level B-2 or 3." He says, "The floor vibrated. We were all thrown upwards, then everyone in the office started screaming." Then, "seconds later, there was another explosion way above, which made the building sway from side to side. And this, we later discovered, was the first plane hitting the North Tower on the 90th floor." A man then runs into the office, shouting, "Explosion! Explosion!" The man, Felipe David, had been standing in front of a nearby lift when a fireball had burst from the lift shaft, severely burning him. Rodriguez will later question, "Now you tell me how an explosion from a jet liner could have burnt a man 90 floors down within seconds of impact?" The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will suggest that the basement explosion Rodriguez heard might have been caused by a fireball traveling from the aircraft down the central lift shaft. However, some time after hearing it, Rodriguez rescues two people trapped in a lift. He will therefore doubt NIST's claim, saying that if it were true, "Why were the two people [I] rescued from the lift not burnt to death?" ([Jacobson 3/20/2006](#); [Western Morning News 12/2/2006](#); [Cowie 2/16/2007](#); [Wintle 2/26/2007](#)) Rodriguez also claims to have witnessed alleged hijacker Mohand Alshehri in the World Trade Center in June 2001 (see [June 2001](#)).

(8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush, Some Aides Reportedly Still Unaware of Flight 11 Hijack

President Bush is traveling through Sarasota, Florida, in a motorcade when the first WTC attack occurs. According to the 9/11 Commission, "no one in the White House or traveling with the president knew that [Flight 11] had been hijacked [at this time]. Immediately afterward, duty officers at the White House and Pentagon began notifying senior officials what had happened." However, according to reports, Bush is not notified about the crash until his motorcade reaches its destination, even though there is a secure phone in his vehicle for just this type of emergency, and even though others in the motorcade are notified. Reportedly, not even Jane Garvey, head of the FAA, nor her deputy have been told of a confirmed hijacking before they learn about the crash from the television. ([Bamford 2004, pp. 17](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(8:46-8:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: New York and Boston Flight Control Conclude Flight 11 Has Hit WTC



Bob Varcadapane. [Source: *NBC News*] Rick Tepper, a flight controller at the Newark, New Jersey, tower, looks across the Hudson River at New York City in time to see the explosion caused by Flight 11. Another flight controller there tries to find out what caused it. He recalls that in the next few minutes, “We contacted La Guardia, Kennedy Tower, and Teterboro Tower to find out if they lost an airplane. And they all said they didn’t know what it was. I got on the phone to the en route air traffic control’s facility out in New York on Long Island, and I asked them if they’d lost any airplanes, and they said, ‘No, but Boston [flight control] lost an airplane. They lost an American 767.’” New Jersey flight controller Bob Varcadapane says to the Long Island flight controller, “I have a burning building and you have a missing airplane. This is very coincidental.” The assumption is quickly made at New York and Boston flight control centers that Flight 11 has hit the WTC. NBC later reports, “Word of the fate of Flight 11 quickly travels throughout the air traffic control world.” ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#)) However, the Indianapolis flight control center that handles Flight 77 reportedly does not learn of Flight 11’s crash until around 9:20 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(After 8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Emergency Response Plans Activated by Officials, Not by Bush

President Bush will say in a speech later that evening, “Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government’s emergency response plans.” ([US President 9/17/2001](#)) However, the Wall Street Journal reports that lower level officials activate CONPLAN (Interagency Domestic Terrorism Concept of Operations Plan) in response to the emerging crisis. CONPLAN, created in response to a 1995 Presidential Decision Directive issued by President Clinton and published in January 2001, details the responsibility of seven federal agencies if a terrorist attack occurs. It gives the FBI the responsibility for activating the plan and alerting other agencies. Bush in fact later states that he doesn’t give any orders responding to the attack until after 9:55 a.m. ([US Government 1/2001](#); [Paltrow 3/22/2004](#))

(After 8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: United Flight Dispatcher Decides Flight 175 Is Hijacked

Ed Ballinger, a United Airlines flight dispatcher, is handling 16 United transcontinental flights, including Flights 175 and 93. Shortly after hearing about the WTC crash, he

contacts all of his flights to warn them. However, Flight 175 is “not acting appropriately,” and fails to respond. Ballinger concludes the flight has been hijacked. Whether he contacts anyone about his conclusions is unclear. ([Davis 4/14/2004](#))

(After 8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FAA Establishes Open Telephone Line with the Secret Service

Shortly after the WTC is hit, the FAA opens a telephone line with the Secret Service to keep the White House informed of all events. ([Sources: [Richard \(“Dick”\) Cheney](#)] A few days later, Vice President Cheney will state, “The Secret Service has an arrangement with the FAA. They had open lines after the World Trade Center was...” (He stopped himself before finishing the sentence.) ([MSNBC 9/16/2001](#))

(Shortly After 8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: New York Flight Control Notices Problems with Flight 175



Curt Applegate sitting next to his flight control terminal. [Source: *NBC News*] New York flight controller Dave Bottiglia is in charge of monitoring both Flights 11 and 175. He has just watched Flight 11’s radar blip disappear over New York City, but does not yet realize the plane has crashed. He says aloud, “Well, we know he’s not high altitude anymore.” Around this time, Flight 175’s transponder changes twice in the space of a minute (see [8:46 a.m.-8:47 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). According to MSNBC, “within seconds” of losing Flight 11’s blip, “Bottiglia has another unexpected problem.” While looking for Flight 11, he realizes that Flight 175 is also missing, and “instinctively... knows the two [planes] are somehow related.” He asks another controller to take over all of his other planes. According to the 9/11 Commission’s account, Bottiglia is still trying to locate Flight 11 after it crashes, and so it is not until 8:51 a.m. that he notices the problem with Flight 175 (see [8:51 a.m.-8:53 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Around the time Flight 175 changes its transponder code, Curt Applegate, sitting at the radar screen next to Bottiglia, sees a blip that might be the missing Flight 11. He shouts out, “Look. There’s an intruder over Allentown.” According to the Washington Post, “In air traffic jargon, an ‘intruder’ is a plane with an operating transponder that has entered restricted airspace without permission.” In fact, it is the

missing Flight 175. ([Lane, Phillips, and Snyder 9/17/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 21](#).) However, there is no mention in these accounts that NORAD is notified about the hijacking at this time. On the other hand, according to a NORAD timeline from shortly after 9/11, NORAD was alerted about Flight 175 by the FAA several minutes earlier, at 8:43 a.m. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#))

(8:47 a.m.-9:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Engineer Finds Major Damage in Basement and Lobby of North Tower



Mike Pecoraro. [*Source: Chief Engineer*] Mike Pecoraro, an engineer who is part of the crew that services the WTC complex, is at work in the mechanical shop in the second subbasement of the north WTC tower when it is hit. When the room he is in starts filling with white smoke and he can smell kerosene (jet fuel), he heads up stairs with a co-worker towards a small machine shop on the C level. Yet, he says, “There was nothing there but rubble. We’re talking about a 50 ton hydraulic press—gone!” He then heads for the parking garage, yet finds that “there were no walls, there was rubble on the floor, and you can’t see anything.” He ascends to the B level where he sees a 300-pound steel and concrete fire door, which is lying on the floor, wrinkled up “like a piece of aluminum foil.” Pecoraro recalls seeing similar things at the Center when it was bombed in 1993 and is therefore convinced that a bomb has gone off this time. When he makes it into the main lobby, he sees massive damage: “The whole lobby was soot and black, elevator doors were missing. The marble was missing off some of the walls. 20-foot section of marble, 20 by 10 foot sections of marble, gone from the walls.... Broken glass everywhere, the revolving doors were all broken and their glass was gone.” Pecoraro says he only later hears that “jet fuel actually came down the elevator shaft, blew off all the (elevator) doors and flames rolled through the lobby. That explained all the burnt people and why everything was sooted in the lobby.” He makes it out of the North Tower before it collapses. ([Chief Engineer 8/1/2002](#))

8:47-10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001: Hundreds Die in WTC Elevators, as Elevator Mechanics Flee

During the 9/11 catastrophe, around 200 people die in the WTC's elevators without getting help from elevator mechanics, according to an in-depth study later performed by USA Today. Some of the victims are burned by the initial explosion, some die as the elevator cars plummet when their cables are severed, and some are stuck and perish in the collapse. USA Today will say it "could not locate any professional rescues of people stuck in elevators. The Fire Department of New York and the Port Authority also could not cite successful rescues." After the North Tower is hit, most of the WTC's 83 elevator mechanics gather in the lobby of the South Tower, but when the second plane hits, they evacuate. In contrast, a passing elevator mechanic from another company runs into the WTC and dies trying to free trapped passengers. USA Today will comment: "When the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993, Otis Elevator's mechanics led the rescue of 500 people trapped in elevators. Some mechanics were dropped onto the roofs of the Twin Towers by helicopter. Others, carrying 50-pound oxygen tanks on their backs, climbed through smoke to machine rooms high in the towers. On Sept. 11, the elevator mechanics—many of the same men involved in the rescues in 1993—left the buildings after the second jet struck, nearly an hour before the first building collapsed." Although ACE Elevator, the local company which won the WTC contract from Otis in 1994, will say it was acting in accordance with procedure, USA Today will note: "The departure of elevator mechanics from a disaster site is unusual. The industry takes pride in rescues. In the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, elevator mechanics worked closely with the firefighters making rescues." Robert Caporale, editor of Elevator World will say, "Nobody knows the insides of a high-rise like an elevator mechanic. They act as guides for firefighters, in addition to working on elevators." The Port Authority will also say that their departure was in conflict with the emergency plan. "There was no situation in which the mechanics were advised or instructed to leave on their own." ([Cauchon 12/19/2001](#); [Cauchon and Moore 9/4/2002](#))

(8:47 a.m.-9:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Giuliani Learns of First WTC Crash, Yet Doesn't Go To Special Emergency Command Center



Rudolph Giuliani. [*Source: Publicity photo*] New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani is promptly informed of the first WTC crash while having breakfast at the Peninsula Hotel on 55th Street. He later claims that he goes outside and, noticing the clear sky, immediately concludes, "It could not have been an accident, that it had to have

been an attack. But we weren't sure whether it was a planned terrorist attack, or maybe some kind of act of individual anger or insanity." Only after the second plane hits at 9:03 will he be convinced it is terrorism. After leaving the hotel, he quickly proceeds south. In his 2002 book, *Leadership*, he will claim that he heads for his emergency command center. This \$13 million center is located on the 23rd floor of Building 7 of the WTC, and was opened by Giuliani in 1999, specifically for coordinating responses to emergencies, including terrorist attacks (see [June 8, 1999](#)). Referring to it, he writes, "As shocking as [the first] crash was, we had actually planned for just such a catastrophe." At around 9:07 a.m., Giuliani meets Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik at Barclay Street, on the northern border of the WTC complex. ([Giuliani 2002, pp. 3-6](#); [9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#); [Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 7](#)) Yet they do not go to the command center. According to Kerik, "The Mayor and I... determined early on that the City's pre-designated Command and Control Center... was unsafe because of its proximity to the attack." ([9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#)) Instead, they head to West Street, where the fire department has set up a command post, and arrive there at around 9:20 a.m. However, in his private testimony before the 9/11 Commission in 2004, Giuliani will apparently change his story, claiming he'd never even headed for his command center in the first place. He says, "Even if the Emergency Operations Center had been available, I would not have gone there for an hour or an hour and a half. I would want to spend some time at the actual incident, at operations command posts." ([9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#); [Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 44-45 and 340-341](#)) Other accounts indicate that the emergency command center is mostly abandoned from the outset, with emergency managers instead heading to the North Tower (see [\(Soon After 8:46 a.m.-9:35 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(After 8:46 a.m.) September 11, 2001: PR Firm Helps American Airlines Respond to Attacks

According to PR Week magazine, "immediately" after the attacks on this day, Tim Doke, the vice president for corporate communications for American Airlines, calls Ken Luce, who is the president of the Southwest offices of public relations firm Weber Shandwick Worldwide (WSW). In response, WSW sends more than 20 people to American Airlines' headquarters in Fort Worth, and to airports around the US. Thus, "While American couldn't answer many questions, spokespeople subtly steered reporters away from false rumors and leaked information. Employees from WSW and American's other agency, Burson-Marsteller, served as the firm's eyes and ears in the airports its staff couldn't reach while planes were grounded." ([Green and Murphy 11/5/2001](#)) The American Airlines operations center in Fort Worth was reportedly alerted to the emergency on Flight 11 around 8:21 a.m. (see [\(8:21 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 5](#)) However, according to the 9/11 Commission, it is not until 9:30 a.m. that the airline confirms that this aircraft had crashed into the World Trade Center. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 16](#)) So the exact time when Doke called Luce is unclear. The FBI has "essentially gagged" American Airlines from any meaningful communication with the media immediately following the attacks. According to Doke, though, in response to subsequent media demands about how the terrorists got through security, American will make use of a number of airline security people it had

“intentionally cultivated relationships with over the years to help carry our messages and put some of the media hysteria into perspective.” ([Jack O'Dwyer's Newsletter 12/4/2002](#))

Shortly After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: FBI Arrives at American Airlines' Command Center and Takes Charge of Crisis Response

Shortly before 9/11, American Airlines revised its crisis plan for dealing with situations including “plane crashes and 1978-style hijackings” (see [Late Summer 2001](#)). However, on this day, “American abandoned its freshly minted crisis communications plan almost immediately, not because putting the CEO out front isn’t the best plan of action in a crisis, but because the FBI rushed to American’s Command Center and made it clear who was in charge.” ([Green and Murphy 11/5/2001](#)) Larry Wansley, the American Airlines director of security, is at the company’s headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas. He had contacted the Dallas FBI about the hijacking of Flight 11 at around 8:45 a.m. (see [\(8:45 a.m.-9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). After learning of the two planes hitting the World Trade Center, he makes a hurried drive to the airline’s Command Center, about a mile from the headquarters, on the floor above its System Operations Control (SOC). Already, by the time he arrives, the FBI is setting up its own command post there, reviewing the Flight 11 passenger manifest, and replaying the recording of flight attendant Betty Ong’s emergency phone call. ([Stowers 11/21/2002](#); [The 9/11 Commission. \(National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States\) 1/27/2004](#)) Tim Doke, the American Airlines vice president for corporate communications, later recounts that the “FBI essentially gagged us from any meaningful media interaction immediately following the terrorist attacks.” ([Jack O'Dwyer's Newsletter 12/4/2002](#)) American Airlines’ first press release, issued within a few hours of the attacks, will refer all questions to the FBI. ([Green and Murphy 11/5/2001](#))

After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: Navy Officials Monitor Events at Antiterrorist Alert Center

Within moments of the attack in New York, the US Navy’s Antiterrorist Alert Center (ATAC) goes to full alert. ATAC is located at the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) headquarters in southeast Washington, DC, across the Potomac River from the Pentagon. ([US Naval Criminal Investigative Service n.d.](#); [US Department of the Navy 2/2002](#); [CNN 8/27/2002](#)) Established in 1983, it was the first 24-hour terrorism watch center in the US intelligence community. ([US Naval Criminal Investigative Service n.d.](#)) In it, top Navy officials are now monitoring the day’s events. According to CNN—which gains access to a video recording of the center during the attacks—just before the Pentagon is hit, these officials are “concerned attacks on Washington could be next.” After the attack on the Pentagon, the Navy’s top leaders will start arriving at the center (see [After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([CNN 8/27/2002](#))

(Between 8:46 a.m. and 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Deputy Mayor Calls Navy; Requests Air Cover Over New York



Naval Station Norfolk. [Source: US

Navy/Rudy Washington, who is one of Rudy Giuliani's deputy mayors, sees the smoking North Tower as he is being driven into downtown Manhattan. He immediately calls Admiral Robert Natter, the commander of the US Atlantic Fleet at Norfolk Naval Station, Virginia, the world's largest naval base. He requests air cover over New York. Norfolk Naval Station is in the region of Naval Air Station Oceana, which has F-14 Tomcats and F/A-18 Hornets. It is also near Langley Air Force Base. Natter says he will need to get in touch with the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), but will then call back. ([Richards 10/2001](#); [Global Security \(.org\) 11/15/2001](#); [CBS News 4/3/2003](#); [Crouch 5/20/2004](#)) Around this time, Washington also calls Patrick Burns at the base. Burns usually works in New York as the director of fleet support for the Navy, a civilian position that works closely with the mayor's office and numerous other agencies. He is at Norfolk Naval Station for his two-week Naval Reserve obligation. Washington tells Burns, "I need you here." No doubt anticipating there will be mass casualties, he adds, "I need that hospital ship." He is referring to the hospital ship the USNS *Comfort*. ([Schafer 9/11/2001](#); [Burns 4/2007](#)) However, the *Comfort*, which is based in Baltimore, will only set off for New York at 3 p.m. the following day, and arrive at Pier 92 in Manhattan late in the evening of September 14. ([US Navy n.d.](#); [Military Sealift Command 9/18/2001](#))

Shortly After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: Neighbor Sees Suspicious Men Documenting First WTC Attack and Cheering, Calls Police

A homemaker living near Liberty State Park, Jersey City, New Jersey sees three men behaving strangely on a nearby roof and alerts the authorities. This homemaker, who has given only her first name Maria, is called by a neighbor shortly after the first plane has hit the WTC and is told about the impact. She has a view of the WTC from her apartment building so she gets her binoculars and watches the disaster. However, she also notices three young men kneeling on the roof of a white van in the parking lot of her apartment building. Maria will later recall, "They seemed to be taking a movie." They are taking

video or photos of themselves with the WTC burning in the background. But what strikes Maria is their expressions: “They were like happy, you know... They didn’t look shocked to me. I thought it was very strange.” She writes down the license plate number of the van and calls the police. ([ABC News 6/21/2002](#)) Apparently the men leave the area a few minutes after the first attack is over. ([Ketcham 2/7/2007](#)) An FBI lookout bulletin for the van will be issued later in the day (see [3:31 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)) and the three men (plus two more discovered with them) will be detained (see [3:56 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)). When the men detained, one of them will be found with pictures of the group standing with the burning wreckage of the WTC in the background. ([Perelman 3/15/2002](#)) At least some of the pictures were taken while standing on top of the van. ([Cowan 10/8/2001](#)) The lawyer for the five men will later note that one photograph developed by the FBI shows one of the men, Sivan Kurzberg, holding a lighted lighter in the foreground, with the burning WTC in the background. ([Lewin and Cowan 11/21/2001](#)) It will apparently be determined at least two of the men are Israeli spies, but what they were doing and why will remain in dispute. One of these Israelis will later say, “our purpose was to document the event.” ([ABC News 6/21/2002](#))

(Between 8:46 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Key Administration Officials Allegedly Think First Crash Is an Accident

A number of key White House officials later claim that, when they learn of the first crash at the World Trade Center, they initially think it is just an accident:

- President Bush says that, when he learns of the crash while in Sarasota, Florida, “my first reaction was—as an old pilot—how could the guy have gotten so off course to hit the towers? What a terrible accident that is” (see [\(Between 8:55 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Sammon 2002, pp. 42](#))
- White House chief of staff Andrew Card, who is with the president, says, “It was first reported to me... that it looked like it was a, a twin-engine pro—prop plane, and so the natural reaction was—‘What a horrible accident. The pilot must have had a heart attack.’” ([Card 9/11/2002](#))
- Adviser Karl Rove, who is also with the president in Florida, is later questioned about his feelings after the first crash. When it is suggested, “I guess at that point, everyone is still thinking it is an accident,” Rove concurs, “Yes, absolutely.” ([Rove 9/11/2002](#))
- White House press secretary Ari Fleischer, also traveling with the president on this day, says, “[W]hen only the first tower had been hit, it was all of our thoughts that this had been some type of terrible accident.” ([CNN 9/11/2006](#))
- National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, who is in her White House office, is informed of the crash by her executive assistant (see [\(9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). She later recalls, “I thought, what a strange accident.” ([O, the Oprah Magazine 2/1/2002; Rice 9/11/2002](#))
- White House counselor Karen Hughes receives a phone call informing her of the first crash as she is about to leave her Washington, DC home. She later recalls, “they thought it was a small plane at the time... so, of course, my immediate thought was what a terrible accident.” ([Hughes 9/11/2002; CNN 4/6/2004](#)) She adds, “We all assumed it was

some kind of weird accident; at that point terrorism didn't occur to us." ([Hughes 2004, pp. 234](#))

The 9/11 Commission later describes, "In the absence of information that the crash was anything other than an accident, the White House staff monitored the news as they went ahead with their regular schedules." It will only be when they learn of the second tower being hit at 9:03 that "nearly everyone in the White House... immediately knew it was not an accident." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 35](#)) However, when counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke is called some time after the first crash but before the second by Lisa Gordon-Hagerty—a member of his staff who is at the White House (see [\(9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#))—she tells him, "Until we know what this is, Dick, we should assume the worst." ([Clarke 2004, pp. 1](#)) And when CIA Director George Tenet learns of the first crash, reportedly he is told specifically, "The World Trade tower has been attacked," and his initial reaction is, "This has bin Laden all over it" (see [\(8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Woodward 2002, pp. 4](#))

After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: Software Company Reconstructs Paths of Four Hijacked Planes

A Fairfax, Virginia company that makes computer software that tracks and records the flight paths of planes helps media companies and airlines to reconstruct the paths of all four of the hijacked aircraft. ([Lincoln 9/11/2001](#); [McCarthy 9/13/2001](#)) Flight Explorer sells an Internet-accessible application that provides constantly updated information on the positions of aircraft in flight. It uses radar feeds that the FAA collects from control centers across the US. ([Business Wire 6/16/2000](#); [Huettel 8/12/2001](#)) All of Flight Explorer's employees begin sorting through its data "after the first crash [of Flight 11] was reported," so presumably this is at around 8:50 a.m. Whether any particular agency, such as the FAA, requests this or they do it of their own initiative is unknown. Although there are some 4,000 planes in the air above the US at the time of the attacks, the company is quickly able to pinpoint the paths of all four hijacked aircraft. It then creates charts and animated videos of the four flights' actual and intended routes. About 12 news agencies, including all the major networks, request these animated illustrations. ([Lincoln 9/11/2001](#); [McCarthy 9/13/2001](#)) Flight Explorer is apparently unhindered by the fact that flights 11 and 93 have their transponders turned off during the hijackings. Its reconstruction of Flight 77's path ends, however, at 8:57, around the time that aircraft's transponder goes off and it disappears from controllers' radar screens (see [\(8:56-9:05 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Yet the 9/11 Commission will later say that, despite this disappearance, "Radar reconstructions performed after 9/11 reveal that FAA radar equipment tracked the flight from the moment its transponder was turned off." Why the Flight Explorer illustration does not therefore show the rest of Flight 77's journey is not clear. ([AVweb 9/11/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Until a few years back, Flight Explorer was the only company that recorded flight paths. Since the 1999 death of golfer Payne Stewart (see [October 25, 1999](#)) the FAA has also been recording these paths. ([Lincoln 9/11/2001](#)) The final report of the 9/11 Commission will make no mention of the Flight Explorer flight path recordings. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 222](#))

8:48 a.m. September 11, 2001: CNN First Major Network to Show WTC Crash Footage

CNN is the first major network to show the footage of the crash site. It breaks into a commercial and anchor Carol Lin says, “This just in. You are looking at... obviously a very disturbing live shot there—that is the World Trade Center, and we have unconfirmed reports this morning that a plane has crashed into one of the towers of the World Trade Center.” CNN then switches to Sean Murtagh, the network’s vice president of finance, who says in a live telephone interview, “I just witnessed a plane that appeared to be cruising at a slightly lower than normal altitude over New York City. And it appears to have crashed into—I don’t know which tower it is—but it hit directly in the middle of one of the World Trade Center towers. It was a jet, maybe a two-engine jet, maybe a 737... a large passenger commercial jet... It was teetering back and forth, wing-tip to wing-tip, and it looks like it has crashed into—probably, twenty stories from the top of the World Trade Center—maybe the eightieth to eighty-fifth floor. There is smoke billowing out of the World Trade Center.” ([CNN 9/11/2001](#); [Bamford 2004, pp. 16-17](#)) Many reports do not come until a few minutes later. For instance, ABC first breaks into regular programming with the story at 8:52 a.m. ([ABC News 9/14/2002](#)) Incredibly, a NORAD timeline presented to the 9/11 Commission in 2003 claims that CNN doesn’t begin its coverage of the attacks until 8:57. ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#))

8:48 a.m. September 11, 2001: New York Flight Control Center Manager Aware of Ong Phone Call, Unaware Flight 11 Has Crashed

A New York flight control center manager speaks in a teleconference between flight centers. The person says, “Okay. This is New York [flight control]. We’re watching the airplane [Flight 11]. I also had conversation with American Airlines, and they’ve told us that they believe that one of their stewardesses was stabbed and that there are people in the cockpit that have control of the aircraft, and that’s all the information they have right now.” The manager is unaware Flight 11 has already crashed. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) This appears to be a simplified version of flight attendant Betty Ong’s phone call, given to American Airlines leader Gerard Arpey and others around 8:30 a.m. (see [\(8:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(Between 8:48 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Cheney Sees Footage of WTC Crash on Television, but Allegedly Does Not Realize It Is Terrorism

Vice President Dick Cheney later claims he learns of the first attack on the World Trade Center just before 9:00 a.m. He has just finished an impromptu discussion in his office at the White House with Sean O’Keefe, the deputy director of the Office of Management

and Budget (see [\(8:25 a.m.-8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). His chief speechwriter John McConnell has come in for a meeting, when his secretary, Debbie Heiden, calls in and tells him a plane hit the WTC. Cheney recalls, “So we turned on the television and watched for a few minutes.” However, journalist and author Stephen Hayes suggests Cheney learns of the attack earlier. He says that while McConnell is waiting for his meeting, O’Keefe comes out of the vice president’s office. McConnell gestures at a television showing the burning WTC, and “O’Keefe nodded; they had been watching the reports inside.” When McConnell enters Cheney’s office, “The small television on the other side of the desk was tuned to ABC News.” ([Cheney 9/16/2001](#); [Hayes 2007, pp. 328-330](#)) According to his own recollection, Cheney is puzzled by the reports: “I was sitting there thinking about it. It was a clear day, there was no weather problem—how in hell could a plane hit the World Trade Center?” ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 35](#)) He claims it is only when he sees the second tower hit at 9:03 that he realizes this is a terrorist attack, saying, “as soon as that second plane showed up, that’s what triggered the thought: terrorism, that this was an attack.” ([Cheney 9/16/2001](#); [CNN 9/11/2002](#))

8:48 a.m. September 11, 2001: Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, Preparing for Global Guardian Exercise When Attacks Start

Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana is an important node in the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) exercise Global Guardian (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) on 9/11. Colonel Mike Reese, director of staff for the 8th Air Force, is monitoring several television screens at the base as part of the exercise when he sees CNN cut into coverage of the first World Trade Center crash, two minutes after it happens. He watches live when the second plane hits the World Trade Center at 9:03 a.m. Reese says that at this point, “we knew it wasn’t a mistake. Something grave was happening that put the nation’s security at risk.” An article in the New Orleans Times-Picayune later recounts how awareness of the real attacks impacts those participating in the exercise: “Immediately [the Barksdale staff’s] focus turned to defense, securing Barksdale, Minot [North Dakota], and Whiteman [Missouri] air force bases, where dozens of aircraft and hundreds of personnel were involved in the readiness exercise ‘Global Guardian.’ The exercise abruptly ended as the United States appeared to be at war within its own borders. Four A-10s, an aircraft not designed for air-to-air combat, from Barksdale’s 47th Fighter Squadron, were placed on ‘cockpit alert,’ the highest state of readiness for fighter pilots. Within five minutes, the A-10s, equipped only with high intensity cannons, could have been launched to destroy unfriendly aircraft, even if it was a civilian passenger airliner.” Lt. Col. Edmund Walker, commander of the 47th Fighter Squadron, a novice pilot still in training, is sitting in his fighter along with other pilots in other fighters, ready to take off, when they are ordered back to the squadron office. They are told they are no longer practicing. Walker recalls, “We had to defend the base against any aircraft, airliner or civilian. We had no idea. Would it fly to the base and crash into the B-52s or A-10s on the flight line?” ([Villafuerte 9/8/2002](#)) When President Bush’s Air Force One takes off from Sarasota, Florida, at approximately 9:55 a.m., it has no destination, and circles over

Florida aimlessly. But around 10:35 (see [\(10:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), it begins heading towards Barksdale Air Force Base. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [CBS News 9/11/2002](#)) It finally arrives at Barksdale around 11:45 a.m. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#); [CBS News 9/11/2002](#)) It's never been explained exactly why Bush traveled from Florida to Barksdale. The Daily Telegraph has reported, "The official reason for landing at Barksdale was that President Bush felt it necessary to make a further statement, but it isn't unreasonable to assume that—as there was no agreement as to what the President's movements should be—it was felt he might as well be on the ground as in the air." ([Langley 12/16/2001](#))

8:48 a.m. September 11, 2001: Office of Emergency Management Preparing for Bioterrorism Exercise; Opens Its Command Center



John Odermatt [*Source: Queens Gazette*] New York City's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is responsible for coordinating the city's response to major incidents, including terrorist attacks. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 283-284](#)) Its offices are in Building 7 of the World Trade Center. Today is reportedly "going to be a busy day at the OEM," as staff members have come to work early to prepare for Tripod, a major biological-terrorism training exercise scheduled for September 12 (see [September 12, 2001](#)). Their building shakes when the North Tower is hit at 8:46 a.m. OEM Commissioner John Odermatt initially believes a freak accident has occurred involving a ground-to-air missile, but soon after, OEM is informed that a plane hit the North Tower. Immediately, OEM staff members begin to activate their emergency command center, located on the 23rd floor of WTC 7 (see [June 8, 1999](#)). ([Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow 9/2003, pp. 15](#)) They call agencies such as the New York fire and police departments, and the Department of Health, and direct them to send their designated representatives to the OEM. They also call the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and request at least five federal Urban Search and Rescue Teams. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 293](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission, OEM's command center will be evacuated at 9:30 a.m. due to reports of further unaccounted for planes (see [\(9:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). By that time, none of the outside agency liaisons will have arrived. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 305](#)) Other accounts indicate the command center may be evacuated earlier, possibly even before the second tower is hit (see [\(Soon After 8:46 a.m.- 9:35 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#) and [\(Shortly Before 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(Soon After 8:46 a.m.-9:35 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Emergency Management Staff go to North Tower, Leaving Special Command Center Nearly Vacant



Richard Sheirer [*Source: Publicity photo*] Richard Sheirer is in a meeting at New York City Hall when he is informed by telephone of the first plane hitting the World Trade Center. Sheirer is the director of the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management (OEM), which was set up in 1996 to coordinate the city's overall response to major incidents, including terrorism (see [1996](#)). It has an emergency command center on the 23rd floor of WTC 7, specially intended for coordinating the response to catastrophes such as terrorist attacks (see [June 8, 1999](#)). Yet instead of going to this, Sheirer heads to the North Tower, and arrives at the fire command post set up in its lobby before the second crash at 9:03 a.m. ([Griscom 10/15/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#) ³) John Odermatt, Sheirer's top deputy, also goes to the North Tower and says that, after the first plane hit, he leaves only two staffers at the command center. John Farmer, who heads the 9/11 Commission unit that assesses the city response to the attacks, will find it "strange that Sheirer, four OEM deputies, and a field responder went straight to the North Tower... rather than to the nearby emergency command center." Journalists Wayne Barrett and Dan Collins will conclude, "[T]he command center was out of business from the outset." ([Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 31 and 34](#)) Sheirer stays at the North Tower lobby until soon after 9:30 a.m., when Mayor Giuliani requests he joins him at the temporary command post at 75 Barclay Street (see [\(9:50 a.m.-10:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#) ³) John Farmer will later complain, "We [the 9/11 Commission] tried to get a sense of what Sheirer was really doing. We tried to figure it out from the videos. We couldn't tell. Everybody from OEM was with him, virtually the whole chain of command. Some of them should have been at the command center." Fire Captain Kevin Culley, who works as a field responder at OEM, is later asked why most of the OEM's top brass were with him at the scene of the incident. He says, "I don't know what they were doing. It was Sheirer's decision to go there on his own. The command center would normally be the focus of a major event and that would be where I would expect the director to be." When the 9/11 Commission later investigates OEM's shortcomings on 9/11, "No rationale for Sheirer's prolonged lobby stay, no information conveyed to commanders, and no steps to coordinate the response" will be discovered. ([Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 31-32 and 34](#))

Shortly After 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Learns of First WTC Attack



Larry Di Rita. [Source: *US Department of Defense*] Larry Di Rita, a special assistant to Donald Rumsfeld, has sent a note to the secretary of defense to inform him of the first plane hitting the World Trade Center. Although some initial reports suggest the WTC may have been hit by just a small plane, according to Torie Clarke, the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, “Even in the accidental crash scenario, the military might be involved in some way. Rumsfeld needed to know.” Rumsfeld, who is currently hosting a breakfast meeting with several members of Congress (see [\(8:00 a.m.-8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), later acknowledges having received this note. Yet apparently he does nothing in response. He recalls, “Everyone assumed it was an accident, the way it was described.” He says only that “we adjourned the meeting, and I went in to get my CIA briefing.” ([Rumsfeld 12/5/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#); [Clarke 2006](#), pp. 217-218; [Vogel 2007](#), pp. 428)

(8:48 a.m.-9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Special NSA Warning Center First Learns from Television that US Is Under Attack

Within the headquarters of the National Security Agency (NSA) in Fort Meade, Maryland is a little-known unit called the Defense Special Missile and Astronautics Center (DEFSMAC). According to author James Bamford, who is an expert on the NSA, the center’s purpose is “to serve as the nation’s chief warning bell for a planned attack on America. It serves as the focal point for ‘all-source’ intelligence—listening posts, early-warning satellites, human agents, and seismic detectors.” According to one former NSA official, DEFSMAC “has all the inputs from all the assets, and is a warning activity. They probably have a better feel for any worldwide threat to this country from missiles, aircraft, or overt military activities, better and more timely, at instant fingertip availability, than any group in the United States.” If they received indications that an attack was imminent, DEFSMAC officials could “immediately send out near-real-time and in-depth, all-source intelligence alerts to almost two hundred ‘customers,’ including the White House Situation Room, the National Military Command Center at the Pentagon, the [Defense Intelligence Agency] Alert Center, and listening posts around the

world.” Its analysts could be “closely monitoring all intercepts flooding in; examining the latest overhead photography; and analyzing data from early-warning satellites 22,300 miles above the equator. DEFSMAC would then flash the intelligence to the US Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, NORAD at Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado, and other emergency command centers.” But on this morning, as Bamford concludes, “DEFSMAC learned of the massive airborne attacks after the fact—not from America’s multibillion-dollar spy satellites or its worldwide network of advanced listening posts, or its army of human spies, but from a dusty, off-the-shelf TV set.” ([Bamford 2004, pp. 33-35](#)) The NSA had in fact intercepted numerous calls between some of the hijackers in the US and an al-Qaeda communications hub in Yemen, beginning in early 2000 and ending just weeks before 9/11 (see [Early 2000-Summer 2001](#)). ([Myers 7/21/2004](#)) It also intercepted two messages in Arabic on September 10, stating, “The match is about to begin,” and “Tomorrow is zero hour,” but these are supposedly not translated until September 12 (see [September 10, 2001](#)). ([Pincus and Priest 6/20/2002](#)) The NSA even intercepted a series of communications between 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (KSM) and lead 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta beginning in the summer of 2001 (see [Summer 2001](#)), continuing to a message where KSM gives Atta the final go-ahead for the attacks on September 10, 2001 (see [September 10, 2001](#)). Michael Hayden, the director of the NSA, will later claim that the “NSA had no [indications] that al-Qaeda was specifically targeting New York and Washington... or even that it was planning an attack on US soil” (see [October 17, 2002](#)). ([Harris 6/19/2006](#))

(8:48 a.m.-9:04 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NSA Director Only Learns US Is Under Attack from TV Reports

Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael Hayden, the director of the National Security Agency (NSA), is in his office at NSA headquarters in Fort Meade, Maryland, meeting with his senior staff. His executive assistant, Cindy Farkus, comes in and informs him of the first plane hitting the World Trade Center. He later says, “The immediate image I had was a light plane, off course, bad flying.” He is able to see the initial CNN reports showing the WTC on a muted television in his office. Nevertheless, he continues with his meeting. Immediately after the second attack occurs, Farkus again comes into Hayden’s office to inform him of it. Saying that “One plane’s an accident, two planes is an attack,” Hayden immediately adjourns his meeting and requests that the agency’s top security officials be summoned to his office. Author James Bamford, who is an expert on the NSA, later comments that this is “not the way it was supposed to be. NSA was not supposed to find out about an airborne attack on America from CNN, after millions of other Americans had already witnessed it. It was supposed to find out first, from its own ultrasecret warning center, and then pass the information on to the White House and the strategic military forces” (see [\(8:48 a.m.-9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Bamford 2004, pp. 18, 20 and 33](#))

(8:48 a.m.-9:02 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Navy Command Center Personnel Think WTC Crash Is an Accident



Michael Allen Noeth. [Source: Associated Press / Army

Times]Personnel in the Navy Command Center at the Pentagon, which is located on the first floor of the building's southwest face, learn of the attack on the WTC from television reports. The center is tasked with constantly monitoring global current events and also monitoring the latest status of all US Naval assets around the world. Its employees have to keep Navy leaders in Washington up to date on what is happening in the world as it directly relates to Navy operations and other security or military issues. Admiral Timothy Keating, who is the Navy's director of operations in the Pentagon, describes it as a "nerve center." Forty to 50 people man it constantly, 24 hours every day. Located within the center is the Chief of Naval Operations Intelligence Plot (CNO-IP), a small, highly secretive intelligence unit that constantly monitors geopolitical developments and military movements that could threaten American forces. The Navy Command Center has just been renovated, and its dozens of employees have been moving in during the past month. According to the Washington Post, the first the Command Center knows of the unfolding crisis is when Petty Officer Michael Allen Noeth sees the scene from the World Trade Center on the TV sets bolted to the wall, and shouts, "My God! What's happened?" Another employee Lt. Kevin Shaeffer later recalls, "We quickly knew what was going on in New York City after the first plane hit the first tower... and stood up a watch to start logging events and tracking things for the Navy." ([St. Petersburg Times 9/14/2001](#); [Becker, Vogel, and Ruane 9/16/2001](#); [Leiby 1/20/2002](#); [Chips 3/2003](#)) Despite the center supposedly being a "nerve center," those in it supposedly are not initially aware that this is a terrorist attack. According to Timothy Keating, who is presently in the Navy Command Center receiving his daily briefing, "We were quite bewildered. We couldn't understand how a pilot could make such a significant navigational error on a day when the skies were crystal clear blue." ([Becker, Vogel, and Ruane 9/16/2001](#); [Garamone 9/11/2006](#)) All 30 people in the Command Center's main room watch the footage of the WTC on the large televisions there, whispering to each other, "Think it's an accident?" ([Swift 9/7/2002](#)) However, according to the Washington Post, "A few old hands muttered to themselves that the Pentagon was probably next." ([Becker, Vogel, and Ruane 9/16/2001](#)) According to one officer, it is only when the second plane hits the WTC that there will be an "almost instantaneous recognition" that this is a terrorist attack. ([Harnden 9/11/2002](#)) By that time, Keating will have gone back to his office. He too supposedly

only realizes this is an attack when he sees television showing the second crash. ([Garamone 9/11/2006](#)) Much of the Navy Command Center will be destroyed when the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 a.m. Forty-two of the 50 people working in it will be killed. ([Leiby 1/20/2002](#); [Kennedy 6/2003](#))

(8:48 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Workers Apparently Learn of WTC Attack from TV, Think It Is an Accident

In the National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon, personnel apparently become aware of the first attack on the World Trade Center from watching the reports on television. According to Steve Hahn, an operations officer there, “We monitor the television networks in the center, and along with the rest of America we saw the smoke pouring from the tower.” Dan Mangino, who is also an operations officer at the NMCC, says, “At first, we thought it was a terrible accident.” ([Garamone 9/7/2006](#)) The 9/11 Commission later says, “Most federal agencies learned about the crash in New York from CNN.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 35](#)) Whether the NMCC was already aware that a hijacking was underway is unclear. According to military instructions, the NMCC is “the focal point within Department of Defense for providing assistance” in response to hijackings in US airspace, and is supposed to be “notified by the most expeditious means by the FAA.” ([US Department of Defense 6/1/2001](#)) Boston Air Traffic Control Center started notifying the chain of command of the suspected hijacking of Flight 11 more than 20 minutes earlier (see [8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). And at 8:32, the FAA’s Command Center in Herndon informed FAA headquarters of the possible hijacking (see [8:28 a.m.-8:32 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Yet, according to the 9/11 Commission, although the “FAA headquarters began to follow the hijack protocol,” it “did not contact the NMCC to request a fighter escort.” Supposedly, the first that the military learned of the hijacking was when Boston Air Traffic Control Center contacted NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) about it, at around 8:37 a.m. (see [8:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). The earliest time mentioned by the 9/11 Commission that the NMCC learns of the Flight 11 hijacking is 9 a.m. (see [9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 19-20 and 35](#))

(8:48 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Top CIA Officials Learn of First Attack on WTC

Most days, at 8:30 a.m., CIA Director George Tenet holds a meeting in his conference room at CIA headquarters where 15 top agency officials contribute the news from their particular area. But on this day Tenet is away, having breakfast with former Senator David Boren (D) (see [8:50 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). In his place, running the meeting is A. B. “Buzzy” Krongard, the CIA’s executive director. After the first attack occurs, the senior duty officer of the CIA’s Operations Center interrupts and announces, “Excuse me, Mr. Krongard, but I thought you would want to know that a plane just struck the World Trade Center.” The Operations Center, which is staffed, 24 hours a day by 15 officers, has

three televisions that are usually tuned to CNN, MSNBC, and Fox. So presumably the duty officer has just seen the initial televised reports coming from New York. Krongard then adjourns his meeting and returns to his office. ([Kessler 2003, pp. 196-197 and 202](#))

(8:48 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD's Colorado Operations Center Sees WTC Television Footage



Canadian Air Force Major General Rick Findley. [Source: NORAD] Canadian Air Force Major General Rick Findley is in charge of the battle staff at NORAD's Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado operations center. He has just completed a 14-hour night shift, and the center is in the middle of a shift change. According to Findley, "As the phones were beginning to ring, someone said, 'Sir, you might want to look at that.' I looked up and there was the CNN image of the World Trade Center. There was a hole in the side of one of the buildings." CNN broadcasts this footage starting at 8:48 a.m. An as-yet unidentified person reportedly tells Findley that it was a small plane, who responded, "I said the hole's too big for a small airplane.... I asked if it was the hijacked aircraft. I was scratching my head, wondering if it was another aircraft altogether." ([Slobodian 10/1/2001](#); [Mertl 9/10/2006](#))

(8:48 a.m.-9:05 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Transportation Secretary Mineta and FAA Administrator Garvey in Meeting Together; Notified of First WTC Crash

Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta is in a breakfast meeting with the Belgian transportation minister, to discuss aviation issues. FAA Administrator Jane Garvey is also

in the meeting, which is in the conference room next to Mineta's office at the Department of Transportation (DOT) in Washington, DC. Soon after 8:45 a.m., Mineta's Chief of Staff John Flaherty interrupts, and takes Mineta and Garvey aside to Mineta's office to tell them that news agencies are reporting that some kind of aircraft has flown into the WTC. While Garvey immediately goes to a telephone and contacts the FAA Operations Center, Mineta continues with the meeting. But a few minutes later Flaherty again takes him aside to tell him the plane is confirmed to be a commercial aircraft, and that the FAA had received an unconfirmed report of a hijacking. The TV is on and Mineta sees the second plane hitting the WTC live. He terminates his meeting with the Belgian minister, and Garvey heads off to the FAA headquarters. The White House calls and requests that Mineta go and operate from there, so he quickly heads out too. He will soon arrive there, and enters its underground bunker at around 9:20 a.m. (see [\(Between 9:20 a.m. and 9:27 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). (US Congress 9/20/2001; Freni 2003, pp. 62-63; 9/11 Commission 5/23/2003) Before leaving the Department of Transportation, Mineta orders the activation of the DOT's Crisis Management Center (see [9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). (US Congress 10/10/2001)

(8:49 a.m.) September 11, 2001: United Airlines Headquarters Learns Flight 175 Is Missing; NORAD Apparently Not Informed

Apparently, managers at United Airlines' headquarters in Chicago are unaware of any unfolding emergency until they watch CNN break the story at 8:48 a.m. (see [8:48 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). "Within minutes," United headquarters gets a call from the FAA, stating that the plane that crashed into the WTC was an American Airlines passenger plane. At about the same time and before a call about the flight that will take place at about 8:50 a.m., a manager says to Jim Goodwin (United's chairman and chief executive), "Boss, we've lost contact with one of our airplanes [Flight 175]." ([Mccartney and Carey 10/15/2001](#)) At around 9:00 a.m., a United dispatcher reports that Flight 175 has been lost (it is not clear whether this is a clarification of the earlier message or a change in the timing that one call occurred). (9/11 Commission 1/27/2004) Ten days previously, Andy Studdert, the chief operating officer and executive vice president of United Airlines had surprised staff there with a crisis-training exercise, telling them a flight over the Pacific had broken radio contact and suffered a potentially disastrous engine failure. For 30 minutes, they had believed the story, before Studdert told them the truth. So, at around 9:00 a.m. on 9/11, after he arrives at the Operations Center within the United Airlines' headquarters, he shouts at the staff, "This is not a drill!" ([Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [Chicago Tribune 7/16/2003](#); 9/11 Commission 1/27/2004)

Soon after 8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: FBI Arrives at Boston Air Traffic Control Center

The FBI arrives at the FAA's Boston Center, in Nashua, New Hampshire, "minutes after Flight 11 crashed into the World Trade Center," and seizes tape recordings of radio

transmissions from the hijacked plane. Boston Center handled Flight 11, and recorded intermittent radio transmissions from its cockpit (see [\(After 8:14 a.m.-8:38 a.m.\) September 11, 2001\)](#). ([Clayton 9/13/2001](#)) According to FAA spokeswoman Laura Brown, the FAA has to turn over all its records from 9/11 to the FBI immediately afterwards. She says it is not unusual for the FAA to turn over its records after a major disaster, but normally this is to the National Transportation Safety Board, not the FBI. ([Griffin 2004, pp. 185](#))

(8:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Goes Off Course

According to a timeline provided to CNN by unnamed but “informed defense officials,” Flight 175 deviates from its assigned flight path at this time. ([CNN 9/17/2001](#)) Other accounts give slightly different times. According to a National Transportation Safety Board report, which is based on various sources of recorded radar, Flight 175 deviates from its assigned altitude at 8:51 a.m., and then begins turning to the southeast at 8:52, climbing during the turn up to 33,500 feet. ([National Transportation Safety Board 2/19/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission Report is unspecific about when it goes off course. It says only that “Minutes later,” after its final 8:42 a.m. communication, “United 175 turned southwest without clearance from air traffic control.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 21](#)) New York Center air traffic controller Curt Applegate later says that he follows Flight 175 on the radar screen as it turns to the left and descends. ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#))

(8:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Attendant Reports Plane Has Been Hijacked; United Headquarters Informed



Robert Fangman. [*Source: Family photo*] Rich Miles, manager of United’s Chicago system operations center, receives a call from a mechanic at an airline maintenance center in San Francisco. (This center takes in-flight calls from flight attendants about broken items.) The mechanic informs Miles that a female flight attendant from Flight 175 has just called to report, “Oh my God. The crew has been killed, a flight attendant has been stabbed. we’ve been hijacked.” Then the line goes dead.

A dispatcher monitoring the flight then sends messages to the plane's cockpit computer but gets no response. ([Mccartney and Carey 10/15/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#)) This information is quickly relayed to United's headquarters. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#)) There is no published record identifying this female flight attendant. According to published accounts, a male flight attendant, Robert Fangman, calls from this flight at some unknown time. ([Hirschhorn 5/28/2004](#)) It is unclear whether the mechanic (or Miles) confused the gender of the caller, or two different attendants call from this flight. ([Hirschhorn 5/28/2004](#))

(8:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FAA Establishes Phone Bridges, Including with the Military, Earlier Than Claimed by 9/11 Commission

According to a statement by two high-level FAA officials, "Within minutes after the first aircraft hit the World Trade Center, the FAA immediately established several phone bridges [i.e., telephone conference calls] that included FAA field facilities, the FAA command center, FAA headquarters, DOD, the Secret Service, and other government agencies." The FAA shares "real-time information on the phone bridges about the unfolding events, including information about loss of communication with aircraft, loss of transponder signals, unauthorized changes in course, and other actions being taken by all the flights of interest, including Flight 77. Other parties on the phone bridges in turn shared information about actions they were taken." The statement says, "The US Air Force liaison to the FAA immediately joined the FAA headquarters phone bridge and established contact with NORAD on a separate line." ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) Another account says the phone bridges are "quickly established" by the Air Traffic Services Cell (ATSC). This is a small office at the FAA's Herndon Command Center, which is staffed by three military officers at the time of the attacks (see [\(Before 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). It serves as the center's liaison with the military. According to Aviation Week and Space Technology, the phone bridges link "key players, such as NORAD's command center, area defense sectors, key FAA personnel, airline operations and the NMCC." ([Scott 6/10/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) If these accounts are correct, it means someone at NORAD should learn about Flight 77 when it deviates from its course (see [\(8:54 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). However, the 9/11 Commission will later claim that the FAA teleconference is established about 30 minutes later (see [\(9:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The Air Force liaison to the FAA will claim she only joins it after the Pentagon is hit (see [\(Soon After 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(Between 8:50 a.m. and 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Janitor Hears Explosions and Other Strange Noises in North Tower

After firefighters arrive at the North Tower, janitor William Rodriguez leads some of them up its stairs. Being one of only five people possessing a master key, he opens

emergency exit doors as he goes up, allowing people to escape from the building. But between the tower's 20th and 30th floors he hears a series of explosions. The source of these is unknown. Then, when he reaches the 33rd floor he hears what sounds like heavy equipment being dragged across the floor of the level above. He finds this puzzling, he later says, because the 34th floor is supposed to be empty and has been off limits for weeks due to a construction project. After he reaches the 39th floor, Rodriguez is ordered to turn back by the firefighters with him. He then hears the sound of the second plane hitting the WTC, at 9:03 a.m. Rodriguez also claims he heard an explosion from the North Tower's basement just seconds before it was hit at 8:46 a.m. (see [\(8:46 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). He will later be credited with saving many lives on 9/11, and be treated as a hero. ([Chaddock 3/25/2004](#); [Western Morning News 12/2/2006](#); [Cowie 2/16/2007](#); [Wintle 2/26/2007](#))

(8:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: American Airlines Learns of Plane Hitting WTC

By 8:50 a.m., the American Airlines headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas has been called by an American employee at La Guardia Airport in New York City, and informed that an aircraft has hit the World Trade Center. However, it does not yet know that this was Flight 11. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 15](#)) Around the same time, a ramp supervisor at JFK International Airport in New York phones the American Airlines System Operations Control (SOC), located near to its headquarters, to also report the plane hitting the WTC, and workers at the SOC then switch on the television to see it on the news reports. Don Carty, the American Airlines president, who has not yet arrived at his office this morning, calls Gerard Arpey, American's executive vice president for operations, who is at the SOC. Carty has seen the reports of the WTC and asks, "Is that our plane?" Arpey replies, "I don't know, Don. We confirmed it was hijacked, and was headed south from Boston." Carty later recalls that he had a bad feeling that it was indeed his plane that had hit the North Tower. According to Arpey, "We furiously attempted to learn if that aircraft was Flight 11." ([Mccartney and Carey 10/15/2001](#); [The 9/11 Commission. \(National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States\) 1/27/2004](#)) Yet, apparently, it is not until 9:30 a.m. that American Airlines confirms that Flight 11 hit the World Trade Center (see [\(9:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(8:50 a.m.-9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Learning of First Crash, Libby Doesn't Want to be Disturbed, 'Unless it's Terrorism'

Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, had met briefly with Cheney earlier in the morning, but is now back in his own office in the Old Executive Office Building, located next door to the White House. According to journalist and author Stephen Hayes, Libby has just commenced a meeting with John Hannah, who serves on the vice president's national security staff. ([Hayes 2007, pp. 328 and 330](#)) However, Newsweek reports that he is with his top deputy, Eric Edelman. The meeting is

reportedly to discuss the stalled peace process in the Middle East. ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) Before it started, Libby had given his assistant Jennifer Mayfield strict instructions not to interrupt. But as soon as she sees a plane has hit the World Trade Center, Mayfield goes in and tells Libby about it. ([Hayes 2007, pp. 330](#)) Asked, “Do they think it’s terrorism?” she replies that no one is sure, and it appears that a small plane hit the building. ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) Libby tells her, “Unless it’s terrorism, don’t interrupt me again.” ([Hayes 2007, pp. 330](#)) He turns on his television briefly, but then turns it off again as he does not want to be distracted from his conversation about the Middle East. ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) After the second tower is hit, Mayfield goes back in and tells Libby, “It’s terrorism.” ([Hayes 2007, pp. 331](#)) She marches across the office and turns on the TV. Libby later comments, “That’s very unlike her, so I knew it was serious.” Edelman later recalls, “We looked at each other and said, ‘That’s no accident.’” ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) Libby receives a call from Dick Cheney, summoning him to the White House, and soon afterwards hurries across to rejoin the vice president. ([Hayes 2007, pp. 331](#))

(8:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Secret Service Agent Outside Cheney’s Office Learns Plane that Hit WTC Is Passenger Jet

While he is waiting outside the vice president’s office for a scheduled meeting, Dick Cheney’s chief speechwriter John McConnell has been chatting with Cheney’s secretary Debbie Heiden and the Secret Service agent posted at the door. They all see the news about the first plane hitting the World Trade Center on the television above Heiden’s desk. McConnell later recalls, “There wasn’t any kind of alarm. It was just kind of, ‘Oh man, look at that.’” The Secret Service agent then receives an urgent call from the agency’s intelligence division. According to McConnell, “He put the phone down and told me: passenger jet. And that’s when you go, Geez. And then you start getting a sick feeling. Because a passenger aircraft is *not* going to crash into the World Trade Center.” ([Hayes 2007, pp. 329-330](#)) But, according to the 9/11 Commission, it is not until they learn of the second crash at 9:03 that nearly everyone in the White House realizes this is not an accident (see [\(Between 8:46 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 35](#))

(8:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: CIA Director Tenet Told of Attack, Immediately Suspects Bin Laden



David Boren. [Source: *University of Oklahoma*]CIA Director

George Tenet is told of the first WTC crash while he is eating breakfast with his mentor, former Senator David Boren (D), at the St. Regis Hotel in Washington, DC. They are interrupted when CIA bodyguards converge on the table to hand Tenet a cell phone. Tenet is told that the WTC has been attacked by an airplane. Boren later says, “I was struck by the fact that [the messenger] used the word ‘attacked.’” Tenet then hands the cell phone back to an aide and says to Boren, “You know, this has bin Laden’s fingerprints all over it.” “‘He was very collected,’ Boren recalls. ‘He said he would be at the CIA in 15 minutes, what people he needed in the room and what he needed to talk about.’” ([Slavin and Page 9/24/2001](#); [ABC News 9/14/2002](#)) According to other accounts, Tenet responds to the caller, “They steered the plane directly into the building?” Tenet then says to Boren, “That looks like bin Laden.” Tenet muses aloud, “I wonder if this has something to do with the guy [Zacarias Moussaoui] who trained for a pilot’s license.” (Moussaoui had been arrested several weeks earlier.) ([Getler 5/29/2002](#); [Laabs 8/13/2003](#)) According to another account, Tenet pauses while on the phone to tell Boren, “The World Trade Center has been hit. We’re pretty sure it wasn’t an accident. It looks like a terrorist act,” then returns to the phone to identify who should be summoned to the CIA situation room. ([Gibbs 9/14/2001](#)) Tenet later tells author Ronald Kessler, “There was no doubt that al-Qaeda was going to come here eventually, and that something spectacular was planned. I knew immediately who it was [behind the attack].” ([Kessler 2003, pp. 196](#)) In his own 2007 book, Tenet will largely confirm the above accounts. He will add, “Most people, I understand, assumed that the first crash was a tragic accident. It took the second plane hitting the second tower to show them that something far worse was going on. That wasn’t the case for me. We had been living too intimately with the possibility of a terrorist attack on the United States. I instantly thought that this had to be al-Qaeda.” He also mentions thinking aloud about Moussaoui. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 161](#)) Tenet will subsequently hurry back to CIA headquarters in his car (see [\(8:55 a.m.-9:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(8:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Boston Flight Control Informs NORAD That Flight 11 Has Hit WTC

As soon as Boston flight controllers hear news that a plane might have hit the WTC, they know it was Flight 11. They have been tracking it continually since it began behaving erratically. It takes “several minutes” for Boston to report to NORAD that Flight 11 is responsible. ([Wald 9/13/2001](#); [Seely 1/25/2002](#))

(8:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Middle Eastern Men Seen in Sarasota, Cursing Bush

A Longboat Key resident has a strange encounter with some Middle Eastern men. He is standing on the Sarasota bay front, waiting for President Bush's motorcade to go by on its way to the Booker Elementary School. He sees a dilapidated van passing by, with two Middle Eastern men "screaming out the windows, 'Down with Bush' and raising their fists in the air." This would be around the time when reports of the first WTC crash are first being broadcast (see [8:48 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). The man will later report this incident to the police and then be questioned by the FBI about it. Several hours earlier, some Middle Eastern men had pulled up in a van at the resort where Bush was staying, falsely claiming to have an interview with him (see [\(6:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). It is unknown whether these were the same men as were seen on the Sarasota bay front. ([Sullivan 9/26/2001](#))

8:51 a.m. September 11, 2001: Last Radio Contact with Flight 77

The last radio contact with Flight 77 is made when a pilot asks for clearance to fly higher. However, six minutes later, the plane fails to respond to a routine instruction. Presumably, it is hijacked during that time. Indianapolis flight control center is handling the plane by this time. ([Wald and Sack 10/16/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 8](#))

8:51 a.m.-8:53 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight Controller Declares Flight 175 Hijacked

According to the 9/11 Commission, the flight controller handling Flight 175 (presumably Dave Bottiglia ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#))) only notices now that the flight's transponder signal has changed. The controller asks the plane to return to its proper transponder code. There is no response. Beginning at 8:52 a.m., the controller makes repeated attempts to contact the plane, but there is still no response. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Bottiglia contacts another controller at 8:53 a.m., and says, "We may have a hijack. We have some problems over here right now." ([Wald and Sack 10/16/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) This account conflicts with earlier accounts that NORAD was notified at 8:43 a.m. that Flight 175 had been hijacked (see [8:43 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#))

8:51 a.m.-8:54 a.m. September 11, 2001: Hijackers Take Over Flight 77



Charles Burlingame. [Source: Family photo / Associated Press] The 9/11 Commission says the hijacking of Flight 77 takes place between 8:51 a.m., when the plane transmits its last routine radio communication (see [8:51 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), and 8:54 a.m., when it deviates from its assigned course (see [8:54 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Based on phone calls made from the plane by flight attendant Renee May (see [9:12 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) and passenger Barbara Olson (see [9:20 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), the commission concludes that the hijackers “initiated and sustained their command of the aircraft using knives and box cutters... and moved all of the passengers (and possibly crew) to the rear of the aircraft.” It adds, “Neither of the firsthand accounts to come from Flight 77... mentioned any actual use of violence (e.g., stabbings) or the threat or use of either a bomb or Mace.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 8-9](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 29](#).) People who knew Charles Burlingame, the pilot of Flight 77, will later contend that it would have required a difficult struggle for the hijackers to gain control of the plane from him. ([Washington Post 9/11/2002](#)) Burlingame was a military man who’d flown Navy jets for eight years, served several tours at the Navy’s elite Top Gun school, and been in the Naval Reserve for 17 years. ([Associated Press 12/6/2001](#)) His sister, Debra Burlingame, says, “This was a guy that’s been through SERE [Survival Evasion Resistance Escape] school in the Navy and had very tough psychological and physical preparation.” ([Cohen 12/30/2003](#)) Admiral Timothy Keating, who was a classmate of Burlingame’s from the Navy and a flight school friend, says, “I was in a plebe summer boxing match with Chick, and he pounded me.... Chick was really tough, and the terrorists had to perform some inhumane act to get him out of that cockpit, I guarantee you.” ([CNN 5/16/2006](#)) Yet the five alleged hijackers do not appear to have been the kinds of people that would be a particularly dangerous opponent. Pilot Hani Hanjour was skinny and barely over 5 feet tall. ([Goldstein, Sun, and Lardner 10/15/2001](#)) And according to the 9/11 Commission, the “so-called muscle hijackers actually were not physically imposing,” with the majority of them being between 5 feet 5 and 5 feet 7 in height, “and slender in build.” ([9/11 Commission 6/16/2004](#)) Senator John Warner (R) later says “the examination of his remains... indicated Captain Burlingame was in a struggle and died before the crash, doing his best to save lives on the aircraft and on the ground.” ([White 12/8/2001](#))

8:52 a.m. September 11, 2001: Fighters Ordered Toward the Crashed Flight 11



A typical F-15. [Source: US Air Force] Two F-15s take off from Otis Air National Guard Base. This occurs six minutes after being ordered to go after Flight 11 (which has already crashed); 26 minutes after flight controllers were certain Flight 11 was hijacked; and 39 minutes after flight controllers lost contact with Flight 11. ([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [Graham 9/15/2001](#); [CNN 9/17/2001](#); [North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) According to the Cape Cod Times, as soon as the pilots strap in, the green light to launch goes on, and they're up in the air even before their fighters' radar kicks in. ([Dennehy 8/21/2002](#)) In Rome, NY, NEADS has just received news of the plane hitting the WTC (see [8:50 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Major Kevin Nasypany, the facility's mission crew commander, is asked what to do with the Otis fighters. He responds, "Send 'em to New York City still. Continue! Go! This is what I got. Possible news that a 737 just hit the World Trade Center. This is a real-world.... Continue taking the fighters down to the New York City area, JFK area, if you can. Make sure that the FAA clears it—your route all the way through.... Let's press with this." ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) Yet there are conflicting reports of the fighters' destination (see [8:52 a.m. \(and After\) September 11, 2001](#)), with some accounts saying they are directed toward military-controlled airspace off the Long Island coast. NEADS Commander Robert Marr says, "My intent was to scramble Otis to military airspace while we found out what was going on." ([Filson 2004, pp. 56-59](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

8:52 a.m. (and After) September 11, 2001: Otis Fighters Scramble to New York; Conflicting Accounts of Urgency and Destination



Route of the Otis Air National Guard fighters to New York City. [Source: Yvonne Vermillion/ MagicGraphix.com] The F-15 fighters are scrambling to New York City. Later accounts concerning these fighters conflict significantly. According one account, pilot Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Duffy later recalls that they are in a hurry at this time: “we’ve been over the flight a thousand times in our minds and I don’t know what we could have done to get there any quicker.” However, though Duffy says he’s been warned Flight 11 had been hijacked and appears headed toward New York City, he does not yet realize that his flight is anything other than a routine exercise: “It’s just peacetime. We’re not thinking anything real bad is going to happen out there.” ([Dennehy 8/21/2002](#); [BBC 9/1/2002](#)) But, in another account, Duffy claims that fellow officer tells him before takeoff, “This looks like the real thing.” “It just seemed wrong. I just wanted to get there. I was in full-blower all the way.” ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) Full-blower means the fighters are traveling at or near full speed. An F-15 can travel over 1,875 mph. ([DelaHaya 7/30/1997](#)) A considerable amount of fuel is required to maintain such high speeds for long, but a NORAD commander notes that, coincidentally, these fighters are stocked with extra fuel. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) Duffy later says, “As we’re climbing out, we go supersonic on the way, which is kind of nonstandard for us.” He says his target destination is over Kennedy airport in New York City. ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) Similarly, another account states that, as the F-15s are taking off, “Duffy told his wingman they would fly supersonic.” According to Duffy, “When we took off I left it in full afterburner the whole time.” ([Filson 2004, pp. 57](#)) He says, “When we [take] off we [start] climbing a 280-heading, basically towards New York City. I [am] supersonic.... We [are] to proceed to Manhattan directly and set up a combat air patrol.” ([BBC 9/1/2002](#)) There are different accounts as to just how quickly they travel. According to Major General Paul Weaver, director of the Air National Guard, “The pilots [fly] ‘like a scalded ape,’ topping 500 mph but [are] unable to catch up to the airliner.” ([Whittle 9/16/2001](#) Sources: [Paul Weaver](#)) ABC News later says, “The fighters are hurtling toward New York at mach 1.2, nearly 900 miles per hour.” ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) NORAD commander Major General Larry Arnold later states that the fighters head straight for New York City at about 1,100 to 1,200 mph. ([MSNBC 9/23/2001](#); [Shuger 1/16/2002](#) Sources: [Larry Arnold](#)) “An F-15 departing from Otis can reach New York City in ten to twelve minutes, according to an Otis spokeswoman.” ([Kinsella 9/16/2001](#)) At an average speed of 1,125 mph, the fighters would reach the city in ten minutes—9:02 a.m. If NORAD commander Arnold’s recollection is correct, these fighters should reach Flight 175 just before it crashes. Yet according to a NORAD timeline developed just after 9/11, the fighters take about 19 minutes to reach New York City (arriving at about 9:11 a.m.), traveling below supersonic speeds at less than 600

mph. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#)) According to a later account though, these fighters weren't even heading toward Manhattan. Contradicting his earlier recollection, pilot Timothy Duffy says, "we were supersonic going down to Long Island.... [W]e have no idea what we are going toward. We are taking off to go help somebody and we needed to get there quickly to assess the situation." NEADS Commander Robert Marr says that after they received word of the first plane hitting the WTC, "Our jets are heading down south toward Whiskey 105 and we don't really have a mission for them at this point, because we don't have any other problems in the air." Whiskey 105 is military training airspace southeast of Long Island. ([Filson 2004, pp. 57-59](#)) Consistent with this account but also contradicting the earlier recollections of pilots and others involved that day, the 9/11 Commission later concludes, in direct contradiction of the recollections of the pilots and others involved that day, that the fighters are never directed toward New York City at all, but rather are ordered to head out over the Atlantic Ocean. According to the 9/11 Commission's conclusions, the fighters do not reach New York City until 9:25 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(8:52 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Passenger Details Stabbing



Peter Hanson. [*Source: Family photo*] Businessman Peter Hanson calls his father from Flight 175 and says, "Oh, my God! They just stabbed the airline hostess. I think the airline is being hijacked." Despite being cut off twice, he manages to report how men armed with knives are stabbing flight attendants, apparently in an attempt to force crewmembers to unlock the doors to the cockpit. He calls again a couple of minutes before the plane crashes. ([BBC 9/13/2001](#); [Alderson et al. 9/16/2001](#); [Mandel 9/16/2001](#)) Hanson's father immediately calls the local police department and relays what he heard. ([San Francisco Chronicle 7/23/2004](#))

(8:52 a.m.) September 11, 2001: New York Flight Controller Tracks Flight 175 into New York; NORAD Not Warned?



Mike McCormick. *[Source: Associated Press]* Mike McCormick, head of New York flight control center, sees the first WTC attack on CNN. He assumes that Flight 175, which he is tracking on his radar screen, is also headed into the WTC. He says, “Probably one of the most difficult moments of my life was the 11 minutes from the point I watched that aircraft, when we first lost communications until the point that aircraft hit the World Trade Center. For those 11 minutes, I knew, we knew, what was going to happen, and that was difficult.” ([CNN 8/12/2002](#)) Yet, according to the 9/11 Commission, this flight control center will not notify NORAD about Flight 175 until after it crashes at 9:03 a.m.

(After 8:52 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD Scramble Delayed? Witness Casts Doubt on NORAD’s Scramble Time

William Wibel, principal of a school inside Otis Air National Guard Base, is inside the Otis base preparing for a meeting when he learns that the WTC has been attacked and his meeting is canceled. He says, “As I drove away, and was listening to the news on the radio, the 102nd was scrambling into duty.” ([Kinsella and Dennehy 9/12/2001](#)) The WTC crash does not break on local news and radio until about 8:52 a.m. Even if he hears CNN’s early reporting starting at 8:48 a.m., it still presumably takes time to learn the meeting is canceled, go back to his car and so forth. NORAD says the fighters took off from Otis at 8:52 a.m.

(8:53 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD Public Affairs Officer Calls Brother in WTC; Possibly Warns Him of Second Hijacked Plane



Adam Arias [*Source: US Air Force*] Major Don Arias, the public affairs officer for NORAD, has just learned of the first WTC crash from television and a phone call from NEADS (see [\(8:38 a.m.-8:52 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Alarmed because his younger brother works at the WTC, he calls him immediately. Adam Arias works for an investment company on the 84th floor of the South Tower. According to some accounts, Don Arias tells his brother that the aircraft that crashed into the North Tower was likely a hijacked plane that he has been informed of, and orders him to “Get out of there. Go home.” ([Florida State Times 11/2001](#); [Seely 1/25/2002](#); [Seydel 9/2002](#)) But according to Newsday, Don Arias tells his brother he has heard there is “another hijacked airliner and might be another attack.” ([Newsday 10/30/2001](#)) This would be consistent with an early NORAD timeline, which had the agency receiving notification of the second hijacking at 8:43 a.m. (see [8:43 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). However, later accounts, including the 9/11 Commission Report, will claim NORAD only hears of it around the time the plane hits the South Tower (see [\(9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Adam Arias reacts to his brother’s call with urgency, going around the floor exhorting people to leave, and physically throwing one woman out of her office. Several survivors will later credit him with saving their lives. ([Seely 1/25/2002](#); [Seydel 9/2002](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 124](#)) Adam Arias will be killed when the South Tower collapses. ([Barber 9/9/2003](#))

(8:54 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Veers Off Course

Flight 77 from Washington begins to go off course over southern Ohio, turning to the southwest. ([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [Adcock, Donovan, and Gordon 9/23/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(8:55 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Arrives at Elementary School for Photo-Op



Bush's motorcade arrives at Booker Elementary School. [Source: *Lions Gate Films*] President Bush's motorcade arrives at Booker Elementary School for a photo-op to promote his education policies. ([Sack 9/16/2001](#); [Plunket 9/19/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Bayles 9/10/2002](#); [Krueger 9/10/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [Sammon 10/7/2002](#)) If he left the Colony Resort around 8:35 a.m. as reported, the timing of his arrival at 8:55 a.m. is consistent with the fact that the trip from the resort to the school is said to take 20 minutes. The Booker Elementary School is reportedly "well-equipped for the brief presidential visit. Police and Secret Service agents [are] on the roof, on horseback and in every hallway. The White House [has] installed 49 new phone lines for staffers and reporters." ([Sack 9/16/2001](#); [Adair and Hegarty 9/8/2002](#); [MSNBC 10/29/2002](#))

(Between 8:55 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush First Told About WTC Crash? Suggests Accident



Karl Rove, Andrew Card, and Dan Bartlett. [Source: *White House, US Office Pristina, Kosovo, White House*] President Bush's motorcade has arrived at Booker Elementary School and Bush enters the school with his entourage. The beepers of politicians' aides are going off with news of the first WTC crash as Bush arrives. According to one account, Bush learns of the crash when adviser Karl Rove takes Bush aside in a school corridor and tells him about the calamity. According to this account, Rove says the cause of the crash was unclear. Bush replies, "What a horrible accident!" Bush also suggests the pilot may have had a heart attack. This account is recalled by photographer Eric Draper, who was standing nearby at the time. ([Churcher 9/8/2002](#)) Dan Bartlett, White House Communications Director, also says he is there when Bush is told: "[Bush] being a former pilot, had kind of the same reaction, going, was it bad weather? And I said no, apparently not." ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) One account states that Rove tells Bush the WTC has been hit by a large commercial airliner. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#)) However, Bush later remembers Rove saying

it appeared to be an accident involving a small, twin-engine plane. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#)) In a third version of the story, Bush later recalls that he first learns of the crash from chief of Staff Andrew Card, who says, “‘Here’s what you’re going to be doing; you’re going to meet so-and-so, such-and-such.’ And Andy Card says, ‘By the way, an aircraft flew into the World Trade Center.’” ([Sammon 10/7/2002](#)) “From the demeanor of the president, grinning at the children, it appeared that the enormity of what he had been told was taking a while to sink in,” according to a reporter standing nearby at the time. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Churcher 9/8/2002](#))

(8:55 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Nearly Collides with Two Other Planes

Flight 175 almost collides in mid-air with at least two other planes as it descends towards Manhattan. At the FAA’s New York Center, air traffic controller Chris Tucker sees it turn toward the path of Delta Flight 2315, a Boeing 737 heading southwest at 28,000 feet. He tells the Delta pilot, “Traffic 2 o’clock. Ten miles. I think he’s been hijacked. I don’t know his intentions. Take any evasive action necessary.” The Delta plane begins to turn to get out of the way, but Flight 175 turns as well. According to the Washington Post, the two planes’ radar targets actually merge on the radar screen. Controller Dave Bottiglia later says, “It was a terrifying moment just to watch the two airplanes miss by less than, I think it was 200 feet.” Shortly after this near miss, Flight 175 almost collides with US Airways Flight 542, another 737, flying just below and four miles behind Delta 2315. This plane’s onboard collision alert system sounds an alarm as Flight 175 comes closer and closer to it. Its pilot descends, managing to avoid a collision. According to an early FAA report, after this incident, several New York air traffic controllers speculate that the unknown aircraft heading towards New York City—only later confirmed to be Flight 175—is an emergency and is heading for an airport to land. ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#); [Lane, Phillips, and Snyder 9/17/2001](#); [Adcock 9/10/2002](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#); [Associated Press 9/12/2002](#))

(8:55 a.m.) September 11, 2001: President Chats With Greeting Committee Instead of Taking Urgent Call From Rice



Adam Putnam. [Source: *Congressional Pictorial Directory*] At the Booker Elementary School in Sarasota, a small greeting committee has been waiting for the president to arrive. Among this group are two congressmen, Adam Putnam (R) and Dan Miller (R). A White House staffer has informed them that the president has an important call to take from Condoleezza Rice. According to Putnam, they were told, "When he arrives, and he'll be here in a minute, he's going to walk past you. He's not being rude; he's just got to take this phone call." ([Safdie 4/8/2002](#); [Adair and Hegarty 9/8/2002](#)) Bush reportedly is informed of the first WTC crash when he arrives at the school (see [\(Between 8:55 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Like others traveling in the president's motorcade (see [\(Between 8:46 a.m. and 8:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), Captain Deborah Loewer, the director of the White House Situation Room, learned of the crash during the journey. She runs up to the president, she later says, "[a]s soon as the motorcade stopped," and informs him of it (see [\(8:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Lance 8/17/2003](#); [Price 7/6/2006](#)) Yet in spite of therefore likely already knowing of the crash, Bush seems in no hurry to take Rice's call. Putnam later recalls, "Well, he comes up and does not go past us. He stops and talks with us, having a good chat with the teacher of the year." (This is Edwina Oliver, who is also part of the greeting committee.) White House chief of staff Andrew Card says, "Mr. President. You have a phone call from National Security Adviser Rice you need to take." According to Putnam, Bush "says OK. [But he] goes on talking with the teacher of the year. 'I'll be right there.' Card comes back to him, grabs him by the arm and says, 'Mr. President, you need to take this call right now.'" ([Sammon 2002, pp. 43](#); [Safdie 4/8/2002](#); [Adair and Hegarty 9/8/2002](#)) The president then takes the call from Rice (see [\(9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(8:55 a.m.-9:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Tenet in Communications Blackout as he Returns to CIA Headquarters; Recalls Bojinka Plot

CIA Director George Tenet has just learned of the first attack on the WTC while having breakfast with former Senator David Boren (D) at the St. Regis Hotel in Washington, DC. He later says, "It was obvious to us both that I had to leave immediately." Along with Tim Ward, the head of his security detail, he gets into his car and, with lights flashing, hurries back to the CIA headquarters in Langley. Tenet later recalls that in these first minutes after the attack, "All the random dots we had been looking at started to fit into a pattern.... [M]y head was exploding with connections. I immediately thought about the 'Bojinka' plot to blow up twelve US airliners over the Pacific and a subsequent plan to

fly a small airplane into CIA headquarters, which was broken up in 1994.” During his journey, he calls John Moseman, his chief of staff, and instructs him to assemble the senior CIA staff and key people from the Counterterrorist Center in the conference room next to his office. However, Tenet claims, it is difficult for him to get calls through on the secure phone, meaning he is “Essentially... in a communications blackout between the St. Regis and Langley, the longest twelve minutes of my life.” He only learns that a second plane hit the World Trade Center when he arrives at CIA headquarters. Tenet enters the conference room at around 9:15 a.m. By that time, he says, “I don’t think there was a person in the room who had the least doubt that we were in the middle of a full-scale assault orchestrated by al-Qaeda.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 161-163](#))

(8:55 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Situation Room Director Informs Bush of WTC Crash



Captain Deborah Loewer. [*Source: Military Sealift Command*]/Captain Deborah Loewer, director of the White House Situation Room, is traveling in President Bush’s motorcade toward Booker Elementary School, when she learns of the first WTC crash from her deputy in the Situation Room at the White House. According to some reports, as soon as the motorcade reaches the school, Loewer runs from her car to Bush’s car, and informs Bush. ([Associated Press 11/26/2001](#); [Stout 12/7/2001](#)) Note that Bush maintains that he learns of the crash at a later time.

(8:55 a.m.) September 11, 2001: New York Flight Control Believes Flight 175 Has Been Hijacked; NORAD Reportedly Not Informed

The head New York flight controller notifies a manager at the facility that she believes Flight 175 has been hijacked. The manager tries to notify regional managers about this, but cannot reach them because they are discussing the hijacking of Flight 11 and refuse to be disturbed. However, even though the controller managing Flight 175 said, “we may have a hijack” at 8:53 a.m., the 9/11 Commission concluded that NORAD is not notified

by this time. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) The commission's account conflicts with previous accounts stating that NORAD is notified of the Flight 175 hijacking at 8:43 a.m. (see [8:43 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) The head of the flight control center, Mike McCormick, has already decided at 8:52 a.m. that Flight 175 has been hijacked and is on a suicide run to New York City (see [\(8:52 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([CNN 8/12/2002](#))

8:55 a.m.-8:57 a.m. September 11, 2001: Confusion at NEADS over Identity of Plane That Hit WTC



Master Sergeant Maureen Dooley. [*Source: ABC News*] Rumors have started circulating through the civilian air traffic system that the plane that hit the WTC was a small Cessna. There is increasing confusion on the NEADS operations floor as to whether it was really Flight 11. ID tech Stacia Rountree is on the phone with Colin Scoggins, a civilian manager who is Boston flight control's military liaison. Scoggins initially seems to confirm that the plane was Flight 11, saying, "Yeah, he crashed into the World Trade Center... disregard the tail number [given earlier for American 11]." When Rountree asks, "He did crash into the World Trade Center?" Scoggins replies, "[T]hat's what we believe, yes." However, an unidentified male staff member at NEADS overhears, and queries, "I never heard them say American Airlines Flight 11 hit the World Trade Center. I heard it was a civilian aircraft." Master Sergeant Maureen Dooley takes the phone from Rountree and asks Scoggins, "[A]re you giving confirmation that American 11 was the one?" Apparently contradicting what he'd previously said, Scoggins replies, "No, we're not gonna confirm that at this time. We just know an aircraft crashed in... The last [radar sighting] we have was about 15 miles east of JFK [International Airport in New York City], or eight miles east of JFK was our last primary hit. He did slow down in speed... and then we lost 'em." ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) This confusion will continue later on, when NEADS will be misinformed that Flight 11 is still airborne (see [9:21 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(After 8:55 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Serious Communications Problems Experienced in Washington Area

In the Washington, DC area, members of the public, emergency responders, and government officials experience serious communications problems. Telephone and cell phone services around the capital remain unavailable to members of the public for most of the day. ([Verton 2003, pp. 149](#)) According to a federally funded report on the emergency response to the Pentagon attack, “communications systems were busy even before American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon.” When the crash occurs, at 9:37, “all area communications seemed simultaneously overwhelmed. Firefighters calling the ECC [Arlington County Emergency Communications Center] couldn’t get through. Relatives of Pentagon workers found cellular and land lines jammed.” Cellular and landline telephone communications remain “virtually unreliable or inaccessible during the first few hours of the response.” Furthermore, at the time the Pentagon is hit, “Emergency traffic jammed radio channels.” ([US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. A34, A39 and C36](#)) For example, Officer Aubrey Davis of the Pentagon police heads to the crash site with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld immediately after the Pentagon is hit. He receives frantic pleas over his radio, regarding Rumsfeld’s whereabouts. But, as Davis later recalls, “the system was overloaded, everyone on the frequency was talking, everything jumbled, so I couldn’t get through and they went on asking” (see [\(9:38 a.m.-10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Cockburn 2007, pp. 1-2](#)) Some senior government officials experience communications difficulties. CIA Director George Tenet has problems using his secure phone while heading from a Washington hotel back to CIA headquarters, located about eight miles outside Washington (see [\(8:55 a.m.-9:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Buncombe 11/6/2002; Tenet 2007, pp. 161-162](#)) Secretary of State Colin Powell has to take a seven-hour flight from Peru, to get back to the capital. He later complains that, during this flight, “because of the communications problems that existed during that day, I couldn’t talk to anybody in Washington” (see [\(12:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) Even President Bush experiences difficulties communicating with Washington after leaving the school in Florida, and subsequently while flying on Air Force One (see [\(9:34 a.m.-11:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/10/2006](#)) A classified after-action report will later be produced, based on observations from a National Airborne Operations Center plane launched near Washington shortly before the time of the Pentagon attack (see [\(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to one government official, the report indicates that the nation was “deaf, dumb, and blind” for much of the day. ([Verton 2003, pp. 150-151](#)) Members of the public in New York City also experience communications problems throughout the day, particularly with cell phones (see [\(After 10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(8:56 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Transponder Signal Disappears; NORAD Not Informed

Flight 77’s transponder signal is turned off at this time. ([Adcock, Donovan, and Gordon 9/23/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission, the Indianapolis flight controller in charge of the flight has watched it go off course and head southwest before the signal disappears. He looks for primary radar signals along its projected flight path as well as in the airspace where it has started to turn. He cannot find

the plane. He tries contacting the plane but gets no answer. “‘American 77, Indy,’ the controller said, over and over. ‘American 77, Indy, radio check. How do you read?’ By 8:56 a.m., it was evident that Flight 77 was lost.” ([Wald and Sack 10/16/2001](#)) The controller has not been told about any other hijacked planes. (Other centers have been notified about the Flight 11 hijacking more than 20 minutes earlier at 8:25 a.m. ([Ellison 10/17/2001](#))) He assumes Flight 77 has experienced electrical or mechanical failure. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) After he informs other Indianapolis Center personnel of the developing situation, they will clear all other aircraft from the plane’s westerly route so their safety will not be affected if Flight 77 is still flying along its original path but unable to be heard. ([Freni 2003, pp. 29](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 460](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 30](#).) Apparently, American Airlines headquarters and the Pentagon’s NMCC are notified that Flight 77 is off course with its radio and transponder not working, but NORAD is not notified at this time. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#))

(8:56-9:05 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Disappears from Radar Screens

According to the 9/11 Commission, “Radar reconstructions performed after 9/11 reveal that FAA radar equipment tracked [Flight 77] from the moment its transponder was turned off at 8:56 [am.].” However, for eight minutes and 13 seconds, this primary radar data is not displayed to Indianapolis flight controllers. “The reasons are technical, arising from the way the software processed radar information, as well as from poor primary radar coverage where American 77 was flying.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Apparently, a radar tower in West Virginia doesn’t have primary radar. ([Phillips 11/3/2001](#)) But the 9/11 Commission notes that other centers had primary radars that covered the missing areas, yet they weren’t asked to do a primary radar search. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) In its final report, the commission will add a rather elaborate further explanation for the loss of primary radar contact, saying it was because “the ‘preferred’ radar in this geographic area had no primary radar system, the ‘supplemental’ radar had poor primary coverage, and the FAA ATC [air traffic control] software did not allow the display of primary radar data from the ‘tertiary’ and ‘quadrant’ radars.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 460](#))

(After 8:56-9:24 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Pentagon Emergency Center Knows Flight 77 Is Hijacked; NORAD Not Notified?

The New York Times reports, “During the hour or so that American Airlines Flight 77 [is] under the control of hijackers, up to the moment it struck the west side of the Pentagon, military officials in [the Pentagon’s NMCC] [are] urgently talking to law enforcement and air traffic control officials about what to do.” ([Wald 9/15/2001](#)) This appears consistent with what would be expected under normal procedures: According to the FAA’s Acting Deputy Administrator Monte Belger, “Prior to 9/11, FAA’s traditional communication channel with the military during a crisis had been through the National

Military Command Center (NMCC). They were always included in the communication net that was used to manage a hijack incident.” He says that, since the FAA does not have direct dedicated communication links with NORAD, in a hijack scenario the NMCC has “the responsibility to coordinate DOD’s response to requests from the FAA or the FBI.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Yet, although the Pentagon’s NMCC reportedly knows of the Flight 77 hijacking, NORAD reportedly is not notified until 9:24 a.m. by some accounts, and not notified at all by others. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(8:57 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Fire Department Advice to Evacuate WTC Tower Fails to Reach People Inside



People inside the World Trade Center flee down a stairway.

[Source: Shannon Stapleton] By 8:57 a.m., fire department commanders at WTC Tower One advise Port Authority police and building personnel to evacuate Tower Two. According to the 9/11 Commission, the reason for this is not concern of a possible second plane, but because the fire chiefs judge the impact of the plane into the North Tower to have made the entire WTC complex unsafe. However, there is no evidence that this advice is communicated effectively to the building personnel in Tower Two. When an announcement is made to evacuate at 9:02 a.m. (one minute before the building is hit), it does not direct everyone to evacuate, and advises only that everyone may wish to start an orderly evacuation if warranted by conditions on their floor. ([9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 287 and 290](#))

8:57 a.m. September 11, 2001: Jet Fuel in North Tower Burns Up

The jet fuel that spilled from Flight 11 when it hit the North Tower (see [8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) has mostly burned up by this time. The National Institute of

Standards and Technology (NIST), which investigates the collapses, will say “The initial jet fuel fires themselves lasted at most a few minutes.” ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 183](#).) Engineering professor Forman Williams will say the jet fuel “burned for maybe 10 minutes.” ([Chertoff et al. 3/2005](#)) Flight 11, a Boeing 767, had a fuel capacity of 23,980 gallons, but was only carrying about 10,000 gallons when it hit the WTC. NIST will estimate that less than 1,500 gallons were consumed in a fireball inside the tower and a comparable amount was consumed in the fireballs outside the building. Therefore, approximately 7,000 gallons splashed onto the office furnishings and started fires on various floors. However, after the jet fuel is used up, office fires burn until the building collapses. NIST will calculate that there were about four pounds per square foot of combustibles in the office space, or about 60 tons per floor. Offices in the WTC actually have fewer combustibles than some other similar spaces due to the small number of interior walls and limited bookshelf space. NIST will later find that only three of sixteen perimeter columns it recovers reached a temperature of 250°C and neither of the two core columns it retrieves reached this temperature. NIST will also find that none of the samples it acquires reaches a temperature above 600°C (see [August 27, 2003](#)). Although steel does not melt until its temperature is about 1,600°C, it may begin to lose significant strength at over 500°C. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 20, 29, 24, 77](#).) The jet fuel will also burn up in the South Tower about 10 minutes after it is hit (see [9:13 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

8:57 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Turns toward New York City

Flight 175, now in descent, briefly levels off at 28,500 feet and starts turning northeast. A minute later, it resumes its descent as it heads toward New York City. ([National Transportation Safety Board 2/19/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 22](#).)

8:58 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Passenger Says Passengers Want to Do Something About Hijacking



Brian Sweeney. [Source: Family photo] Brian Sweeney, a passenger on Flight 175, calls his wife, but can only leave a message. “We’ve been hijacked, and it doesn’t look too good.” Then he calls his mother and tells her what is happening onboard. ([Barnes 9/13/2001](#); [Maranis 9/21/2001](#)) She recalls him saying, “They might come back here. I might have to go. We are going to try to do something about this.” She also recalls him identifying the hijackers as Middle Eastern. Then he tells his mother he loves her and hangs up the phone. The mother turns on the television and soon sees Flight 175 crash into the WTC. The 9/11 Commission later concludes that the Flight 175 passengers planned to storm the cockpit but did not have time before the plane crashed. ([Siemaszko 3/9/2004](#); [Hirschhorn 3/10/2004](#))

(Before 9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: American Airlines Learns of Flight 77 Problems; Cancels All Flight Take Offs in the Northeast; NORAD Not Notified

American Airlines headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas, learns that Flight 77 is not responding to radio calls, is not emitting a transponder signal, and flight control has lost its location since 8:56 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#)) According to the Wall Street Journal, a call from the FAA roughly says that Flight 77 has “turned off its transponder and turned around. Controllers [have] lost radio communications with the plane. Without hearing from anyone on the plane, American [doesn’t] know its location.” American Airlines executive Gerard Arpey gives an order to stop all American flight take-offs in the Northeast. By 8:59 a.m., American Airlines begins attempts to contact the flight using ACARS (a digital communications system used primarily for aircraft-to-airline messages). Within minutes, some time between 9:00 a.m. and 9:10 a.m., American gets word that United also has lost contact with a missing airliner (presumably Flight 175). When reports of the second WTC crash come through after 9:03 a.m., one manager will mistakenly shout, “How did 77 get to New York and we didn’t know it?” ([Mccartney and Carey 10/15/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 454](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 31](#) 🗉)

Shortly Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Joint Chiefs of Staff Vice Chairman Learns of First Crash From Television



Air Force General Richard Myers, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and acting chairman on 9/11. [Source: NORAD] According to his own account, Air Force General Richard Myers, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, sees reports of the first WTC crash on television. Myers is acting chairman of the US military during the 9/11 crisis because Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Army General Henry Shelton is flying across the Atlantic for a NATO meeting in Europe. ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [Garamone 9/8/2006](#)) Myers has a 9 o'clock appointment with Senator Max Cleland (D) in one of the Senate office buildings. He is heading into this meeting and sees a television in Cleland's outer office showing the burning North Tower, with the commentator suggesting it has been hit by an airplane. ([Myers 9/11/2002](#)) Myers later recalls, "They thought it was a small plane or something like that." ([Armed Forces Radio And Television Service 10/17/2001](#); [Rhem 10/23/2001](#)) He says, "And we're standing around saying, 'What in the world happened?' I remember the day being beautiful. I said, 'How could a pilot be that stupid, to hit a tower? I mean, what'—but then you think, 'Well, whatever.'" So he goes ahead and walks into the meeting, and is with Cleland at the time the second tower is hit (see [\(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Myers 6/29/2006](#)) On several occasions, Cleland will confirm that Myers had this meeting with him. ([US Congress 9/13/2001](#); [CNN 11/20/2001](#); [Baxter and Galloway 6/16/2003](#)) But counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke seems to contradict this account. He claims that, when he joins a video teleconference shortly after arriving at the White House, he sees Myers on screen, indicating that Myers is at the Pentagon rather than with Cleland (see [\(9:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Clarke 2004, pp. 1-3](#))

Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, Is Directing Global Guardian Training Exercise



Admiral Richard Mies. [Source: Public domain] Offutt Air Force Base, near Omaha, Nebraska, appears to be the headquarters of the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) exercise Global Guardian that is “in full swing” when the 9/11 attacks begin. At least the director of the exercise, Admiral Richard Mies, commander in chief of Stratcom, is at Offutt this morning. Because of Global Guardian, bombers, missile crews, and submarines around America are all being directed from Stratcom’s command center, a steel and concrete reinforced bunker below Offutt. ([Arkin 11/12/1997](#); [Ruff 2/21/2002](#); [Dejka 2/27/2002](#); [BBC 9/1/2002](#); [Buttry 9/10/2002](#)) This bunker is staffed with top personnel and they are at a heightened security mode because of the exercise. ([Ruff 2/21/2002](#); [Bjorkman 7/2002](#).) Because of Global Guardian, three special military command aircraft with sophisticated communications equipment, based at Offutt, are up in the air the morning of 9/11. These E-4B National Airborne Operations Center planes—nicknamed “Doomsday” planes during the Cold War—are intended to control nuclear forces from the air in times of crisis. They are capable of acting as alternative command posts for top government officials from where they can direct US forces, execute war orders and coordinate the actions of civil authorities in times of national emergency. The Federal Advisory Committee (whose chairman is retired Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft) is aboard one of these Doomsday planes, being brought to Offutt to observe the exercise. Global Guardian will be cancelled some time after the second WTC tower is hit (see ([Between 9:04 a.m. and 9:40 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), with the battle staff at Offutt switching to “real-world mode.” However, even after Global Guardian is called off, the three E-4Bs will remain airborne. Also on this morning, a small group of business leaders are at Offutt because of a charity fundraiser event due to take place later in the day, hosted by the multi-billionaire Warren Buffett (see ([8:45 a.m.-9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#))). ([Dejka 2/27/2002](#); [Bjorkman 7/2002](#)); [BBC 9/1/2002](#); [Dejka 9/8/2002](#))

8:59 a.m.-9:02 a.m. September 11, 2001: Orders Given to Evacuate WTC Buildings, But Not Heard by Fire Safety Director

At 8:59 a.m., the Port Authority Police Department (PAPD) commanding officer of the World Trade Center complex calls for the evacuation of the North Tower and the South Tower, saying, “As soon as we’re able, I want to start a building evacuation, building one and building two, till we find out what caused this.” Thirty seconds later, the officer repeats his order, but this time calls for all the buildings in the WTC complex to be evacuated. At 9:02, he repeats this, saying, “Evacuate all buildings in the complex. You copy? All buildings in the complex.” However, his order is given over WTC police radio

channel W, which cannot be heard by the deputy fire safety director in the South Tower. ([Pochna 8/29/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 293](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 28, 32 and 200-202](#) ⁸)

September 11, 2001: More Than \$100 Million Rushed from WTC

Data recovery experts later looking at 32 hard drives salvaged from the 9/11 attacks discover a surge in credit card transactions from the WTC in the hours before and during the attacks. Unusually large sums of money are rushed through computers even as the disaster unfolds. Investigators later say, “There is a suspicion that some people had advance knowledge of the approximate time of the plane crashes in order to move out amounts exceeding \$100 million. They thought that the records of their transactions could not be traced after the mainframes were destroyed.” ([Kirschbaum 12/19/2001](#))

Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Army Base Outside New York Prepares for Terrorist Attack Exercise

Staff at Fort Monmouth, an Army base in New Jersey located about 50 miles south of New York City, is preparing to hold a “disaster drill” to test emergency response capabilities to a fake chemical attack. The exercise, called Timely Alert II, is to involve various law enforcement agencies and emergency personnel, including Fort Monmouth firefighters and members of the New Jersey State Police. Personnel are to be deployed and measures taken as in a real emergency. A notice has been sent out, warning that anyone not conducting official business will be turned away from Fort Monmouth during the exercise. Soon after 9 a.m., the exercise director tells a group of participating volunteers that a hijacked plane has crashed into the World Trade Center. The participants pretend to be upset, believing this is just part of the simulation. When they see the live televised footage of the WTC attacks, some people at the base think it is an elaborate training video to accompany the exercise. One worker tells a fire department training officer: “You really outdid yourself this time.” Interestingly, the follow-up exercise held in July 2002 (Timely Alert III) does incorporate simulated television news reports to give participants the impression that the emergency is real. And in the first Timely Alert exercise, held on the base in January 2001, a call had come through of a supposed “real” bomb situation, but this “fortunately turned out to be a report related to a training aid being used during the exercise.” On 9/11, Fort Monmouth is geared to go into high-alert status as part of Timely Alert II. The exercise is called off once the base is alerted to the real attacks. ([Monmouth Message 2/9/2001](#); [Conohan 9/21/2001](#); [Sheehan 9/21/2001](#); [Harnes 7/24/2002](#); [Sheehan 8/23/2002](#); [US Department of the Army 7/26/2003](#); [Foster 9/12/2003](#)) Fort Monmouth is home to various Army, Defense Department, and other government agencies. The largest of these is the US Army’s Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM). CECOM serves to “develop, acquire, field, and sustain superior information technologies and integrated systems for America’s warfighters.” It is tasked

with the “critical role of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR).” ([Communications-Electronics Command 4/17/2002](#); [US Department of the Army 1/2003](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 8/2/2004](#)) Fort Monmouth services also directly assist in the emergency response later in the day. Its fire department deploys to Atlantic Highlands to assist passengers coming from Manhattan by ferry, and members of its Patterson Army Health Clinic are also sent out to help. Teams of CECOM experts from the base are later deployed to ground zero in New York with equipment capable of locating cellular phone transmissions within the ruins of the collapsed World Trade Center. Its explosive ordnance company is also deployed to assist authorities should they come across anything they think might be explosives, while digging through the debris in search of victims. ([Conohan 9/21/2001](#); [Sheehan 9/21/2001](#))

Just Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Two Otis Fighters Take Off for Training Mission Over Ocean

A team in the 102nd Fighter Wing at Otis Air National Guard Base, Cape Cod, Massachusetts, finishes loading dummy missiles onto two fighters that are going to fly a training mission over the Atlantic. They take off sometime before the second WTC tower is hit. Shortly after that hit, the fighters on the training mission are recalled. The implication is that the fighters are then refitted with actual weapons instead of dummy ones. ([Dennehy 9/8/2002](#)) Otis is the base from which the two F-15s launch in response to the first hijacking (Flight 11) at roughly the same time. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) One of the pilots of these F-15s—nicknamed “Nasty” —is reportedly standing in for the usual “alert” pilot, who is “scheduled for training” on 9/11. ([Dennehy 8/21/2002](#))

9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Passenger Peter Hanson Predicts Crash into Building

Flight 175 passenger Peter Hanson calls his parents a second time, and says to his father, “It’s getting bad, Dad—A stewardess was stabbed—They seem to have knives and Mace —They said they have a bomb—It’s getting very bad on the plane—Passengers are throwing up and getting sick—The plane is making jerky movements—I don’t think the pilot is flying the plane—I think we are going down—I think they intend to go to Chicago or someplace and fly into a building—don’t worry, Dad—If it happens, it’ll be very fast—My God, my God.” ([San Francisco Chronicle 7/23/2004](#))

9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: 9/11-Styled Simulation Canceled



John Fulton. [Source: NLESI] An “emergency response exercise” is scheduled to take place at 9 a.m. the morning of 9/11, involving the simulated crash of a small corporate jet plane into a government building. The exercise is to be conducted by the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) in Chantilly, Virginia—just four miles from Washington Dulles International Airport, from where Flight 77 took off, and 24 miles from the Pentagon. The NRO draws its personnel from the CIA and the military, and operates many of the nation’s spy satellites. John Fulton, chief of the NRO’s strategic war gaming office, and his team at the CIA, are in charge of the exercise. It is to involve the jet experiencing mechanical problems then crashing into one of the four towers at the NRO. In order to simulate the damage from the crash, some stairwells and exits are to be closed off, forcing NRO employees to find other ways to evacuate the building. However, according to an agency spokesman, “as soon as the real world events began, we canceled the exercise.” After the attacks, most of the agency’s 3,000 staff are supposedly sent home. ([National Law Enforcement and Security Institute 8/4/2002](#); [National Law Enforcement and Security Institute 8/6/2002](#); [Lumpkin 8/21/2002](#); [Hess 8/22/2002](#))

9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Transportation Department Crisis Management Center Coordinates Emergency Response

On the order of Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, the Department of Transportation’s Crisis Management Center (CMC) was quickly activated after the first WTC tower was hit (see [\(8:48 a.m.-9:05 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). It is thus fully operational by this time, with security procedures initiated, secure lines of communication, and key contacts on line. The CMC is located in the Office of Emergency Transportation, on the 8th floor of the DOT’s Washington headquarters. It serves as a focal point for the transportation response during emergencies, enabling senior department personnel to conduct operations in a coordinated manner. ([US Department of Transportation 12/30/1999](#); [US Congress. Senate. Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation 9/20/2001](#); [US Congress 10/10/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) It includes representatives from all nine transportation modes (i.e., the different means of transport, such as road, rail, air), including Federal Aviation, as well as public affairs, and intelligence and security functions. It is capable of gathering information in real time via its own reporting system, and provides a flow of information to the DOT leadership, the

White House, and Cabinet leaders on developments within the nation's transportation infrastructure (including in the air). The CMC will remain fully operational, manned on a 24/7 basis, even in the weeks after the attacks have ended. ([US Congress 10/10/2001](#); [Mineta Transportation Institute 10/30/2001, pp. 12](#)) Furthermore, according to Mineta, in an incident "involving a major crash of any type," the Office of the Secretary of Transportation "goes into a major information-gathering response. It contacts the mode of administration overseeing whatever mode of transportation is involved in the incident. It monitors press reports, contacts additional personnel to accommodate the surge in operations, and centralizes the information for me through the chief of staff. In major incidents, it will follow a protocol of notification that includes the White House and other agencies involved in the incident." He says that these activities, "albeit in the nascent stage of information-gathering," took place in the initial minutes after Flight 11 hit the WTC. ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#))

9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Learns of Flight 11 Hijacking, But Does Not Discuss Scrambling Fighters

The deputy director of operations and his assistant in the Pentagon's National Military Command Center (NMCC) have been notifying senior Pentagon officials of the first WTC tower being hit. At around 9 a.m., the senior NMCC operations officer contacts the Operations Center at FAA headquarters asking for information, and is informed of the hijacking of Flight 11. This is the earliest time mentioned by the 9/11 Commission Report that the NMCC learns of this hijacking. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 35](#)) Yet, according to military instructions, the NMCC is supposed to be "the focal point within Department of Defense for providing assistance" in response to hijackings in US airspace. ([US Department of Defense 6/1/2001](#)) Apparently, during the call, the FAA Operations Center does not connect the plane crashing into the WTC with the hijacked Flight 11, which it claims is still airborne: The relevant entry in the NMCC operations officer's log will state, "9:00 NMCC called FAA, briefed of explosion at WTC possibly from aircraft crash. Also, hijacking of American Flight 11 from Boston to LA, now enroute to Kennedy [International Airport in New York City]." Nor is there any discussion about launching fighter jets. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 35 and 462](#))

(9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Force Crisis Action Team Activated



Matt Swanson. [Source: Iowa State University] The Air Force's Crisis Action Team (CAT) at the Pentagon is activated. The CAT is under the command of the US Air Force chief of staff, and reportedly it "coordinates Air Force reaction to anything that might be a threat to the United States." After hearing the CAT has been activated, Major Donna Nicholas heads down to the Air Force Operations Center in the basement of the Pentagon's C Ring, where the CAT is carrying out its activities. She arrives there after 9:03, when the second WTC tower is hit, and someone tells her, "Just so you know, we're considering that we're under attack." The Operations Center is "a flurry of activity as Air Force officials worked to gather information, both from the media and from their own intelligence sources." ([Brown 9/19/2001](#); [Yackel 12/2001](#)) The CAT's usual first in charge is away. So Lieutenant Colonel Matt Swanson, its second in command, has to take their place supervising emergency operations for the Air Force. But he is only called from his Pentagon office to the Air Force Operations Center to join the CAT after the time of the second attack. ([Prospectus 9/2006, pp. 3-6](#)) Similarly, James Roche and John Jumper, the Air Force secretary and chief of staff respectively, will not arrive at the center until after the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 (see [After 9:03 a.m.-Shortly After 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:00 a.m.-9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Chief of Naval Operations Continues with Budget Meeting while US is Under Attack

The Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Vern Clark, the Navy's top officer, is in his office on the fourth floor of the Pentagon for a budget meeting. Although it is clear after the second WTC tower is hit that the US is under attack, Clark apparently does nothing in response, and no attempt is made to evacuate him from the Pentagon. Reportedly, when the Pentagon is hit at 9:37, he is "receiving a budget briefing." It is only then that a member of his staff enters his office and tells him, "You've got to evacuate." Clark will then head to the Pentagon's National Military Command Center (NMCC), where he meets with other senior Department of Defense leaders, and decides to re-establish the Navy's command center in another secure location in Washington, DC (see [After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Clark later reflects, "There has never been an experience like this in my lifetime. We were thinking about the immediate protection of the United States of America." ([Peterson 1/2002](#); [Bowman 6/14/2007](#))

[\(9:00 a.m.-9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Top Navy Official Unconcerned About Danger of Attack on Pentagon](#)



Timothy Keating. [Source: Department of Defense] Admiral Timothy Keating, who is the Navy's director of operations in the Pentagon, is back in his fourth-floor office for a 9:00 a.m. meeting with David Newton, the US ambassador to Yemen. Keating has just returned from the Navy Command Center on the Pentagon's first floor, where he'd received his daily briefing, and where he'd seen the television reports of the first crash at the World Trade Center (see [\(8:48 a.m.-9:02 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Despite seeing the second plane hitting the WTC on television, Keating and Newton reportedly do not question their own safety at the Pentagon. Though it is now obvious that the US is under attack, they start discussing the upcoming first anniversary of the terrorist attack on the USS *Cole*. In 2002, Keating will recall, "We were discussing the fact that the *Cole* attack was coming up on a year's anniversary—those were almost our exact words at the moment the plane impacted [the Pentagon]," which happens at 9:37. But in 2006, Keating will give a different account, telling Washington Post Radio that, after seeing the second crash on TV, he understands this is an attack. In response, he claims, he makes some phone calls and is on his way back to the Navy Command Center when the Pentagon is hit. ([Peterson 1/2002](#); [Goldberg 9/2006](#); [Garamone 9/11/2006](#)) The Command Center is mostly destroyed in the attack, and 42 of the 50 people working in it are killed. ([Leiby 1/20/2002](#); [Kennedy 6/2003](#))

[\(9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Bin Laden Brother Attends Carlyle Group Conference](#)

The Carlyle Group is a large private-equity investment firm, closely associated with officials of the Bush and Reagan administrations, and has considerable ties to Saudi oil money, including ties to the bin Laden family. This morning it is holding its annual investor conference at the Ritz Carlton hotel in Washington, DC. Among the guests of honor is investor Shafig bin Laden, brother of Osama bin Laden. ([Vulliamy 6/16/2002](#); [Briody 5/8/2003](#)) Former President George H. W. Bush, who makes speeches on behalf of the Carlyle Group and is also senior adviser to its Asian Partners fund ([Golden, Bandler, and Walker 9/27/2001](#)), attended the conference the previous day, but is not there today (see [\(8:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Schneider 3/16/2003](#))

(9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Rice Informs Bush Flight 11 Has Accidentally Hit the WTC, but Knows Nothing Else

National Security Adviser Rice later claims she is in her White House office when she hears about the first WTC crash just before 9:00 a.m. She recalls, “I thought to myself, what an odd accident.” She reportedly speaks to President Bush around 9:00 a.m. on the telephone, and tells him that a twin-engine plane has struck the WTC tower. She says, “That’s all we know right now, Mr. President.” ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) Rice later claims, “He said, what a terrible, it sounds like a terrible accident. Keep me informed.” ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) Despite her title of National Security Adviser, she is apparently unaware that NORAD has scrambled planes after learning of two hijackings in progress at least 15 minutes ago. She goes ahead with her usual national security staff meeting. ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) Author James Bamford comments, “Neither Rice nor Bush was aware that the United States had gone to ‘battle stations’ alert and had scrambled fighter jets into the air to intercept and possibly take hostile action against multiple hijacked airliners, something that was then known by hundreds of others within NORAD, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Pentagon.” ([Bamford 2004, pp. 17](#)) Congressman Dan Miller, who is waiting in a receiving line to meet Bush, says he waits a few minutes for the call to end. Bush appears unbothered when he greets Miller after the call. Miller recalls, “It was nothing different from the normal, brief greeting with the president.” ([Martin 7/4/2004](#))

(9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Informed of the First Plane Crash, Bush Goes Ahead with Photo-Op

Sarasota elementary school principal Gwen Tose-Rigell is summoned to a room to talk with President Bush. She recalls, “He said a commercial plane has hit the World Trade Center, and we’re going to go ahead and go on, we’re going on to do the reading thing anyway.” ([Stacy 8/19/2002](#)) One local reporter notes that at this point, “He could and arguably should have left Emma E. Booker Elementary School immediately, gotten onto Air Force One and left Sarasota without a moment’s delay.” ([Lyons 9/12/2001](#))

(9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: WTC South Tower Announcement: OK to Return to Offices

A public announcement is broadcast inside the WTC Tower Two (the South Tower, which has yet to be hit), saying that the building is secure and people can return to their offices. ([Dwyer et al. 9/11/2002](#)) Such announcements continue until a few minutes before the building is hit, and “may [lead] to the deaths of hundreds of people.” No one knows exactly what is said (though many later recall the phrase “the building is secure”), or who gives the authority to say it. ([Moore and Cauchon 9/2/2002](#)) Additionally, security agents inside the building repeat similar messages to individuals in the tower. For instance, one

survivor recounts hearing, “Our building is secure. You can go back to your floor. If you’re a little winded, you can get a drink of water or coffee in the cafeteria.” ([Moss and Bagli 9/13/2001](#)) Another survivor recalls an escaping crowd actually running over a man with a bullhorn encouraging them to return to their desks. ([MacGowan 9/12/2001](#)) Businessman Steve Miller recalls hearing a voice say over the building’s loudspeaker something similar to: “There’s a fire in Tower One. Tower Two is unaffected. If you want to leave, you can leave. If you want to return to your office, it’s okay.” ([Maraniss 9/16/2001](#)) British visitor Mike Shillaker recalls, “As we got to around floor 50, a message came over the [loudspeaker], telling us that there was an isolated fire in Tower One, and we did not need to evacuate Tower Two. Again, thank god we continued down, others didn’t.” ([website 9/1/2002](#)) Despite messages to the contrary, about two-thirds of the tower’s occupants evacuate during the 17 minutes between the attacks. ([Cauchon 12/20/2001](#))

(9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Northern Vigilance Operation Canceled; False Blips Purged from Radar Screens



A soldier monitors a NORAD radar screen.

[Source: National War College] For the past two days, NORAD has had fighters deployed to Alaska and Northern Canada. They are there for a real-world maneuver called Operation Northern Vigilance, tasked with monitoring a Russian air force exercise being conducted in the Russian Arctic all this week (see [September 9-11, 2001](#)). ([NORAD 9/9/2001](#)) At its operations center deep inside Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, NORAD is also reportedly at “full ‘battle staff’ levels for a major annual exercise that tests every facet of the organization.” Canadian Captain Mike Jellinek is one hour into his shift, overseeing the operations center, when he is contacted by NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS), based in Rome, NY: The FAA believes there is a hijacking in progress and is asking NORAD for support. As the Toronto Star reports, “In a flash, Operation Northern Vigilance is called off. Any simulated information, what’s known as an ‘inject,’ is purged from the screens.” ([Simmie 12/9/2001](#)) NORAD has the capacity to inject simulated material, including mass attacks, during exercises, “as though it was being sensed for the first time by a radar site.” ([US Department of Defense 1/14/1999](#)) However, Northern Vigilance is a military operation, not a training exercise. ([NORAD 9/9/2001](#); [US Congress 3/11/2005](#)) So presumably the “simulated information” is part of a NORAD exercise currently taking place, such as Vigilant Guardian (see [\(6:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Therefore, many minutes into the real 9/11 attacks, there may have

been false radar blips causing confusion among NORAD personnel. Additional details, such as whose radar screens have false blips and over what duration, are unknown. The Russians, after seeing the attacks on New York and Washington on television, will quickly communicate that they are canceling their Russian Arctic exercise. ([Simmie 12/9/2001](#); [Alberts 10/19/2002](#))

(9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Clarke Alerted to Crisis, Immediately Activates Interagency Group

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke is at a conference three blocks from the White House when a telephone call alerts him to the crisis. He runs to his car. He responds, “Activate the CSG on secure video. I’ll be there in less than five.” The CSG is the Counterterrorism Security Group, comprising the leaders of the government’s counterterrorism and security agencies. Clarke hurriedly drives to the White House. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 1](#))

(9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001): Moussaoui Cheers 9/11 Attacks

Zacarias Moussaoui cheers as he watches the 9/11 attacks on television inside a prison, where he is being held on immigration charges. At his trial in 2006 (see [March 6-May 4, 2006](#)) he will recall watching television and seeing “the blue sky and the World Trade Center in flames.” ([BBC 12/12/2001](#); [Stout 3/27/2006](#))

(9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: 9/11-Styled Simulation Cancelled



An aerial view of the National Reconnaissance Office headquarters in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. [Source: USGS] The National Reconnaissance Office plans a simulation of an airplane accidentally crashing into its headquarters. The office is located four miles from Washington's Dulles airport, where one of the real hijacked planes takes off. The NRO "operates many of the nation's spy satellites. It draws its personnel from the military and the CIA." The simulation is apparently run by John Fulton "and his team at the CIA." An agency spokesman says, "It was just an incredible coincidence that this happened to involve an aircraft crashing into our facility. As soon as the real world events began, we canceled the exercise." ([Associated Press 8/21/2002](#); [Hess 8/22/2002](#))

(After 9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Indianapolis Flight Control Issues Alert to Look for Flight 77; FAA and NORAD Not Notified

According to the 9/11 Commission, shortly after 9:00 a.m., Indianapolis flight control begins to notify other government agencies that American 77 is missing and has possibly crashed. For instance, at 9:08 a.m., Indianapolis contacts Air Force Search and Rescue at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, and tells them to look out for a downed aircraft. It is not clear what Air Force Search and Rescue does with this information. Indianapolis also contacts the West Virginia State Police at about 9:15 a.m., and asks whether they have any reports of a downed aircraft (see [Soon After 9:09 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). However, they apparently do not contact NORAD, but do notify the FAA regional center at 9:09 a.m. (see [9:09 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(After 9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight Dispatcher Sends Warning to All United Flights, Including Flight 93

Ed Ballinger, a flight dispatcher for United Airlines, is continuing to send messages one by one to the 16 transcontinental flights he is covering, warning them of the first WTC crash. He is handling both Flights 175 and 93, and 175 has failed to respond to his message. A few minutes after 9:00, he sends a message to Flight 93. The exact content of the message is not known, but apparently it doesn't advise the pilots to bar the cockpit door. ([Hillston 10/28/2001](#); [Sheehy 6/17/2004](#)) Another flight controller at the Cleveland tower in charge of Flight 93 at the time later recalls, "I saw controllers step up to the plate and start warning flight crews. This was totally by the seat of their pants. It's not because they're directed to by anybody. It's just, OK, everybody's on alert right now." ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#)) Ballinger later says, "One of the things that upset me was that [the FAA and United Airlines headquarters] knew, 45 minutes before [Flight 93 crashed], that American Airlines had a problem. I put the story together myself [from news accounts]. Perhaps if I had the information sooner, I might have gotten the message to [Flight] 93 to bar the door." ([Sheehy 6/17/2004](#)) Ballinger will send Flight 93 a second, more detailed warning that does warn to bar the door. It will reach Flight 93 at 9:24 a.m., shortly before the flight is hijacked.

(After 9:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: United Flight 23 Hijacking Possibly Averted

Shortly after 9:00 a.m., United Airlines Flight 23 receives a warning message from flight dispatcher Ed Ballinger. Flight 23 is still on a runway at JFK airport in New York, about to take off for Los Angeles. Apparently in response to Ballinger's message, the crew tells the passengers there has been a mechanical problem and returns to the departure gate. A number of Middle Eastern men (one account says three, others say six) argue with the flight crew and refuse to get off the plane. Security is called, but they flee before it arrives. ([CBS News 9/14/2001](#); [Davis 4/14/2004](#)) Later, authorities check their luggage and find copies of the Koran and al-Qaeda instruction sheets. Ballinger suspects they got away. "When all we have is a photo from a fake ID, the chances of finding [someone] in Afghanistan or Pakistan are rather slim." ([Davis 4/14/2004](#)) A NORAD deputy commander later says, "From our perception, we think our reaction on that day was sufficiently quick that we may well have precluded at least one other hijacking. We may not have. We don't know for sure." ([Ha 6/13/2002](#))

(Before 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Special FAA-Military Link Fails to Help Communication Problems

At some point before the second WTC crash, the FAA Command Center sets up a teleconference with FAA facilities in the New York area. Also on the same floor of the

same building is “the military cell”—the Air Traffic Services Cell (ATSC)—created by the FAA and the Defense Department to coordinate priority aircraft movement during warfare or emergencies if needed. “The Pentagon staffs it only three days per month for refresher training, but September 11 happen[s] to be one of those days.” ([Bond 12/17/2001](#)) There are three officers in the ATSC at the time of the attacks: Col. John Czabaranek, Lt. Col. Michael-Anne Cherry, and Maj. Kevin Bridges. According to the FAA’s Deputy Director of Air Traffic Control Jeff Griffith, these officers become “immediately involved in coordinating FAA... Command Center actions with military elements.” Additionally, just six weeks earlier the cell had been given a secure Internet terminal and other hardware, allowing it to “immediately look at NORAD and [Defense Dept.] plans as they evolved” and “greatly enhancing the movement of vital information.” ([Scott 6/10/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/9/2004](#)) The 9/11 Commission later determines that communication between the FAA and the military is extremely poor. It is unclear why this connection, which the 9/11 Commission fails to mention, does not help.

(9:01 a.m.-9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight Controllers, American Headquarters Watch Flight 175 Head into New York City



Flight 175 an instant before it hits the WTC South Tower. [Source: Associated Press] Flight 175 is an unmarked blip to flight controllers at the FAA’s New York Center, on Long Island. One controller stands up in horror. “No, he’s not going to land. He’s going in!” Another controller shouts, “Oh, my God! He’s headed for the city.... Oh, my God! He’s headed for Manhattan!” ([Maranis 9/21/2001](#)) The controllers start speculating what it is aiming for, with one guessing the Statue of Liberty. Another, Jim Bohleber, is looking at his radar scope and calling out the plane’s rate of descent every 12 seconds, each time the screen updates: “It’s six thousand

feet a minute. Now it's eight. Now ten.” ([Adcock 9/10/2002](#); [Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) Workers at the crisis center at United Airlines' headquarters outside Chicago, also closely watch Flight 175 head into New York City on radar. ([Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#)) Yet, according to the 9/11 Commission, no one has notified NORAD about the flight.

(9:01 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Claims to See First WTC Crash on Television While at Elementary School

President Bush later makes the following statement: “And I was sitting outside the classroom waiting to go in, and I saw an airplane hit the tower—the television was obviously on, and I use to fly myself, and I said, ‘There’s one terrible pilot.’ And I said, ‘It must have been a horrible accident.’ But I was whisked off there—I didn’t have much time to think about it.” ([US President 12/10/2001](#)) He has repeated the story on other occasions. ([US President 1/14/2002](#); [CBS News 9/11/2002](#)) Notably, the first WTC Crash was not shown live on television. Further, Bush does not have access to a television until 15 or so minutes later. ([Sammon 10/7/2002](#)) A Boston Herald article later notes, “Think about that. Bush’s remark implies he saw the first plane hit the tower. But we all know that video of the first plane hitting did not surface until the next day. Could Bush have meant he saw the second plane hit—which many Americans witnessed? No, because he said that he was in the classroom when Andrew Card whispered in his ear that a second plane hit.” The article, noting that Bush has repeated this story more than once, asks, “How could the commander in chief have seen the plane fly into the first building—as it happened?” ([Schorow 10/22/2002](#)) A Bush spokesman later calls Bush’s repeated comments “just a mistaken recollection.” ([Paltrow 3/22/2004](#))

(9:01 a.m.) September 11, 2001: La Guardia Flight Controllers and Port Authority Unaware of Hijackings

An unidentified woman in the La Guardia control tower speaks to a Port Authority police officer. La Guardia is one of two major New York City airports. The Port Authority patrols both the WTC and the city’s airports. The woman asks the officer what has happened at the WTC, and the officer replies that he has learned from the news that a plane crashed into it. ([Dwyer 12/30/2003](#)) Around the same time, one flight controller in the tower says to another, “But you don’t know anything.” The other responds, “We don’t know. We’re looking at it on Channel 5 right now.” ([Kelly 1/4/2004](#)) “Nothing on the [later released transcripts] shows that the La Guardia controllers knew that the planes flying into their airspace had been seized by terrorists, or that military aircraft were screaming in pursuit over the Hudson River.” Port Authority officials appear to be equally oblivious. ([Dwyer 12/30/2003](#))

(9:01 a.m.) September 11, 2001: New York Flight Control Informs Low Altitude NYC Controllers About Flight 175 Hijacking

New York flight control contacts New York terminal approach control and asks for help in locating Flight 175. Different flight controllers scan different altitudes, and terminal approach controllers only deal with low-flying planes. These low altitude flight controllers have remained uninformed about the fate of Flight 11 until about now: “We had 90 to 120 seconds; it wasn’t any 18 minutes,” says one controller, referring to the actual elapsed time between the two crashes. Another such controller says of both planes: “They dove into the airspace. By the time anybody saw anything, it was over.” ([Wald 9/13/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(9:01 a.m.) September 11, 2001: New York Flight Control Tells FAA Command Center About Flight 175 Hijack; Command Center Already Knows?

According to the 9/11 Commission, a manager from New York flight control tells the FAA Command Center in Herndon, Virginia, “We have several situations going on here. It’s escalating big, big time. We need to get the military involved with us.... We’re, We’re involved with something else, we have other aircraft that may have a similar situation going on here...” The 9/11 Commission calls this the first notification to FAA leadership of the second hijack, but NORAD is not yet notified. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) If this is true, then it means United Airlines headquarters has not yet contacted the FAA, despite knowing Flight 175 has been hijacked since about 8:50 a.m. However, according to the transcript of the 9/11 Commission hearing at which the tape is played, it is the Herndon Command Center that says, “We’re involved with something else, we have other aircraft that may have a similar situation going on here.” This version is subsequently picked up by some media. ([American RadioWorks 9/2/2004](#); [CBC 9/12/2006](#)) It is unclear which version is accurate, but if the transcript is right, it means that the Command Center may already have been informed of the hijackings of United 175 and American 77. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(Shortly Before 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: New York City Workers Reportedly Find Emergency Command Center Empty Before It Is Supposedly Evacuated

After the first World Trade Center tower is hit, Barry Jennings, a City Housing Authority worker, and Michael Hess, New York’s corporation counsel, head up to the emergency command center of the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM), which is on

the 23rd floor of WTC 7. ([Associated Press 9/11/2001](#)) The center, opened in 1999, is intended to coordinate responses to various emergencies, including terrorist attacks (see [June 8, 1999](#)). ([CNN 6/7/1999](#)) However, Hess and Jennings reportedly find no one there. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 109-110](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission, “After the South Tower was hit [at 9:03], OEM senior leadership decided to remain in its ‘bunker’ and continue conducting operations, even though all civilians had been evacuated from 7 WTC.” The Commission claims the center is not evacuated until 9:30 a.m. (see [\(9:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 305](#)) But according to the London Independent, Hess and Jennings arrive there by the time the South Tower is hit, which suggests the center is evacuated earlier than officially claimed. ([Vallely 9/13/2001](#)) This possibility is partly confirmed by OEM Commissioner John Odermatt, who later says that after the first plane hit the WTC, he left only two staffers at the command center (see [\(Soon After 8:46 a.m.-9:35 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 34](#)) Jennings and Hess subsequently become trapped in WTC 7, and have to be rescued by firefighters (see [12:10 p.m.-12:15 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 109-110](#))

9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Crashes into WTC South Tower; Millions Watch Live on Television



Flight 175 hits the WTC South Tower. The picture was taken from a traffic helicopter. [Source: *WABC 7/ Salient Stills*] Flight 175 hits the South Tower of the World Trade Center (Tower Two). Seismic records pinpoint the time at six seconds before 9:03 a.m. (rounded to 9:03 a.m.). ([New York Times 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/17/2001](#); [North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [Cauchon 12/20/2001](#); [Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 1-10](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [Moore and Cauchon 9/2/2002](#); [Dwyer et al. 9/11/2002](#)) According to the NIST report, the crash time is 9:02:59. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 38](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission Report, the crash time is 9:03:11. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 8](#)) Millions watch the

crash live on television. The plane strikes the 77th through 85th floors in the 110-story building. Approximately 100 people are killed or injured in the initial impact; 600 people in the tower eventually die. The death toll is far lower than in the North Tower because about two-thirds of the South Tower's occupants have evacuated the building in the 17 minutes since the first tower was struck. ([Cauchon 12/20/2001](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 5-9, 41](#).) The combined death toll from the two towers is estimated at 2,819, not including the hijackers. ([Associated Press 8/19/2002](#)) The impact severs some columns on the south side of the South Tower. Each of the Twin Towers is designed as a "tube-in-tube" structure and the steel columns which support its weight are arranged around the perimeter and in the core. The plane, which is traveling at an estimated speed of around 500 mph (see [October 2002-October 2005](#)), severs 33 of the building's 236 perimeter columns and damages another one. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 39](#).) The perimeter columns bear about half of the tower's weight, so the damage to them reduces the tower's ability to bear gravity loads by about 7.1 percent. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 6](#).) The actual damage to the 47 core columns is not known, as there are no photographs or videos of it, but there will be much speculation about this after 9/11. It will be suggested that some parts of the aircraft may be able to damage the core even after crashing through the exterior wall (see [8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 107](#).) According to NIST's base case model, five of the core columns are severed and another five suffer some damage. ([National Institute of Standards & Technology 9/2005, pp. 235](#).) This may reduce the tower's ability to bear loads by a further approximately 8 percent, meaning that the aircraft impact accounted for a loss of about 15 percent of the building's strength. This damage will be cited as an event contributing to the building's collapse after 9/11 (see [October 23, 2002](#) and [October 19, 2004](#)). NIST's base case estimate of damage to the North Tower's core will be similar, even though the aircraft impact there was dissimilar (see [8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Flight 11 hit the North Tower's core head on, whereas Flight 175 only hits the corner of the South Tower's core. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 20-23, 38-41](#).) In addition, some of the fireproofing on the steel columns and trusses may be dislodged (see [8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([National Institute of Standards & Technology 9/2005, pp. xxxvi, 83](#).) Photographs and videos of the towers will not show the state of fireproofing inside the buildings, but the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will try to estimate the damage to fireproofing using a series of computer models. Its severe case model (see [October 2002-October 2005](#)) will predict that 39 of the 47 core columns are stripped of their fireproofing on one or more floors and that fireproofing is stripped from trusses covering 80,000 ft² of floor area, the equivalent of about two floors. NIST will say that the loss of fireproofing is a major cause of the collapse (see [April 5, 2005](#)), but only performs 15 tests on fireproofing samples (see [October 26, 2005](#)). ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 41](#).) According to NIST, less fireproofing is stripped from the North Tower (see [8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Bush's Security Agents Watch Second WTC Crash on Television; Bush Continues with Photo-Op



Bill Balkwill. *[Source: Sarasota County Sheriff's*

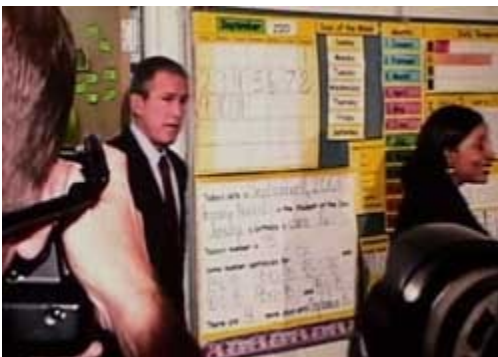
Office] According to Sarasota County Sheriff Bill Balkwill, just after President Bush enters a Booker Elementary classroom, a Marine responsible for carrying Bush's phone walks up to Balkwill, who is standing in a nearby side room. While listening to someone talk to him in his earpiece, the Marine asks, "Can you get me to a television? We're not sure what's going on, but we need to see a television." Three Secret Service agents, a SWAT member, the Marine, and Balkwill turn on the television in a nearby front office just as Flight 175 crashes into the WTC. "We're out of here," the Marine tells Balkwill. "Can you get everyone ready?" ([Bayles 9/10/2002](#)) However, Bush stays at the school for another half-hour. Who makes the decision to stay—and why—remains unclear, and the Secret Service won't comment on the matter. Philip Melanson, author of a book on the Secret Service, comments, "With an unfolding terrorist attack, the procedure should have been to get the president to the closest secure location as quickly as possible, which clearly is not a school. You're safer in that presidential limo, which is bombproof and blastproof and bulletproof.... In the presidential limo, the communications system is almost duplicative of the White House—he can do almost anything from there but he can't do much sitting in a school." ([Martin 7/4/2004](#)) The decision to allow the president to remain in the classroom seems odder still considering that, according to the Tampa Tribune, the reason that Sandra Kay Daniels' classroom has been selected for Bush's photo-op is "not because [it] fulfilled some complicated formula; her classroom merely was situated next to the school's north door, making it easier to organize elaborate security." ([Barrs 9/1/2002](#))

9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Newark Flight Controllers Watch Flight 175 Hit WTC



Rick Tepper. [Source: Eileen Blass] Flight controllers in Newark, New Jersey, are on the phone with New York flight controllers and are asked to find Flight 175 from their windows. They see it and watch in horror as it drops the last five thousand feet and crashes into the WTC. Rick Tepper (who also saw the explosion of the first crash) recalls, “He was in a hard right bank, diving very steeply and very fast. And he—as he was coming up the Hudson River, he—he made another hard left turn and—just heading for downtown Manhattan.... You could see that he was trying to line himself up on the tower. Just before he hit the tower, he almost leveled it out and just—just hit the building.” Newark immediately calls the Air Traffic Control System Command Center in Washington and tells them they will not land any more airplanes in Newark, in an effort to keep aircraft away from New York City. It is the first step in shutting down the national airspace system. ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#))

(9:03 a.m.-9:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Enters Classroom Photo-Op, Still Claims to Think WTC Crash Is Accidental



President Bush enters Sandra Kay Daniels' classroom. [Source: Lions Gate Films] President Bush enters Sandra Kay Daniels' second-grade class for a photo-op to promote his education policies. ([Churcher 9/8/2002](#)) Numerous reporters who travel with the president, as well as members of the local media, watch from the back of the room. ([Stacy 8/19/2002](#)) Secret Service agents protecting the president are lying in the trusses above the classroom. ([Bayles 9/10/2002](#)) Altogether, there are about 150 people in the room, 16 of whom are children in the class. Bush is introduced to the children and poses for a number of pictures. The teacher then leads the

students through some reading exercises (video footage shows this lasts about three minutes). ([Tapper 9/12/2001](#)) Bush later claims that during this lesson, he is thinking what he will say about the WTC crash. “I was concentrating on the program at this point, thinking about what I was going to say. Obviously, I felt it was an accident. I was concerned about it, but there were no alarm bells.” ([Sammon 10/7/2002](#)) The children are just getting their books from under their seats to read a story together when Chief of Staff Andrew Card comes in to tell Bush of the second WTC crash. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Sammon 10/8/2002](#)) According to the Washington Times, Card comes in at the conclusion of the first half of the planned lesson, and “[seizes] a pause in the reading drill to walk up to Mr. Bush’s seat.” ([Sammon 10/7/2002](#); [Sammon 10/8/2002](#))

(9:03 a.m.-9:08 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight Control Managers Ban Aircraft Around New York and Washington

In a series of stages, flight control managers ban aircraft from flying near the cities targeted by the hijackers. All takeoffs and landings in New York City are halted within a minute of the Flight 175 crash, without asking for permission from Washington. Boston and Newark flight control centers follow suit in the next few minutes. Around 9:08 a.m., departures nationwide heading to or through New York and Boston airspace are canceled. ([LeBlanc 8/12/2002](#); [Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [Adcock 9/10/2002](#)) Mike McCormick, head of a Long Island, New York, air traffic control center, makes the decision without consulting any superiors. ([ABC News 8/12/2002](#)) In addition, “a few minutes” after 9:03 a.m., all takeoffs from Washington Reagan National Airport are stopped. ([Levin 8/11/2002](#))

(9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: WTC Building 7 Evacuated

According to a soldier at the scene, WTC Building 7 is evacuated before the second tower is hit. ([Fleming-Michael 10/18/2001](#)) The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) states, “As the second aircraft struck WTC 2, a decision was made to evacuate WTC 7.” This would be just after the Port Authority Police Department called for the evacuation of the entire WTC complex (see [8:59 a.m.-9:02 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). But by this time, “many WTC 7 occupants [have] already left the building and others [have] begun a self-evacuation of the building.” ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 109](#)) All individuals in the Secret Service’s New York field office, located in WTC 7, were ordered to evacuate after the first attack, and they are in the process of doing so when the second plane hits the South Tower. ([PCCW Newsletter 3/2006](#)) The Secret Service has a Stinger missile secretly stored in the WTC, to be used to protect the president if there were an attack on the city when he visits it. ([Weiss 2003, pp. 379](#)) Presumably, this missile is abandoned with the evacuation. The Office of Emergency Management’s command center, on the 23rd floor of WTC 7, is not evacuated until later, at 9:30 a.m. (see [\(9:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Cousin of the President Saved From Death in the South Tower Due to Changed Venue of Meeting



Jim Pierce. [Source: AON] Jim Pierce, a cousin of President Bush, sees the South Tower of the WTC hit from the nearby Millennium Hotel. Pierce is the managing director of the AON Corporation, an insurance company with offices in WTC 2. He had arranged a business conference, to be held on the tower's 105th floor this morning. However, the previous night, the conference was moved to the Millennium Hotel because the group was too large for the original room. According to a book by former First Lady Barbara Bush, Pierce later learns that 12 people are in the room where the meeting was originally planned to take place when the South Tower is hit, and only one of them survives. ([Boston Globe 2001](#); [Ananova 9/18/2001](#); [Bush 10/27/2003](#)) Another AON Corporation meeting is taking place on the 105th floor of the South Tower, run by business executive Mary Wieman. Of about 50 participants in attendance, only six are able to escape. ([New York Times 12/17/2001](#); [Moore and Cauchon 9/2/2002](#))

9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Staff See Second Attack on WTC, Yet Accounts Conflict Over Urgency of Their Response

Those in the National Military Command Center (NMCC) within the Pentagon see the second plane hitting the World Trade Center live on television. According to Dan Mangino, an operations officer at the center, the staff there had thought the first WTC crash was a "terrible accident," but after seeing the second one, "we knew immediately that it was a terrorist attack." The American Forces Press Service later reports, "Personnel in the center shifted into hyperdrive.... Phones in the center began ringing off the hook." Mangino says he initiates "the process to stand up a working group in advance of the direction that would come down later." One of his deputies is responsible for this process. Yet, despite this supposed urgency, Mangino later recalls that he "knew he would have little time in the days ahead, so he quickly ran to the concourse to get some money out of an automated teller machine." He will not arrive back at the NMCC until after the Pentagon is hit. ([Garamone 9/7/2006](#)) Brigadier General Montague Winfield had earlier on allowed a colleague to temporarily take over from him as the NMCC's deputy director for operations (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Yet, despite the obvious emergency

now taking place, he does not retake charge of the center until more than an hour later, at around 10:15-10:30 a.m. (see [\(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Furthermore, according to the 9/11 Commission, the NMCC does not begin a “significant event” conference call in response to the attacks until 9:29 a.m., which is 26 minutes after the South Tower is hit (see [\(9:29 a.m.-9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#) ^a; [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 37](#))

(9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD Phones Start Ringing ‘Like Crazy’

In the NORAD operations center in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, workers see the second aircraft crashing into the World Trade Center live on television. ([Diedrich 10/7/2001](#)) Major General Rick Findley, NORAD’s director of operations, later says that he now realizes “it was not an accident but a coordinated attack.” Then, he recalls, “At about that moment in time, every phone in this cab, and every phone over in the command center, and every phone in all the centers in this building were ringing off the hook.” Master Corporal Daniel Milne, the emergency action controller in the operations center, will similarly recall, “The feeling was total disbelief. Then the phones started ringing like crazy.” ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/11/2002](#); [Dick 11/2004](#)) It is unclear what causes all the phones to simultaneously ring. According to Aviation Week and Space Technology magazine, after the second tower is hit, “Calls from fighter units... started pouring into NORAD and sector operations centers, asking, ‘What can we do to help?’” (see [\(After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) So this could be one factor. Also, a 1996 article in Airman magazine had quoted Stacey Knott, a technician in the NORAD operations center. She’d said, “Things can be pretty quiet in here.” However, “One of the busiest times is during exercises. This room fills up.... The phones are ringing off the hook, and I’ve got phones in each hand.” ([McKenna 1996](#)) On this morning, those in Cheyenne Mountain are in fact participating in a major exercise called Vigilant Guardian. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#); [CNN 9/11/2006](#)) This is reportedly only canceled “shortly after” the second attack (see [After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) ([Tudor 3/2002](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 59](#)) So it is plausible that this is also a factor in causing all the phones to suddenly ring. A similar thing appears to occur in the National Military Command Center (NMCC) at the Pentagon. According to a news article based on the recollections of two officers who are there, after the second plane hits the WTC, “Phones in the center began ringing off the hook.” ([Garamone 9/7/2006](#)) Rick Findley later suggests that all the ringing phones are not a hindrance for NORAD, claiming, “The good news is we had lots of people here and we already had an operational architecture. We already had the command and control, the network, the phones, the data links. Everything was already in place that enabled us to react to the situation.” ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/11/2002](#))

(9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Contradictions over Otis Fighter Mission and Whereabouts

The minute Flight 175 hits the South Tower, pilot Major Daniel Nash says that clear visibility allows him to see smoke pour out of Manhattan, even though NORAD says he is 71 miles away. ([Dennehy 8/21/2002](#)) The other Otis pilot, Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Duffy, recalls, “We’re 60 miles out, and I could see the smoke from the towers.” They call NORAD right then for an update, and Duffy relates, “At that point, they said the second aircraft just hit the World Trade Center. That was news to me. I thought we were still chasing American [Airlines Flight] 11.” ([ABC News 9/14/2002](#)) In another account Duffy again relates, “It was right about then when they said the second aircraft had just hit the World Trade Center, which was quite a shock to both [Nash] and I, because we both thought there was only one aircraft out there. We were probably 70 miles or so out when the second one hit. So, we were just a matter of minutes away.” ([BBC 9/1/2002](#)) He asks for clarification of their mission, but the request is met with “considerable confusion.” ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) Bob Varcadapane, a Newark, New Jersey, flight controller who sees the Flight 175 crash, claims, “I remember the two F-15s. They were there moments after the impact. And I was just—said to myself, ‘If only they could have gotten there a couple minutes earlier.’ They just missed it.” ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#)) However, the 9/11 Commission appears to believe that the pilots never get near New York City at this time. According to the commission’s account, from 8:46 a.m. until 8:52 a.m., NORAD personnel are unable to find Flight 11. Shortly after 8:50 a.m., and just before the fighters take off, NORAD is given word that a plane has hit the WTC (see [\(8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Lacking a clear target, the fighters take off toward a military controlled airspace over the ocean, off the coast of Long Island. A map released by the 9/11 Commission indicates that at 9:03 the fighters are about 100 miles away and heading southwest instead of west to New York City. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Tape recordings of the NEADS operations floor reveal Major Kevin Nasypany telling Colonel Robert Marr, “Fighters are south of—just south of Long Island.” ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) The 9/11 Commission says that, at 9:10 a.m., Boston flight control tells the Otis fighters about the second WTC tower being struck. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 459](#))

[\(9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: New York Flight Control Informs NORAD That Flight 175 Has Been Hijacked; Timing of Notice in Question](#)

The 9/11 Commission later concludes that New York flight control tells NEADS that Flight 175 has been hijacked at this time. The commission refers to this as “the first indication that the NORAD air defenders had of the second hijacked aircraft.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Tape recordings of the NEADS operations floor reveal ID tech Stacia Rountree answering the call from the New York Center, and saying out loud, “They have a second possible hijack!” ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) Colonel Robert Marr, head of NEADS, claims that he first learns a flight other than Flight 11 has been hijacked when he sees Flight 175 crash into the WTC on television. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) NEADS Mission Crew Commander Dawne Deskins claims that when she sees Flight 175 hitting the South Tower on television, “we didn’t even know there was a second hijack.” ([Filson 2004, pp. 59](#)) However, these accounts contradict NORAD’s conclusion reached shortly after 9/11 that it was first notified about Flight 175 at 8:43 a.m. (see [8:43 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#)) Additionally, as Flight 175 crashes into the WTC, Canadian Captain Mike Jellinek (who is command director at NORAD's Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado operations center) is on the phone with NEADS. He sees the crash live on television and asks NEADS, "Was that the hijacked aircraft you were dealing with?" The reply is yes. ([Simmie 12/9/2001](#)) If the commission's account is correct, several questions remain unanswered. Flight 175 lost radio contact at 8:42 a.m. (see [8:41 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) and changed transponder signals at 8:46 a.m. (see [8:46 a.m.-8:47 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)); a flight controller declared it possibly hijacked sometime between 8:46 a.m. and 8:53 a.m. (see [Shortly After 8:46 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)); and a flight control manager called it hijacked at 8:55 a.m. (see [8:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) The commission has not explained why New York flight control would wait 10-17 minutes before warning NORAD that Flight 175 is possibly hijacked. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) It also would not explain why United Airlines headquarters would fail to notify NORAD National Guard after learning that the plane has been hijacked at about 8:50 a.m. (see [8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#))

(9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Fighters Do Not Have Shootdown Authority

A fighter pilot flying from Otis Air Base toward New York City later notes that it wouldn't have mattered if he caught up with Flight 175, because only President Bush could order a shootdown, and Bush is at a public event at the time. ([Dennehy 8/21/2002](#)) "Only the president has the authority to order a civilian aircraft shot down," according to a 1999 CNN report. ([McIntyre 10/26/1999](#)) In fact, by 9/11, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld also has the authority to order a shootdown, but he is not responding to the crisis at this time. ([Sheehy 6/17/2004](#)) Furthermore, NORAD Commander Larry Arnold later states that on 9/11, "I have the authority in case of an emergency to declare a target hostile and shoot it down under an emergency condition." ([Filson 2004, pp. 75](#))

(9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Boston Flight Control Tells FAA That Hijackers Said 'We Have Planes,' FAA Suggests Notifying NORAD

A manager at Boston flight control reports to the FAA's New England regional headquarters the "We have some planes" comment made by a Flight 11 hijacker at 8:24 a.m. (see [8:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The Boston controller says, "I'm gonna reconfirm with, with downstairs, but the, as far as the tape... seemed to think the guy said that 'we have planes.' Now, I don't know if it was because it was the accent, or if there's more than one [hijacked plane], but I'm gonna, I'm gonna reconfirm that for you, and I'll get back to you real quick. Okay?" Asked, "They have what?," this person clarifies, "Planes, as in plural.... It sounds like, We're talking to New York, that there's another one aimed at the World Trade Center.... A second one just hit the Trade Center." The person at New England headquarters replies, "Okay. Yeah, we gotta get—we gotta alert the military real quick on this." At 9:05 a.m., Boston confirms for this headquarters and

the FAA Command Center in Herndon, Virginia, that a hijacker said, “we have planes” (forgetting the “some”). ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) It appears Boston replays the recording of the hijacker saying this from about 40 minutes earlier. Other people, such as American Airlines leader Gerard Arpey at that airline’s headquarters, apparently learned about this comment before the Flight 11 crash at 8:46 a.m. (see [8:46 a.m. September 11, 2001](#))

(After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Secret Service Agent Establishes Open Line with FAA

Soon after the second WTC tower is hit, a senior Secret Service agent who is responsible for coordinating the president’s movements establishes an open line with his counterpart at the FAA. This FAA official tells him of further planes, on top of the two that have already crashed, that are unaccounted for and possibly hijacked. Although the Secret Service agent asks someone to pass this information on to the Secret Service’s operations center, the 9/11 Commission says that either this does not happen or else the message is passed on but not disseminated. Therefore the information fails to reach agents assigned to the vice president and, consequently, “the Vice President was not evacuated at that time.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 464](#)) However, some other accounts contradict this, saying the vice president is indeed evacuated from his White House office by Secret Service agents at around this time. ([Sanger and van Natta 9/16/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [ABC News 9/14/2002](#))

(After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: New York and Washington Flight Controllers Told to Watch for Suspicious Aircraft

New York flight controllers are told by the FAA to watch for airplanes whose speed indicates that they are jets, but which either are not responding to commands or have disabled their transponders. “Controllers in Washington [get] a similar briefing, which [help] them pick out hijacked planes more quickly.” ([Wald 9/13/2001](#)) Other centers are apparently not told the same, and Indianapolis flight control apparently remains unaware of any crisis. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Rice Learns of Second Attack; Goes to Basement Bunker

National Security Adviser Rice has just started her daily national security staff meeting at 9:00 a.m. Shortly after 9:03 a.m., an aide hands her a note saying a second plane has hit the WTC. Rice later claims that she thinks, “This is a terrorist attack,” and then leaves the meeting, quickly walking to the White House Situation Room. ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) However, according to counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke, Rice leaves the meeting

for Vice President Cheney's office. Clarke meets her there a few minutes later and only then does she go down to the basement bunker. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 1-2](#))

(After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Boston Controllers Give Cockpit Security Alert to New England Planes and Asks FAA to Issue Nationwide Warning; FAA Fails to Do So

"Within minutes of the second impact," Boston flight control's Operations Manager instructs all flight controllers in his center to inform all aircraft in the New England region to monitor the events unfolding in New York and to advise aircraft to heighten cockpit security. Boston asks the FAA Command Center to issue a similar cockpit security alert to all aircraft nationwide. The 9/11 Commission concludes, "We have found no evidence to suggest that Command Center managers instructed any centers to issue a cockpit security alert." ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) United Airlines flight dispatchers give their pilots a cockpit warning about 20 minutes later.

(After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Base Commanders Offer to Help NORAD; Timing of Acceptance Unclear



Amraam missiles being loaded onto a 119th Fighter Wing jet at an unknown time on the day of 9/11. The 119th is based at Langley, Virginia. [Source: *William Quinn*] Shortly after the second WTC crash, calls from fighter units begin "pouring into NORAD and sector operations centers, asking, 'What can we do to help?'" In Syracuse, New York, an Air National Guard commander tells NEADS commander Robert Marr, "Give me ten [minutes] and I can give you hot guns. Give me 30 [minutes] and I'll have heat-seeker [missiles]. Give me an hour and I can give you slammers [Amraams]." Marr replies, "I want it all." ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) Reportedly, Marr says, "Get to the phones. Call every Air National Guard unit in the land. Prepare to put jets in the air. The nation is under attack." ([Seely 1/25/2002](#))

Canadian Major General Eric Findley, based in Colorado and in charge of NORAD that day, reportedly has his staff immediately order as many fighters in the air as possible. ([Kampouris 9/11/2002](#)) However, according to another account, NORAD does not accept the offers until about an hour later: “By 10:01 a.m., the Command Center began calling several bases across the country for help.” ([Sallah and Mahr 12/9/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission later concludes that a command for other bases to prepare fighters to scramble is not given until 9:49 a.m. In fact, it appears the first fighters from other bases to take off are those from Syracuse at 10:42 a.m. (see [10:42 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) This is over an hour and a half after Syracuse’s initial offer to help, and not long after a general ban on all flights, including military ones, is lifted at 10:31 a.m. (see [10:31 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) These are apparently the fourth set of fighters scrambled from the ground. Previously, three fighters from Langley, two from Otis, and two from Toledo, Ohio, were scrambled at 10:01 a.m. (see [10:01 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), but did not launch until fifteen minutes later. ([Sallah and Mahr 12/9/2001](#))

Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Reportedly Only Ups Alert Status One Level, but One Account Indicates It Is Not Raised

John Jester, the chief of the Defense Protective Service—the law enforcement agency that guards the Pentagon—is in his office at the Pentagon. He had been unaware of the first WTC crash and only learned of it when his press officer, Glenn Flood, phoned about it at around 9 a.m. and asked him if he would be reacting. Jester switched on the TV in his office just in time to see the second tower hit, at 9:03 a.m. Despite realizing that it is “obvious this was a terrible attack,” Jester later recalls that at this time, he is “thinking about what else we needed to do based on the attacks in New York, not having in my mind that it would happen here too.” He calls his deputy, but only instructs him to raise the building’s state of alert by one level, from “normal” to “alpha,” which only requires spot-inspections of vehicles and increased police patrols. Yet according to a report in *Leatherneck*, the magazine of the US Marines, “an e-mail from the security manager to all Department of Defense employees” that is apparently sent out shortly before the Pentagon is hit, says, “the threat condition remained ‘normal.’” The *Washington Post* claims that—further adding to the building’s vulnerability—the Pentagon has “no anti-aircraft guns posted on its roof, nor any radars of its own for tracking local air traffic.” ([Graham 9/16/2001](#); [Younge 9/17/2001](#); [Allison 11/2001](#); [Murphy 2002, pp. 243-244](#)) Yet, at the nearby White House, the Secret Service is believed to have a battery of ground-to-air Stinger missiles ready to defend the place. ([Wastell and Jacobson 9/16/2001](#)) Around 30 minutes after Flight 77 crashes into the Pentagon, the US military will increase its threat level to Defcon Delta, the highest possible level (see [10:10 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). This will be reduced to “Charlie” before the end of the week. ([MSNBC 9/11/2001](#); [US Department of Defense 9/16/2001](#); [Weisman 9/16/2001](#))

Between 9:03 a.m. and 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Defense Official at Pentagon Says, ‘We’re Next’

After the second WTC tower is hit, NBC News correspondent Jim Miklaszewski is heading down a hall inside the Pentagon when he runs into a Defense Department official. The official says he doesn't yet know anything specific about the attack. But, he says, it is so coordinated that "[i]f I were you I would stay off the E-ring [the outermost corridor of the Pentagon] today, because we're next." According to Miklaszewski, the official had no specific information, "that was just his gut instinct." ([Gilbert et al. 2002, pp. 43](#))

(After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Wolfowitz Continues Routine Meeting, Rumsfeld Stays in Office

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz has recently left a meeting with Defense Secretary Rumsfeld around 8:46 a.m. (see [\(Before 8:46 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Wolfowitz later recalls, "We were having a meeting in my office. Someone said a plane had hit the World Trade Center. Then we turned on the television and we started seeing the shots of the second plane hitting, and this is the way I remember it. It's a little fuzzy.... There didn't seem to be much to do about it immediately and we went on with whatever the meeting was." ([Wolfowitz 5/9/2003](#)) Rumsfeld recalls that around this time, "I was in my office with a CIA briefer and I was told that a second plane had hit the other tower." ([9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#)) Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Torie Clarke headed to Rumsfeld's office right after the second plane hit. She later recalls, "A couple of us had gone into... Secretary Rumsfeld's office, to alert him to that, tell him that the crisis management process was starting up. He wanted to make a few phone calls." Rumsfeld tells Clarke and his personal chief of staff Larry Di Rita, who is with her, to go to the Executive Support Center (ESC) located near his office, and wait for him. "In the meantime, he would get his daily intelligence briefing, which was already scheduled for nine thirty." Di Rita and Clarke head off down the hallway to the ESC, while Rumsfeld stays in his office. Apparently Rumsfeld will not go to the ESC until around 10:15 a.m. (see [\(10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Clarke 9/15/2001](#); [Clarke 2006, pp. 218-219](#))

(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NMCC Commander Concludes US is Under Attack, Yet Does Not Retake Charge of Center



Brigadier General Montague Winfield. [Source: *US Army*] Brigadier General Montague Winfield, commander of the National Military Command Center (NMCC), the Pentagon's emergency response center, later says, "When the second aircraft flew into the second tower, it was at that point that we realized that the seemingly unrelated hijackings that the FAA was dealing with were in fact a part of a coordinated terrorist attack on the United States." ([ABC News 9/14/2002](#)) For unknown reasons, Winfield had stepped down from his usual position at 8:30 a.m., and allowed Captain Charles Leidig to temporarily take his place as deputy director for operations in the NMCC (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Post 9/11 news reports will give the impression that Winfield remained in the NMCC throughout the course of the attacks, and was aware of the unfolding events. None of them will mention him ever having left the center. ([CNN 9/4/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) Yet, despite concluding that the US is suffering a "coordinated terrorist attack," Winfield allows Leidig to continue as his stand-in, and does not take over from him and resume charge of the center until shortly after Flight 93 has crashed. This would presumably be around 10:15-10:30 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Secret Service Wants Fighters Scrambled from Andrews; None Are Ready to Fly

A few minutes after 9:03 a.m., a squadron pilot at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland (just ten miles from Washington), hears that two planes have crashed into the WTC. He calls a friend in the Secret Service to see what's going on. The Secret Service calls back, and asks whether Andrews can scramble fighters. According to weapons officer, Major Dan Caine, who takes this call, the Secret Service agent then tells them "to stand by and that somebody else [will] call." Apparently anticipating the need to launch fighters, one commander has already started preparing weapons for the fighters. However, the weapons are located in a bunker on the other side of the base, and the process takes time. Senior Master Sergeant David Bowman, 113th Wing munitions supervisor, says, "We were doing it as fast as we could, because for all we knew the terrorists were getting ready to hit us." It normally takes three hours to get weapons from the storage sheds and load them onto the fighters. However, on this occasion, it is later claimed, it only takes 45

minutes. The fighters don't take off though for about another hour and a half (see [\(10:42 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Whilst the crew at Andrews are unloading missiles onto a flatbed trailer, Dan Caine answers another phone call from someone in the White House, requesting armed fighters over Washington. Caine says: "I could hear plain as day the vice president talking in the background. That's basically where we got the execute order. It was 'VFR (Visual Flight Rules) direct.'" Meanwhile, there are also three unarmed F-16 fighters assigned to the Andrews base on a training mission 207 miles to the south in North Carolina. These are not recalled until much later, and don't reach Washington until 10:45 a.m. ([Scott 9/9/2002](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 78,84](#)) NORAD commander Major General Larry Arnold has said, "We [didn't] have any aircraft on alert at Andrews." ([MSNBC 9/23/2001](#)) However, prior to 9/11, the District of Columbia Air National Guard [DCANG] based at Andrews had a publicly stated mission "to provide combat units in the highest possible state of readiness." Prior to 9/11, the mission statement was posted on the DC National Guard's public website. Shortly after 9/11, this mission statement is removed and replaced by a DCANG "vision" to "provide peacetime command and control and administrative mission oversight to support customers, DCANG units, and NGB in achieving the highest levels of readiness." ([District of Columbia Air National Guard n.d.](#))

After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: NORAD Training Exercise Cancelled

NORAD Commander Larry Arnold later says that after Flight 175 hits the South Tower, "I thought it might be prudent to pull out of the exercise [presumably Vigilant Guardian (see [\(6:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#))], which we did." He says: "As we pulled out of the exercise we were getting calls about United Flight 93 and we were worried about that." ([Filson 2004, pp. 59](#)) Some early accounts say the military receives notification of the possible hijacking of Flight 93 at around 9:16 a.m. ([CNN 9/17/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) However, the 9/11 Commission later claims that the military first receives a call about Flight 93 at 10:07 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Larry Arnold adds, "Then we had another call from Boston Center about a possible hijacking, but that turned out to be the airplane that had already hit the South Tower but we didn't know that at the time." ([Filson 2004, pp. 59](#))

Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon's Executive Support Center Goes Into Operation, But Rumsfeld Not Present



Torie Clarke. [Source: *US Department of Defense*] Just minutes after the second plane hits the World Trade Center, the Executive Support Center (ESC) within the Pentagon goes into operation. The ESC is located next door to the National Military Command Center (NMCC), and comprises several conference rooms that are secure against electronic eavesdropping. The Pentagon's state-of-the-art communications hub, "Cables," is establishing secure two-way video links with the White House and other key agencies. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Torie Clarke arrives at the ESC soon after the second crash, accompanied by Larry Di Rita, who is Donald Rumsfeld's personal chief of staff. They have just visited Rumsfeld and informed him of the second crash, but he has remained in his office to wait for his daily intelligence briefing (see [\(After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Also at the ESC at this time is Rumsfeld's closest aide, Stephen Cambone. According to Clarke, the ESC is "the place where the building's top leadership goes to coordinate military operations during national emergencies." Yet supposedly the secretary of defense does not join them there until about 10:15 a.m. (see [\(10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Clarke 2006, pp. 218-221](#); [Cockburn 2007, pp. 5-6](#))

Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: New York City Put on Highest State of Alert



Joseph Esposito. [Source: *NYPD*] Soon after the second plane hits the World Trade Center, the New York Police Department (NYPD) Chief of Department Joseph Esposito calls for the initiation of something called Operation Omega. This puts New York on the highest state of alert, and requires the protection of sensitive

locations around the city. NYPD headquarters is secured and all other government buildings are evacuated. ([9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 302](#)) Operation Omega is reportedly still in effect a month later. ([Celona 10/6/2001](#))

Between 9:03 a.m. and 9:35 a.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Aides Discuss Pentagon as Possible Target



Edmund Giambastiani, Jr. [*Source: US Department of Defense*] Navy Vice Admiral Edmund Giambastiani Jr., who is Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's senior military assistant, returned to his office after attending a breakfast meeting hosted by the secretary of defense (see [\(8:00 a.m.-8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). After learning the second WTC tower has been hit, he says, he realizes "it [is] no longer an accident." Stephen Cambone, who is Rumsfeld's closest aide, comes to Giambastiani's office, which is located near to the defense secretary's office. Reportedly, he is there "to discuss the Pentagon as a potential target and their course of action if it was attacked." Then, "Minutes later," the attack on the Pentagon occurs. ([Miles 9/8/2006](#)) Cambone is also reported as being at the Pentagon's Executive Support Center (ESC), located down the hallway from Rumsfeld's office, some time between when the attacks on the South Tower and the Pentagon occur (see [Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Clarke 2006, pp. 219-220](#)) It is unclear whether he goes to the ESC before meeting with Giambastiani, or afterwards. Despite Cambone's concern that the Pentagon could be a target, no attempt is made to evacuate the place before it is struck (see [\(9:35 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and it does not appear that any alarms are sounded either. ([Adcock, Donovan, and Gordon 9/23/2001](#))

(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Admiral in Charge of Navy Anti-Terrorism Division Finally Realizes US is Under Attack But Does Not Know From Whom



Jeffrey Hathaway. [Source: US Department of Defense]Rear

Admiral Jeffrey Hathaway of the US Coast Guard is presently temporarily assigned to the Navy Command Center at the Pentagon. For about the last two months, he has been in charge of Navy Anti-Terrorism Force Protection. He'd been at the Command Center earlier on for the morning briefings, but headed back to Coast Guard headquarters at about 8 a.m. He'd been aware of the first plane hitting the WTC, yet, despite his specific anti-terrorism role, apparently did not know immediately that the US was under terrorist attack. He later says it was only "apparent to me after I found out that the second plane had flown into the World Trade Center that the first one was not an accident, and that there was some sort of a coordinated attack." Furthermore, he will claim, "No one knew where it was coming from. It could have been domestic terrorists for all we knew. No one knew why." He claims there were no indicators that such an attack was imminent, saying, "There were general indicators in the air of general threats; nothing that was in my role that would have indicated hijacked airliners INCONUS [in the continental US].... There was very little attention being paid to anti-terrorism efforts INCONUS for the Navy. We were mostly focused on the fallout from the USS Cole bombing in Yemen." ([Hathaway 6/20/2002](#); [Kennedy 6/2003](#))

After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: CIA's Deputy Director and New York Station Chief Conclude Bin Laden Behind Attack

At the CIA's Langley headquarters, Deputy Director for Operations James Pavitt has arrived back at his office after attending an 8:30 a.m. meeting in the agency's conference room (see [\(8:48 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The second WTC tower has already been hit by this time. Pavitt sends a message to all CIA stations, saying, "I expect each station and each officer to redouble efforts of collecting intelligence on this tragedy." Mary, the CIA's New York station chief, calls him. In this call, Pavitt and Mary agree that Osama bin Laden is behind the attack. According to journalist and author Ronald Kessler, they believe that "Its scope, temerity, degree of planning, and viciousness fit his way of operating." ([Kessler 2003, pp. 202-204](#))

(After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Superintendent Doesn't Send School Children Home, Despite Danger

At the Booker Elementary School in Sarasota, Florida, where President Bush is staging a photo-op, White House security staff reportedly urge school officials to send the students home. As the Arlington Heights Daily Herald later points out, “the well-publicized event at the school assured Bush’s location that day was no secret,” and therefore “Bush’s presence made even the planned reading event a perceived target.” Yet Wilma Hamilton, the superintendent of schools for Sarasota County, who is at the school for Bush’s visit, refuses their advice. In spite of the danger, she later says she is glad she made this decision: “I couldn’t see sending the children home. There’d be no one there. All they would have to look at were those images on television.” Whether the school officials are advised to send the children home before or after the president leaves the place is unspecified. ([Sammon 2002, pp. 43](#); [Riopell 9/11/2006](#))

(After 9:03 a.m.-Shortly After 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Force Secretary and Chief of Staff Head to Operations Center But Only Arrive after Pentagon Has Been Hit



James Roche. [*Source: United States Air Force*] Secretary of the Air Force James Roche is in his office on the fourth floor of the Pentagon, along with Air Force Chief of Staff John Jumper. Both have learned of the first WTC crash. After seeing the second attack live on television, they get on the phone to the Air Force Operations Center, and are then called down there. ([CNN 10/10/2001](#); [Airman 10/2002](#)) The Operations Center is located in the basement of the Pentagon’s C Ring. In it, the Crisis Action Team (CAT) is carrying out emergency operations for the Air Force. ([Yackel 12/2001](#)) However, Roche and Jumper apparently do not arrive there until after 9:37, when the Pentagon is hit. Roche later recalls, “Once in our crisis action center, we found out that the building had been hit by an aircraft.” ([CNN 10/10/2001](#))

Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: CIA Counterterrorist Center Learns of at Least One More Plane Unaccounted for

According to CIA Director George Tenet, “Only minutes” after the South Tower is hit, the CIA’s Counterterrorist Center (CTC) receives a report that at least one other commercial passenger jet plane is unaccounted for. ([Tenet 2007, pp. 163](#)) The CTC is based at the CIA headquarters in Langley, and is run by the agency’s operations division. It gathers intelligence and runs covert operations abroad. It employs hundreds of analysts, and includes experts assigned from Defense Department intelligence agencies, the Pentagon’s Central Command, the FBI, the National Security Agency, the Federal Aviation Administration, and other government agencies. According to the Los Angeles Times, “It serves as the nerve center for the CIA’s effort to disrupt and deter terrorist groups and their state sponsors.” ([Garza 10/2/2001](#); [Drogin 10/12/2001](#)) Further details of the unaccounted-for plane, and where the CTC learns of it from, are unclear. The plane is presumably Flight 77, which veered off course at 8:54 (see [\(8:54 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and was evidently lost by 8:56 (see [\(8:56 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Wald and Sack 10/16/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 9](#)) The FAA will later claim it had established several phone bridges at around 8:50 a.m., which included various government agencies, on which it shared “real-time information... about the unfolding events, including information about loss of communication with aircraft, loss of transponder signals, unauthorized changes in course, and other actions being taken by all the flights of interest, including Flight 77” (see [\(8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) So the CTC may have learned of the errant plane by this means. Yet the 9/11 Commission will claim the FAA’s phone bridges were not established until about 9:20 (see [\(9:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 36](#)) And NORAD is supposedly only alerted to Flight 77 at 9:24, according to some accounts (see [\(9:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), or 9:34, according to others (see [9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(Between 9:04 a.m. and 9:40 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Global Guardian Exercise Canceled Due to Attacks; Exact Time Uncertain

The US Strategic Command (Stratcom) is currently in the middle of a large annual exercise called Global Guardian, which tests its ability to fight a nuclear war (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Global Guardian is reportedly called off due to the real attacks taking place. However, there are conflicting accounts of when exactly this happens. According to one article in the Omaha World-Herald, the exercise is canceled shortly after the second WTC tower is hit (at 9:03 a.m.). But an earlier World-Herald article says it is only canceled “after the attacks on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon,” suggesting some time after 9:37. ([Rumsfeld 1/9/2002](#); [Dejka 2/27/2002](#); [Bjorkman 7/2002](#) ; [Dejka 9/8/2002](#)) And an E-4B National Airborne Operations Center (NAOC) plane launched from an airfield near Washington that is involved in Global Guardian is reportedly only told to pull out of the exercise just after the Pentagon is hit (see [\(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Verton 2003, pp. 143-144](#)) Even after Global Guardian is called off, this plane and another two E-4Bs that are involved in the exercise will remain airborne. ([Dejka 2/27/2002](#))

(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Admiral in Charge of Navy Anti-Terrorism Division Finally Realizes US is Under Attack But Does Not Know From Whom



Jeffrey Hathaway. *[Source: US Department of Defense]*Rear

Admiral Jeffrey Hathaway of the US Coast Guard is presently temporarily assigned to the Navy Command Center at the Pentagon. For about the last two months, he has been in charge of Navy Anti-Terrorism Force Protection. He'd been at the Command Center earlier on for the morning briefings, but headed back to Coast Guard headquarters at about 8 a.m. He'd been aware of the first plane hitting the WTC, yet, despite his specific anti-terrorism role, apparently did not know immediately that the US was under terrorist attack. He later says it was only "apparent to me after I found out that the second plane had flown into the World Trade Center that the first one was not an accident, and that there was some sort of a coordinated attack." Furthermore, he will claim, "No one knew where it was coming from. It could have been domestic terrorists for all we knew. No one knew why." He claims there were no indicators that such an attack was imminent, saying, "There were general indicators in the air of general threats; nothing that was in my role that would have indicated hijacked airliners INCONUS [in the continental US].... There was very little attention being paid to anti-terrorism efforts INCONUS for the Navy. We were mostly focused on the fallout from the USS Cole bombing in Yemen." ([Hathaway 6/20/2002](#); [Kennedy 6/2003](#))

(9:04 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Andrews Air Force Base Pilots 'Launched Into Action,' Yet No Fighters Take Off

At Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, many of the pilots with the District of Columbia Air National Guard (DCANG) are in the headquarters of the 121st Fighter Squadron. They had immediately been suspicious after learning of the first plane hitting the World Trade Center. One pilot, Heather Penney, later recalls having wondered, "How do you make a mistake like that?" After the second plane hits at 9:03, someone yells, "We're under a terrorist attack!" A routine meeting of pilots quickly breaks up. According to Lt. Col. Steve Chase, who is at the operations desk, "People just launched into action. There

was a buzz in the unit. People got on the radio and telephones to higher headquarters.” ([Vogel 4/8/2002](#)) Andrews Air Force Base, which is home to the presidential jet Air Force One, is located ten miles southeast of Washington, DC. ([GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 11/15/2001](#)) According to Knight Ridder, “Air defense around Washington, DC, is provided mainly by fighter planes from Andrews.” ([Knight Ridder 9/11/2001](#)) Yet the first fighters to take off from Andrews are not airborne until 95 minutes later, at 10:38 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 44](#)) The DC Air National Guard’s 113th Wing includes the 121st Fighter Squadron and the 201st Airlift Squadron. It flies the F16-C and F16-D Fighting Falcon jet fighters. ([GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 10/21/2001](#); [Cohn and Lengel 11/5/2004](#)) Unlike other Guard units, the DCANG reports to the president, instead of a state governor. The 113th Wing works closely with Secret Service agents who are across the runway in the Air Force One hangar. ([Vogel 4/8/2002](#); [Vogel 2007, pp. 445](#))

(9:04 a.m.-9:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: House Speaker Has Problems Contacting the Vice President; Receives Nuisance Call



Dennis Hastert. [*Source: Congressional Pictorial Directory*] Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert, who is third in line for the presidency, is in his office suite on the second floor of the US Capitol building when he sees the second plane hitting the World Trade Center live on television. ([Hastert 2004, pp. 5](#)) He is told that Vice President Dick Cheney will soon be calling him on the secure telephone in his office. ([Hastert 9/11/2002](#)) However, Cheney is currently having problems using secure phones, and Hastert is too. Hastert later recalls, “To use the secure phone, you have to push a button and turn a key. On that dreadful day I couldn’t make the thing work. No matter what I did, I couldn’t connect with the vice president. As the minutes passed, my frustrations grew.” ([Hastert 2004, pp. 6](#); [Hayes 2007, pp. 336](#)) Several attempts to reach the vice president are unsuccessful. Hastert’s later explanation is that “Anyone who has used a secure phone can tell you they do not work very well.” However, numerous other people in the Washington area, including senior government officials, are also experiencing serious communications problems throughout the day (see [\(After 8:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Around the time the Pentagon is hit, the light on Hastert’s regular phone starts flashing, but instead of being Cheney it is apparently a nuisance caller, who complains, “I can’t get a hold of Jeb Bush, I can’t get a hold of the president, I can’t get a hold of Colin Powell. All this stuff is happening. What are you guys doing?” When Hastert asks the caller who they are, their reply is, “I’m just a citizen. Who is this?” ([Skertic 9/25/2001](#);

[Hastert 9/11/2002](#); [Espo 6/16/2007](#)) Shortly afterwards, the Capitol is evacuated (see [9:48 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) and Hastert's Secret Service agents hurry him out of the building. It is not until around 11 a.m. that Cheney finally speaks to him. ([Hastert 2004, pp. 8-9](#); [Hayes 2007, pp. 337 and 340-341](#))

(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: White House Officials Reportedly Converge on Cheney's Office, But Accounts Conflict

Vice President Dick Cheney sees the second plane hitting the World Trade Center live on television while meeting with his speechwriter John McConnell. He later claims that several other officials then come and join him in his White House office: National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, political adviser Mary Matalin, and his chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, who has come across from the Old Executive Office Building next door to the White House. ([Cheney 9/16/2001](#)) According to journalist and author Stephen Hayes, "As word of the attacks spread throughout the West Wing, many White House officials migrated to Cheney's office." As well as Rice, Libby, and Matalin, these include Sean O'Keefe, the deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget; Josh Bolten, the deputy White House chief of staff; and counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke. ([Hayes 2007, pp. 332](#)) However, other accounts contradict this. Clarke claims that when he arrives at the White House shortly after 9:03, he sees the vice president and Rice, but the two are "alone in Cheney's office" (see [\(9:05 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). (It is possible, though, that the other officials only arrive after Clarke ends his brief visit to the vice president's office.) ([Clarke 2004, pp. 1-2](#)) In numerous interviews where she discusses her actions this morning, Rice makes no mention of heading to Cheney's office after the second tower is hit. ([O, the Oprah Magazine 2/1/2002](#); [Rice 8/1/2002](#); [Australian Broadcasting Corporation 9/11/2002](#); [Rice 9/11/2002](#); [Sanger 9/11/2002](#)) Also, according to some accounts, the Secret Service evacuates Cheney from his office shortly after the second attack occurs (see [\(9:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Safire 9/13/2001](#); [ABC News 9/14/2002](#)) Cheney claims that President Bush phones him around this time, while he is still in his office. ([Cheney 9/16/2001](#)) But according to White House adviser Karl Rove, who is with the president in Florida, Bush is unable to reach the vice president because Cheney is being evacuated from his office (see [\(9:16 a.m.-9:29 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Rove 9/11/2002](#))

(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Pentagon Building Command Center Reacts to WTC Attacks, But Accounts Conflict Over Urgency of Its Response

In the Building Operations Command Center (BOCC) inside the Pentagon, Steve Carter and his team are watching the unfolding events in New York on one of the center's monitors. ([Plugged In Quarterly 3/2002, pp. 4-5](#)) As the assistant building manager, Carter is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Pentagon. ([CNN 3/5/2002](#))

The BOCC, which is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is where systems such as lighting, heating, fire safety, and security for the Pentagon all come together “through a network of thousands of sensors, actuators, and controllers.” According to Chuck Holland, a technical manager, it “has three eight-foot screens back-to-back that monitor everything.... Anything that happens inside and outside the building, we watch it.” ([Snoonian 8/2003](#); [Takash 6/2007](#)) After seeing the television footage of the second WTC tower being hit, Carter tells his assistant, “That’s not an accident. We have an event going.” According to some accounts, he and his team immediately begin lockdowns, securing all the mechanical and electrical areas within the Pentagon. They also begin searching for unauthorized people and unusual packages. ([Plugged In Quarterly 3/2002, pp. 4-5](#); [Hi-Tech Security Solutions 10/2004](#); [Vogel 2007, pp. 429](#)) However, a report in the Washington Post suggests their response is less determined. It states that, after the second WTC crash, Carter “grew uneasy and called his boss to suggest they begin locking down electrical and mechanical rooms in the Pentagon in the event that officials upgraded building security.” The report does not say whether these actions are implemented before the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 a.m. ([Barr 9/11/2006](#)) According to some accounts, the chief of the Defense Protective Service raises the Pentagon’s state of alert by one level shortly after the second attack in New York (see [Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Murphy 2002, pp. 243-244](#)) However another report states that an e-mail is sent to Department of Defense employees shortly before the Pentagon is hit that says the threat condition remains “normal” (see [Shortly Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Allison 11/2001](#)) No steps are taken to evacuate the Pentagon or alert workers before it is attacked. ([Vogel 2007, pp. 429](#))

Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: DIA Supervisor Thinks Pentagon Is Safest Building in the World

In the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) comptroller’s office, on the first floor of the Pentagon’s C-ring, workers are reportedly uneasy at the news of the plane crashes in New York. However, Paul Gonzalez, a retired Navy commander who is now a supervisor there, confidently declares that the Pentagon is probably the safest building in the world. So by 9:30 a.m., most of the workers in his section will be settling back to their usual business. The DIA comptroller’s office is one of the areas impacted when the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Of the 18 workers there, seven will die and five others will be hospitalized. ([Vogel 3/11/2002](#); [Vogel 2007, pp. 429](#); [Cirillo 9/11/2007](#))

(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Myers Learns of Second Attack But Does Not Head Back to Pentagon; Reports Are Contradictory

According to some reports, acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers entered a meeting on Capitol Hill with Senator Max Cleland (D) just minutes before the second plane hit the World Trade Center (see [Shortly Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). There are confused accounts of when Myers learns of this second attack, and what he does in response. Myers later tells NBC News, “[S]omewhere in the middle of that meeting, they came in and said the second tower has been hit... and I think that’s when we figured out something—that America or at least the World Trade Center is under attack.” He adds, “And then I left the office,” and says that NORAD Commander Ralph Eberhart then calls him. ([Myers 9/11/2002](#)) In testimony on September 13, 2001, he similarly states, “[A]fter the second tower was hit, I spoke to the commander of NORAD, General Eberhart.” ([US Congress 9/13/2001](#)) In a speech in 2006, Myers says that after the second attack occurs, “The meeting was over very quickly.” ([Myers 6/29/2006](#)) He tells CNN, “[W]hen the second target was hit, we knew something was up, so we rushed back to the Pentagon.” ([CNN 4/15/2003](#)) Yet in an interview five weeks after 9/11, he claims, “Nobody informed us” when the second tower was hit, “But when we came out [of our meeting], that was obvious.” ([Armed Forces Radio And Television Service 10/17/2001](#); [Rhem 10/23/2001](#)) And, according to several accounts, he does not leave Capitol Hill until around the time the Pentagon is hit, which is more than 30 minutes after the second attack happens (see [Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). In a speech in 2003, Max Cleland recalls, “Gen. Myers bolted from his seat. We rushed into an adjoining office as we saw on TV the second plane slam into the second tower. Gen. Myers rushed out of my office, headed for the Pentagon. At that moment, the Pentagon was hit.” ([Baxter and Galloway 6/16/2003](#)) But on a couple of other occasions, Cleland says he is still meeting with Myers in his office at the time the Pentagon is hit. ([US Congress 9/13/2001](#); [CNN 11/20/2001](#)) Contradicting both Cleland and Myers, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke later claims that when he joins a video teleconference shortly after the time of the second attack, he can see Myers on screen, meaning Myers is at the Pentagon at that time rather than on Capitol Hill (see [9:10 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Clarke 2004, pp. 1-3](#))

(9:04 a.m.) September 11, 2001: WTC 7 Alarms Activate; OEM Calls for Air Security and Warned of Plane Heading for New York

The second plane hitting the World Trade Center (see [9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) causes internal alarms to go off in WTC Building 7, located just a few hundred feet away from the Twin Towers. The alarms warn there is no water pressure and that the building’s emergency power generator has been activated. Office of Emergency Management (OEM) staff, based in Building 7, immediately request air security over New York. They are told that federal support is on its way, but the Federal Aviation Administration instructs them to use NYPD and Port Authority Police Department air assets to clear the airspace around the WTC. They are also warned that the Kennedy Airport control tower is reporting an unaccounted for plane heading towards New York. A report by the Mineta Transportation Institute will claim that this plane is Flight 93, which later crashes in Pennsylvania. ([Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow 9/2003, pp. 16](#)) However, Flight 93 is still

flying west at this time, and only reverses course and heads towards Washington at around 9:36 a.m. (see [\(9:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to at least one person at the scene, WTC 7 is evacuated around this time due to the reports of this incoming third plane (see [\(9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Dionne and Heightman 3/2002, pp. 68](#))

(9:04 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 175 Crash Leads to Confusion at NEADS; Some Think it is a Simulation

NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) in Rome, NY, has just received a phone call informing it of the hijacking of Flight 175 (see [\(9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and several personnel have witnessed the plane crashing into the second WTC tower live on CNN. There is considerable confusion on the operations floor over whether the plane seen on TV is the hijacking they have just been informed of. Tape recordings capture NEADS personnel in the background trying to make sense of things: "Is this explosion part of that that we're lookin' at now on TV?"... "And there's a possible second hijack also—a United Airlines"... "Two planes?" Someone comments, "I think this is a damn input, to be honest." "Input" refers to a simulations input, as part of a training exercise. ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) NORAD has the capacity to inject simulated material, including mass attacks, during exercises, "as though it was being sensed for the first time by a radar site." ([US Department of Defense 1/14/1999](#)) At least one military exercise this morning is reported to include simulated information injected onto radar screens (see [\(9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). At the current time, despite the earlier crash of Flight 11, NORAD has yet to cancel a major exercise it is in the middle of (see [After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Filson 2004, pp. 59](#))

Soon After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: Director of Air Traffic Services Joins FAA Teleconference

Bill Peacock, the FAA director of air traffic services, is currently away from FAA headquarters for a meeting in New Orleans (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). His staff called him earlier to alert him to the possible hijacking of Flight 11. He returned to his hotel room in time to see the second attack live on CNN. He quickly phones FAA headquarters, trying to contact his staff, and has his call added to the teleconference being run from the conference room next to his office. ([Freni 2003, pp. 12 and 22](#)) According to a statement provided by the FAA to the 9/11 Commission in 2003, this teleconference began "[w]ithin minutes" of the first WTC tower being hit (see [\(8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Yet the 9/11 Commission will later claim that it was not established until "about 9:20" (see [\(9:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), which is about 15 minutes later than Peacock supposedly joined it. ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 36](#))

(9:05 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Fire Chief Worried WTC Could Collapse; Other Firefighters Unconcerned

In the lobby of the north WTC tower, just after the South Tower is hit, Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen speaks briefly to Fire Chief Ray Downey. According to Von Essen, Downey—who is a highly respected expert on building collapses—says to him, “You know, these buildings can collapse.” Von Essen later recalls, “He just said it in passing, not that these buildings will collapse in 40 minutes and we have to get everybody out of here, or not that they’ll collapse by tomorrow, or not that they necessarily will collapse at all. Just that they *can* collapse.” ([Fink and Mathias 2002, pp. 229; 9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#)) But other firefighters do not appear to have shared this concern. According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), the Fire Department command officers who are planning for operations inside the Twin Towers expect that there will “be localized collapse conditions on the damaged fire floors,” but do “not expect that there [will] be any massive collapse conditions or complete building collapse.” At the end of its three-year investigation of the WTC collapses, NIST will report, “No one interviewed indicated that they thought that the buildings would completely collapse.” ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 72 and 75-76](#).) In fact, Deputy Fire Commissioner Lynn Tierney will meet up with Downey and others—including Von Essen—slightly later, on the south lawn of the WTC complex, where a new command center is set up. At that time, according to Tierney, Downey will only be concerned that the 360-foot antenna atop the North Tower will fall, and “No one ever thought the towers were going to come down.” ([Wereschagin 9/11/2006](#)) However, shortly before the first tower comes down, EMT Richard Zarrillo will be asked to relay a message to some senior firefighters that the mayor’s Office of Emergency Management “says the buildings are going to collapse” (see [\(Before 9:59 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). And later in the day, Mayor Giuliani will recount that around the same time, he had been told “that the World Trade Center was going to collapse” (see [\(Before 9:59 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission will state, “The best estimate of one senior [fire] chief, provided to the chief of the department sometime between 9:25 and 9:45, was that there might be a danger of collapse [of the South Tower] in a few hours, and therefore units probably should not ascend above floors in the sixties.” The Commission does not state, however, whether this fire chief was referring to a total building collapse or just a localized collapse. ([9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#)) Ray Downey is killed when the second tower collapses at 10:28 a.m. ([Dwyer and O'Donnell 9/9/2005](#))

(9:05 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Clarke, Cheney, and Rice Talk, Clarke’s Recommendation to Evacuate White House Is Ignored

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke is driving up to a gate outside the White House when an aide calls and tells him, “The other tower was just hit.” He responds, “Well, now we know who we’re dealing with. I want the highest level person in Washington from each agency on-screen now, especially the FAA.” He has already ordered this aide to set up a secure video conference, about five minutes earlier. A few minutes later, he finds Vice President Cheney and National Security Adviser Rice in Vice President Cheney’s White House office. Cheney tells Clarke, “It’s an al-Qaeda attack and they like simultaneous attacks. This may not be over.” Rice asks Clarke for recommendations, and

he says, “We’re putting together a secure teleconference to manage the crisis.” He also recommends evacuating the White House (However, evacuation does not begin until 9:45 a.m. (see [\(9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), after a critical 40 minutes has passed). Rice notes the Secret Service wants them to go to the bomb shelter below the White House, and as Clarke leaves the other two, he sees Rice and Cheney gathering papers and preparing to evacuate. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 1-2](#); [Australian 3/27/2004](#))

9:05 am (and After) September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Reappears on Radar, but Flight Controllers Do Not Notice

According to the 9/11 Commission, Flight 77’s radar blip, missing for the last eight minutes, reappears on Indianapolis flight control’s primary radar scope. It is east of its last known position. It remains in air space managed by Indianapolis until 9:10 a.m., and then passes into Washington air space. Two managers and one flight controller continue to look west and southwest for the flight, but don’t look east. Managers don’t instruct other Indianapolis controllers to join the search for the flight. Neither they nor FAA headquarters issues an “all points bulletin” to surrounding centers to search for Flight 77. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Newsday claims that rumors circulate the plane might have exploded in midair. ([Adcock, Donovan, and Gordon 9/23/2001](#)) However, the 9/11 Commission’s conclusion that Indianapolis flight controllers did not look east is contradicted by an account indicating that American Airlines headquarters was told that Flight 77 had turned around.

9:06 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight Controllers Nationwide Are Told Flight 11 Crash Caused by Hijacking

All flight control facilities nationwide are notified that the Flight 11 crash into the WTC was probably a hijacking. ([US Congress 9/21/2001](#); [Adcock, Donovan, and Gordon 9/23/2001](#))

(9:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Told WTC Hit Again and America’s Under Attack; He Continues Photo-Op



Andrew Card speaks to President Bush and tells him of the second World Trade Center crash. [*Source: Agence France-Presse*] President Bush is in a Booker Elementary School second-grader classroom. His chief of staff, Andrew Card, enters the room and whispers into his ear, “A second plane hit the other tower, and America’s under attack.” ([Sack 9/16/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Krueger 9/10/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [Sammon 10/8/2002](#)) Intelligence expert James Bamford describes Bush’s reaction: “Immediately [after Card speaks to Bush] an expression of befuddlement passe[s] across the president’s face. Then, having just been told that the country was under attack, the commander in chief appear[s] uninterested in further details. He never ask[s] if there had been any additional threats, where the attacks were coming from, how to best protect the country from further attacks.... Instead, in the middle of a modern-day Pearl Harbor, he simply turn[s] back to the matter at hand: the day’s photo-op.” ([Bamford 2002, pp. 633](#)) Bush begins listening to a story about a goat. But despite the pause and change in children’s exercises, as one newspaper put it, “For some reason, Secret Service agents [do] not bustle him away.” ([Ibbitson 9/12/2001](#)) Bush later says of the experience, “I am very aware of the cameras. I’m trying to absorb that knowledge. I have nobody to talk to. I’m sitting in the midst of a classroom with little kids, listening to a children’s story and I realize I’m the commander in chief and the country has just come under attack.” ([Langley 12/16/2001](#)) Bush listens to the goat story for about ten more minutes. The reason given is that, “Without all the facts at hand, George Bush ha[s] no intention of upsetting the schoolchildren who had come to read for him.” ([MSNBC 10/29/2002](#)) Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport is only three and a half miles away. In fact, the elementary school was chosen for the photo-op partly because of its closeness to the airport. ([Roland 9/12/2002](#)) Why the Secret Service does not move Bush away from his publicized location that morning remains unclear.

(9:06 a.m.-9:16 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Reads Pet Goat Story for Nearly Ten Minutes; Warned Not to Talk



President Bush and Sandra Kay Daniels read the goat story while the media watches. [*Source: White House/ Eric Draper*<] President Bush, having just been told of the second WTC crash, stays in the Booker Elementary School Classroom, and listens as 16 Booker Elementary School second-graders take turns reading “The Pet Goat.” It’s a simple story about a girl’s pet goat. ([Weisenmiller 9/7/2002](#); [Staff 7/2/2004](#)) They are just about to begin reading when Bush is told of the attack. One account says that the classroom is then silent for about 30 seconds, maybe more. Bush then picks up the book and reads with the children “for eight or nine minutes.” ([Barrs 9/1/2002](#)) In unison, the children read aloud, “The—Pet—Goat. A—girl—got—a—pet—goat. But—the—goat—did—some—things—that—made—the—girl’s—dad—mad.” And so on. Bush mostly listens, but does ask the children a few questions to encourage them. ([Sammon 10/7/2002](#)) At one point he says, “Really good readers, whew!... These must be sixth-graders!” ([Gibbs 9/12/2001](#)) In the back of the room, Press Secretary Ari Fleischer catches Bush’s eye and holds up a pad of paper for him to read, with “DON’ T SAY ANYTHING YET” written on it in big block letters. ([Sammon 10/7/2002](#)) (Note that three articles claim that Bush leaves the classroom at 9:12 a.m.) ([Sack 9/16/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Churcher 9/8/2002](#)) However, a videotape of the event lasts for “at least seven additional minutes” and ends before Bush leaves. ([Paltrow 3/22/2004](#)) (The timing of this entry is a rough approximation based mostly on the Tampa Tribune estimate. Much of this video footage is shown in Michael Moore’s documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11*. ([New York Times 6/18/2004](#)))

9:07 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Command Center Informs All Air Traffic Facilities of First Hijacking

According to a book about the Federal Aviation Administration’s response on 9/11, the FAA Command Center sends a message to all the nation’s air traffic facilities at this time, announcing the first hijacking. ([Freni 2003, pp. 59](#)) This would be two minutes after it had been informed that the Flight 11 hijackers had announced, “we have [some] planes” (see [\(9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Yet according to the 9/11 Commission, Indianapolis Center, which handles Flight 77, only learns that there are other hijacked aircraft “By 9:20” (see [\(9:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 23-24](#))

(9:08 a.m.-9:13 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Fighters Put in Holding Pattern over Ocean instead of Defending New York City

The two F-15s scrambled to find Flight 11 in New York are now ordered to circle in a 150-mile window of air space off the coast of Long Island. It is not clear whether they reach New York City before being directed over the ocean. Pilot Major Daniel Nash states, “Neither the civilian controller or the military controller knew what they wanted us to do.” ([Dennehy 8/21/2002](#)) By 9:08 a.m., Major Kevin Nasypany, the NEADS mission crew commander, has learned of the second WTC crash and wants to send the fighters to New York City. However, according to Vanity Fair, the NEADS “weapons techs get ‘pushback’ from civilian FAA controllers, who have final authority over the fighters as long as they are in civilian airspace. The FAA controllers are afraid of fast-moving fighters colliding with a passenger plane, of which there are hundreds in the area, still flying normal routes.” At 9:10 a.m., the senior director on the NEADS floor tells the weapons director, “I want those fighters closer in.” NEADS controllers are concerned about refueling, and are simultaneously working with a tanker to relocate close to the Otis fighters. Then, at 9:11 a.m., either the senior weapons director at NEADS or his technician instructs the Otis fighters to “remain at current position [holding pattern] until FAA requests assistance.” According to the 9/11 Commission, the record of this instruction is the only NEADS recording of the NEADS senior weapons director and weapons director technician responsible for controlling the Otis scramble that is available to them. This, they state, is because of a “technical issue.” The commission says the Otis fighters remain in a holding pattern over the ocean until 9:13 a.m. while the FAA clears the airspace. The fighters will then establish a Combat Air Patrol over the city at 9:25 a.m. What the fighters do between 9:13 a.m. and 9:25 a.m. is unclear. The distance between the two locations is unknown but presumably not large. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 23-24, 459](#); [Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) These fighters will remain over New York City for the next four hours. ([Dennehy 8/21/2002](#))

9:08 a.m. September 11, 2001: American Airlines Thinks Flight 77 Hit the WTC

By this time, officials at American Airlines’ System Operations Control in Fort Worth, Texas have mistakenly concluded that the second aircraft to hit the World Trade Center might have been Flight 77. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 9](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 30](#).) American Airlines learned that communications had been lost with Flight 77 just before 9 a.m. (see [\(Before 9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

9:08 a.m.-9:11 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Autopilot Briefly Disengaged

After leveling off at 25,000 feet and making a slight course change to the east-northeast, Flight 77 has its autopilot disconnected. It remains off for about three minutes before being re-engaged. This is according to information later obtained from its flight data recorder. During these three minutes, Flight 77's altitude dips as low as 22,000 feet, but by the time the autopilot is re-engaged it has leveled again at 25,250 feet. ([National Transportation Safety Board 2/13/2002, pp. 3](#); [National Transportation Safety Board 2/19/2002, pp. 2](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 30 and 94](#)) The autopilot will later be disengaged again for the last eight minutes of the plane's flight (see [9:29 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

9:09 a.m. September 11, 2001: NORAD Said to Order Langley Fighters to Battle Stations Alert; Pilots Say This Happens Much Later

Major Kevin Nasypany, the mission crew commander at NEADS, wants to launch F-16s at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, towards New York to provide backup for the Otis fighters. However, the command area at NEADS overlooking the operations floor (the "Battle Cab") refuses his request, and orders "battle stations only at Langley." "Battle stations" means the pilots are in their cockpits, but with the engines turned off. The 9/11 Commission later accepts this account, claiming that the intent was not to protect Washington, but because there is a concern that the fighters currently hovering over New York City will run low on fuel, and need to be replaced, and also because of the general uncertainty of the situation in the sky. Around this time, the FAA Command Center reports that 11 aircraft are either not in communication with FAA facilities, or flying unexpected routes (see [\(9:09 a.m. and After\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Scott 6/3/2002; Filson 2004, pp. 55; 9/11 Commission 6/17/2004; 9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 460; Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) NEADS Commander Robert Marr says that after seeing Flight 175 hit the WTC (at 9:03 a.m.), "we're thinking New York City is under attack," so he directs the Langley pilots to battle stations. "The plan was to protect New York City." ([Filson 2004, pp. 60](#)) However, at least one pilot, Major Dean Eckmann, asserts that the battle stations alert does not occur until 9:21 a.m. Another pilot, code-named Honey (presumably Craig Borgstrom), asserts that this does not occur until 9:24 a.m. ([BBC 9/1/2002](#))

9:09 a.m. September 11, 2001: Indianapolis Flight Control Tells Local FAA Flight 77 Is Missing, But FAA Headquarters and NORAD Are Not Yet Told

Indianapolis flight control reports the loss of contact with Flight 77 to the FAA's Great Lakes Regional Operations Center. They describe it as a possible crash. The center waits 15 minutes before passing the information to FAA headquarters at 9:24 a.m. (see [9:24 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#); [Phillips 11/3/2001; 9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) However, American Airlines headquarters has

been notified of the same information before 9:00 a.m. (see [\(Before 9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:09 a.m. and After) September 11, 2001: Numerous False Reports of Hijacked Aircraft



NEADS commander Robert Marr. [Source: Dick Blume] According to the 9/11 Commission, “During the course of the morning, there were multiple erroneous reports of hijacked aircraft in the system.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Around 9:09 a.m., the FAA Command Center reports that 11 aircraft are either not communicating with FAA facilities or flying unexpected routes. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) NORAD’s Major General Larry Arnold claims that during the “four-hour ordeal” of the attacks, a total of 21 planes are identified as possible hijackings. ([Code One Magazine 1/2002](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 71](#)) Robert Marr, head of NEADS on 9/11, says, “At one time I was told that across the nation there were some 29 different reports of hijackings.” ([Baker 3/31/2005](#)) It is later claimed that these false reports cause considerable chaos. Larry Arnold says that particularly during the time between the Pentagon being hit at 9:37 and Flight 93 going down at around 10:06, “a number of aircraft are being called possibly hijacked... There was a lot of confusion, as you can imagine.” ([Filson 2004, pp. 71-73](#)) He says, “We were receiving many reports of hijacked aircraft. When we received those calls, we might not know from where the aircraft had departed. We also didn’t know the location of the airplane.” ([Code One Magazine 1/2002](#)) According to Robert Marr, “There were a number of false reports out there. What was valid? What was a guess? We just didn’t know.” ([Filson 2004, pp. 73](#))

9:10 a.m. September 11, 2001: Port Authority Tells La Guardia Airport WTC Crashes Are Criminal Acts

According to released transcripts, a caller from the Port Authority police desk tells a La Guardia Airport control tower employee that, “they are considering [the crashes into the WTC] a criminal act.” The control tower employee replies, “We believe that, and we are holding all aircraft on the ground.” ([Kugler 12/29/2003](#)) La Guardia is one of two major New York City airports, and the Port Authority patrol both the WTC and the city’s airports.

(Between 9:10 a.m. and 9:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001: South Tower Employee Sees No Inferno on 78th Floor



Brian Clark. [Source: CTV] Brian Clark, the executive vice president of brokerage firm Euro Brokers, was on the 84th floor of the South Tower, where his firm’s offices are, when Flight 175 crashed into it. He had headed out, going down Stairway A, which is the only staircase in the tower that remains intact from top to bottom, and was soon joined by Stanley Praitmuth, who also works in the South Tower. They reach a point that Clark later guesses to have been around the 77th or 78th floor, where the stairway walls are cracked, allowing them to look through. This would be around the lower end of the floors where the plane impacted. However, Clark sees no large fire. He later says, “[Y]ou could look through the cracks and see flames. They were just quietly licking up, not a roaring inferno. And there was some smoke there, but again I think the stairs were pressurized, pushing the air out so we had less smoke in the stairway than you might imagine.” ([BBC 3/7/2002](#); [New York Times 5/26/2002](#); [Clark 9/6/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#)) This apparently contradicts later claims that the tower was subjected to “extreme fires” prior to its collapse. ([Lipton 10/20/2004](#)) Firefighter Orio Palmer will make it up to this level of the tower later on, and also report only finding small fires there (see [9:52 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Clark and Praitmuth continue down the stairs and make it out just minutes before the collapse. They are two of only four people who were at or above the impact zone after Flight 175 hit, who are able to escape from the South Tower. ([Okwu 9/9/2002](#)) A further 14 people are able to get out of the building from its 78th floor, which is the lower part of the crash zone. ([Dwyer and Flynn 2005, pp. 255](#))

(9:10 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Rice and Cheney Apparently Go to White House Bunker; Other Accounts Have Cheney Moving Locations Later

According to counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke and others, Vice President Dick Cheney goes from his White House office to the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC), a bunker below the East Wing of the White House, at about this time. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, after initiating a video conference with Richard Clarke in the West Wing, goes to the PEOC to be with Cheney. There is no video link between response centers in the East and West Wings, but a secure telephone line is used instead. ([Sanger and van Natta 9/16/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [ABC News 9/14/2002](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 3-4](#)) One eyewitness, David Bohrer, a White House photographer, says Cheney leaves for the PEOC just after 9:00 a.m. ([ABC News 9/14/2002](#)) White House adviser Karl Rove, who is with the president in Florida, appears to corroborate this account, later telling NBC News that when Bush tries phoning Cheney at around 9:16 a.m., he is unable to contact him because “the vice president was being... grabbed by a Secret Service agent and moved to the bunker” (see [\(9:16 a.m.-9:29 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Rove 9/11/2002](#)) And Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta says that when he arrives at the PEOC, at around 9:20-9:27, Cheney is already there (see [\(Between 9:20 a.m. and 9:27 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Mineta 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#); [Mineta 6/3/2006](#)) However, there is a second account claiming that Cheney doesn’t leave until sometime after 9:30 a.m. In this account, Secret Service agents burst into Cheney’s White House office. They carry him under his arms—nearly lifting him off the ground—and propel him down the steps into the White House basement and through a long tunnel toward the underground bunker. ([Wald and Sack 10/16/2001](#); [Thomas 12/31/2001](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [BBC 9/1/2002](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) According to journalist and author Stephen Hayes, it takes “Less than a minute” for the Secret Service agents to escort Cheney from his office down to the secure tunnel leading to the PEOC. ([Hayes 2007, pp. 335](#)) At about the same time, National Security Adviser Rice is told to go to the bunker as well. ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) Despite admitting that there “is conflicting evidence about when the vice president arrived” in the PEOC, the 9/11 Commission will conclude that the “vice president arrived in the room shortly before 10:00, perhaps at 9:58.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 40](#)) In addition to the eyewitness accounts of Clarke, Mineta, and Bohrer, several accounts claim that Cheney is in the bunker when he is told Flight 77 is 50 miles away from Washington, at about 9:26 a.m. (see [\(9:26 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). This further supports the claims of Cheney going to the PEOC earlier on, rather than after 9:30.

(9:10 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Washington Flight Control Sees Unidentified Plane, Apparently Fails to Notify FAA or NORAD

Washington flight control notices a new eastbound plane entering its radar with no radio contact and no transponder identification. They do not realize it is Flight 77. They are aware of the hijackings and crashes of Flights 11 and 175, yet they apparently fail to notify anyone about the unidentified plane. ([Adcock, Donovan, and Gordon 9/23/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Another report says they never notice it, and it is only

noticed when it enters radar coverage of Washington's Dulles International Airport at 9:24 a.m. (see [\(9:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Phillips 11/3/2001](#))

(9:10 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Clarke Directs Crisis Response Through Video Conference with Top Officials

Around this time, according to his own account, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke reaches the Secure Video Conferencing Center next to the Situation Room in the West Wing of the White House. From there, he directs the response to the 9/11 attacks and stays in contact with other top officials through video links. Clarke claims that on video he can see Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, CIA Director George Tenet, FBI Director Robert Mueller, FAA Administrator Jane Garvey, Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson (filling in for the traveling Attorney General John Ashcroft), Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage (filling in for the traveling Secretary of State Colin Powell), and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers (filling in for the traveling Chairman Henry Shelton). National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice is with Clarke, but she lets him run the crisis response, deferring to his longer experience on terrorism matters. Clarke is also told by an aide, “We’re on the line with NORAD, on an air threat conference call.” ([Clarke 2004, pp. 2-4](#); [Australian 3/27/2004](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission, logs indicate that Clarke’s video teleconference only begins at 9:25 a.m. (see [9:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), which is later than Clarke suggests, and CIA and FAA representatives only join it at 9:40 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 36 and 462](#)) Other accounts claim that, rather than being involved in Clarke’s teleconference at this time, Donald Rumsfeld is still in his office waiting for his intelligence briefing (see [\(After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and Richard Myers is in a meeting on Capitol Hill (see [\(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Armed Forces Radio And Television Service 10/17/2001](#); [Clarke 2006, pp. 218-219](#)) The 9/11 Commission claims that, “While important,” Clarke’s conference has “no immediate effect on the emergency defense efforts.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Yet, as the Washington Post puts it, “everyone seems to agree” Clarke is the chief crisis manager on 9/11. ([Achenbach 3/28/2004](#)) Even Clarke’s later opponent, National Security Adviser Rice, calls him 9/11’s “crisis management guy.” ([Waterman 4/9/2004](#)) The conference is where the government’s emergency defense efforts are concentrated.

Soon After 9:09 a.m. September 11, 2001: Mistaken Report of Flight 77 Crash Causes Confusion

When Indianapolis flight control reported the loss of contact with Flight 77 to the FAA’s Great Lakes Regional Operations Center (see [9:09 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), an employee at an FAA flight service station (which particular one is unspecified) picks up on the communication and mistakenly calls the Ashland, Kentucky police to report a confirmed crash. Indianapolis controllers had noted the last known position of Flight 77 as being near the Ohio-Kentucky border, so this becomes part of the employee’s report. Indianapolis Center personnel, suspecting that Flight 77 may have crashed, subsequently

contact the same police office, requesting information on any crashes. (An FAA report describes them contacting the West Virginia State Police at about 9:15 a.m. Ashland, though in Kentucky, is only a few miles out of West Virginia, so this may be referring the same incident.) Using the flight service station report as an actual accident, the police mistakenly confirm the crash, even though it never actually happened. A state helicopter is even dispatched to the plane's last known coordinates, but there is nothing there. Time is lost in all the confusion. ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#); [Freni 2003, pp. 29](#)) It is not until about 9:20 a.m., when Indianapolis Center learns there are other hijacked aircraft in the system (see [\(9:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), that it will start to doubt its initial assumption that Flight 77 crashed. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 32](#)) However, the report of a downed plane persists. Shortly before 10 a.m., Dale Watson, counterterrorism chief at the FBI, will say to counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke over a video teleconference, "We have a report of a large jet crashed in Kentucky, near the Ohio line." ([Clarke 2004, pp. 13](#)) According to USA Today, "The reports are so serious that [FAA Administrator Jane] Garvey notifies the White House that there has been another crash. Only later does she learn the reports are erroneous." ([Adams, Levin, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#))

(9:12 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Attendant Has Confirmed Hijacking, American Airlines Learns



Renee May. [*Source: Family photo*] Renee May, a flight attendant on Flight 77, uses a cell phone to call her mother in Las Vegas. She tells her mother that the flight has been hijacked, and that everyone has been asked to move to the back of the plane. She asks her mother to call American Airlines and let them know Flight 77 has been hijacked. Her mother (Nancy May) calls the airline. ([Patton 9/13/2001](#); [Patton 9/15/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#); [San Francisco Chronicle 7/23/2004](#)) American Airlines headquarters is already aware that Flight 77 is hijacked, but supposedly Indianapolis flight control covering the flight still is not told.

9:13 a.m. September 11, 2001: Port Authority Asks New York Airports About Hijacked Planes, Airports Know Little

A Port Authority police officer calls a flight controller at La Guardia Airport in New York City. The officer asks, “They are inquiring whether or not you can call Kennedy’s tower, because they can’t get through, and inquire whether or not they had any contact with these aircrafts.” The flight controller responds, “At this time, we do not think that anyone in the FAA had any contact with them.” ([Dwyer 12/30/2003](#)) “Kennedy” is a reference to John F. Kennedy Airport, another major airport in New York City. Port Authority police, who patrol both the WTC and the airports, seek information from the controllers about the hijackers. However, the controllers are unable to offer any news. ([Dwyer 12/30/2003](#))

9:13 a.m. September 11, 2001: Jet Fuel in South Tower Burns Up

The jet fuel that spilled from Flight 175 when it hit the South Tower (see [9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) has mostly burned up by this time. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which later investigates the collapses, will say the “initial jet fuel fires themselves lasted at most a few minutes.” ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 183](#).) Engineering professor Forman Williams will say the jet fuel “burned for maybe 10 minutes.” ([Chertoff et al. 3/2005](#)) Flight 175, a Boeing 767, had a capacity of 23,980 gallons, but was only carrying about 9,100 gallons of fuel when it hit the WTC. NIST will estimate that less than 1,500 gallons were consumed in a fireball inside the tower and 910 to 2,275 gallons were consumed in the fireballs outside the building. Approximately 6,100 gallons therefore splashed onto the office furnishings and started fires on various floors. However, after the jet fuel is used up, office fires burn until the building collapses. NIST will calculate that there were about four pounds per square foot of combustibles in the office space, or about 60 tons per floor. Offices in the WTC actually had fewer combustibles than other similar spaces due to the small number of interior walls and limited bookshelf space. NIST will later find that only three of sixteen perimeter columns it recovers reached a temperature of 2500°C and neither of the two core columns it retrieves reached this temperature. NIST will also find that none of the samples it acquires reached a temperature above 6000°C (see [August 27, 2003](#)). While steel does not melt until its temperature is about 1,6000°C, it may begin to lose significant strength at over 5000°C. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 29, 38, 42, 77](#).) The jet fuel also burned up in the North Tower about 10 minutes after it was hit (see [8:57 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). When a group of firefighters reach the bottom impact floor in the South Tower just before collapse, they only find two isolated fires (see [9:52 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

9:15 a.m. September 11, 2001: American Airlines Orders No New Take Offs in US; United Airlines Follows Suit

American Airlines orders no new take-offs in the US United Airlines follows suit five minutes later. ([Mccartney and Carey 10/15/2001](#))

(9:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Transportation Secretary Mineta Arrives at White House and is Briefed by Richard Clarke

Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, who saw the second plane hitting the WTC on television while at the Department of Transportation, had been called to the White House (see [\(8:48 a.m.-9:05 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). When he arrives there, as he later recalls, he sees “People... coming out of the White House, pouring out of the Executive Office Building, running over towards Lafayette Park.” As he enters the White House, Mineta is told he has to be briefed by counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke. He goes to the Situation Room where Clarke talks to him for four or five minutes, briefly informing him of what is going on. Clarke instructs him, “You have to get over to the Presidential Emergency Operation Center to be with the vice president.” The Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) is the bunker located below the White House. As Mineta does not know where it is, a Secret Service agent leads him to it. He will arrive there around 9:20-9:27, according to his own recollections (see [\(Between 9:20 a.m. and 9:27 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Mineta 3/18/2002](#); [Mineta 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#); [Mineta 6/3/2006](#))

(Between 9:15 a.m. and 10:28 a.m.) September 11, 2001: New York City Workers Hear Explosion in WTC 7

Barry Jennings, a City Housing Authority worker, and Michael Hess, New York’s corporation counsel, went up to the emergency command center on the 23rd floor of WTC Building 7 after the first attack occurred (see [\(Shortly Before 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Associated Press 9/11/2001](#); [Vallenty 9/13/2001](#)) At some point, the power goes out in the building. They then start walking down the stairs to get out. According to Hess, when the two men get down to the eighth floor, “there was an explosion and we’ve been trapped on the eighth floor with smoke, thick smoke, all around us, for about an hour and a half.” ([UPN 9 9/11/2001](#)) Jennings similarly describes, “We made it to the eighth floor. Big explosion. Blew us back into the eighth floor, and I turned to Hess. I said, ‘This is it; we’re dead. We’re not gonna make it out of here.’” ([Penn State Public Broadcasting 3/1/2002](#)) The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) claims the two men head down the stairs after 9:59, when the first collapse occurs, and then become trapped around the time the second tower collapses, at 10:28. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 109-110](#) ) But according to the London Independent, they start heading down the stairs after the second attack at 9:03, which suggests the explosion occurs earlier on. ([Vallenty 9/13/2001](#)) The cause of the explosion is unclear. Later on, firefighters rescue Hess and Jennings from the building (see [12:10 p.m.-12:15 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 109-110](#) )

(Between 9:15-9:25 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FAA Head Tells Clarke Videoconference That Flight 11 and 175 Were Hijacked

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke begins a crisis response video conference by asking FAA Administrator Jane Garvey what she knows. Garvey replies, “The two aircraft that went in [to the WTC] were American flight 11, a 767, and United 175, also a 767. Hijacked.” She says that she has put a hold on all takeoffs and landings in New York and Washington, then states, “We have reports of eleven aircraft off course or out of communications.” Clarke and Garvey discuss the feasibility of canceling all takeoffs nationally, and grounding all planes in the air. Garvey says it is possible, but will take time. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 4-5](#))

9:16 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Reported Hijacked Before Hijacking Supposedly Occurs, According to Some Accounts; One Hijacker May Have Snuck Into Cockpit Early

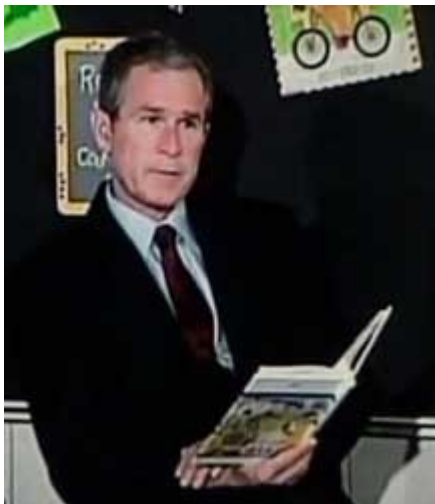
According to an early timeline laid out to CNN by unnamed but “informed defense officials,” the FAA informs NORAD at this time that Flight 93 may have been hijacked. ([CNN 9/17/2001](#)) In public testimony before the 9/11 Commission in 2003, NORAD officials will similarly claim that the FAA first reports the possible hijacking of Flight 93 at this time. ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) Yet this is 12 minutes before the hijacking is meant to have occurred (see [\(9:28 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 38](#)) One explanation is put forward that could possibly help explain the discrepancy: There are media reports that “investigators had determined from the cockpit voice recorder from United Airlines Flight 93... that one of the four hijackers had been invited into the cockpit area before the flight took off from Newark, New Jersey.” Cockpit voice recordings indicate that the pilots believed their guest was a colleague “and was thereby extended the typical airline courtesy of allowing any pilot from any airline to join a flight by sitting in the jumpseat, the folded over extra seat located inside the cockpit.” ([Fox News 9/24/2001](#); [Giles 9/25/2001](#)) This would be consistent with passenger phone calls from the plane, describing only three hijackers on Flight 93 (see [\(9:27 a.m.-10:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Longman 2002, pp. 120](#)) However, the reports will not be confirmed. The 9/11 Commission Report will dismiss the claim that NORAD was alerted at 9:16, stating, “In public testimony before this Commission in May 2003, NORAD officials stated that at 9:16, NEADS received hijack notification of United 93 from the FAA. This statement was incorrect. There was no hijack to report at 9:16. United 93 was proceeding normally at that time.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 34](#)) No further explanations will be offered for the incorrect timelines. NORAD’s own initial timeline, released on September 18, 2001, will not give a time for when the FAA alerted it to Flight 93. It will only say that the FAA and its Northeast Air Defense Sector

(NEADS) “established a line of open communication discussing AA Flt 77 and UA Flt 93.” ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#))

9:16 a.m.-9:18 a.m. September 11, 2001: American Airlines Contacts FAA; Thinks Flight 77 May Have Hit the WTC

Bill Halleck, an American Airlines air traffic control specialist at the airline’s System Operations Control (SOC) in Fort Worth, Texas, phones an official at the FAA’s Herndon Command Center, to ask about the status of New York City air traffic. During their two-and-a-half minute conversation, Halleck says American thinks Flight 11 crashed into the WTC, and says that Flight 77 is “missing.” Presently, he receives an update from someone else at SOC, indicating that Flight 77 may also have crashed into the WTC (see [9:08 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). He wonders how it could have gotten to New York, but updates the FAA official on this news. The FAA official replies that the second WTC crash may not have been Flight 77 because “we have another call sign” for that incident. The FAA Command Center is currently uncertain of the identity of either of the planes that hit the Twin Towers, and provides no further information. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 31 and 94](#).)

(9:16 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Takes His Time Leaving Classroom Photo-Op



Bush continues to read the goat story. [*Source: Lions Gate Films*] President Bush leaves the Sarasota classroom where he has been since about 9:03 a.m. (see [9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). The children finish their lessons and put away their readers. ([Plunket 9/19/2001](#)) Bush advises the children to stay in school and be good citizens. ([Barrs 9/1/2002](#); [Adair and Hegarty 9/8/2002](#)) He also tells the children, “Thank you all so very much for showing me your reading skills.” ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) One student also asks Bush a question, and Bush gives a quick response on his education policy. ([Balfour 9/12/2002](#)) A reporter asks, “Mr. President, are you aware

of the reports of the plane crash in New York? Is there any..." This question is interrupted by an aide who has come into the room, saying, "All right. Thank you. If everyone could please step outside." Bush then says, "We'll talk about it later." ([Minutes 9/11/2002](#)) Bush then tells school principal Gwen Tose-Rigell, who is in the room, about the terror attacks and why he has to leave. ([Sammon 10/7/2002](#)) He then goes into an empty classroom next door and meets with his staff there. ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) Bush's program with the children was supposed to start at 9:00 a.m. and end 20 minutes later. ([Davis 9/16/2001](#)) He leaves the classroom only a couple of minutes earlier than planned, if at all. The "goodbyes" and questions on the way out may have taken another minute or two.

(9:16 a.m.-9:29 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Works on Speech with Staff; Makes No Decisions



Bush in a holding room before giving his speech. Communications director Dan Bartlett points to the TV, and the clock reads 9:25. [*Source: White House*] After leaving the Booker Elementary School classroom, President Bush returns to an adjacent holding room where he is briefed by his staff, and gets his first look at the footage of the burning World Trade Center on a television that has been set up there. He instructs his press secretary, Ari Fleischer, to take notes to create an accurate accounting of events. According to some accounts, he speaks on the phone with Vice President Dick Cheney who is at the White House, and they both agree that terrorists are probably behind the attacks. But White House adviser Karl Rove, who is also in the holding room, later tells NBC News that Bush is unable to reach Cheney because the vice president is being moved from his office to the White House bunker at this time. The president also speaks with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, New York Governor George Pataki, and FBI Director Robert Mueller. Bush learns from Mueller that the planes that hit the WTC were commercial American aircraft, and at least one of them had apparently been hijacked after leaving Boston. Fleischer and White House Communications Director Dan Bartlett quickly draft a statement for the president to deliver in the school's library, which Bush rewords, scribbling three sheets of notes. Bush will deliver this at 9:29 a.m. (see [9:29 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). While he works on the statement, Bush briefly glances at the

unfolding horror on the television. Turning to his aides in the room, he declares, “We’re at war.” According to the 9/11 Commission, the focus at the present time is on the president’s statement to the nation, and the only decision made by Bush’s traveling party is to return to Washington. ([Sammon 2002, pp. 92-94](#); [Churcher 9/8/2002](#); [Adair and Hegarty 9/8/2002](#); [Krueger 9/10/2002](#); [Rove 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 39](#)) Bush later claims he makes no major decisions in response to the crisis until after Air Force One takes off at around 9:55 a.m. (see [\(After 9:56 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))

9:17 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Shuts Down All New York City Airports

The FAA shuts down all New York City area airports. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [New York Times 9/12/2001](#)) A flight controller at La Guardia airport reports the taxiways, runways, and airspace are completely clear at 9:37 a.m.m ([Dwyer 12/30/2003](#))

(Between 9:16 a.m. and 9:29 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Secret Service Still Does Not Evacuate Bush From School, Allegedly at the President’s Insistence



Frank Brogan. [*Source: Publicity photo*]The Secret Service later tells the 9/11 Commission that while he is in the holding room at the Booker Elementary School (see [\(9:16 a.m.-9:29 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), they are “anxious to move the president to a safer location, but did not think it imperative for him to run out the door.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 39](#)) Yet according to Philip Melanson, who is an expert on the Secret Service, “With an unfolding terrorist attack, the procedure should have been to get the president to the closest secure location as quickly as possible, which clearly is not a school.” ([Martin 7/4/2004](#)) Bush himself later recalls that at this time, “[T]he Secret Service and the Mil Aide [military aide] was in the process of getting information about where the president ought to go. One thing for certain, I needed to get out of where I was.” ([Sammon 2002, pp. 93](#)) Yet he does not immediately leave the school, and will remain there to give a brief statement in its library (see [9:29 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). According to Frank Brogan, the lieutenant governor of Florida, who is also in the holding room at this time, the Secret Service tries to get the president to return to Air Force One immediately. But Bush refuses, saying he is “committed to staying on the ground long enough to write a statement about what was happening, read it to the nation and lead a

moment of silence for the victims.” ([Frost 9/18/2003](#)) Bush himself later says that while he is in the holding room, “I didn’t spend that much time about my own safety because I knew others were worried about that. What I was interested in is making sure that the response mechanism that was under my control was sharp and ready to go. And that meant defense, for starters.” ([Sammon 2002, pp. 93](#)) Yet he reportedly will not make any decisions about the response to the attacks until after 9:55 a.m. (see [\(Between 10:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission later claims that, while Bush is in the holding room, “No one in the traveling party had any information... that other aircraft were hijacked or missing. Staff was in contact with the White House Situation Room, but as far as we could determine, no one with the president was in contact with the Pentagon.” ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 39-41](#)) In contrast to the Secret Service’s inaction in removing Bush from the school, Vice President Dick Cheney is reportedly “seized by the arms, legs and his belt and physically carried” out of his office by Secret Service agents around this time, in order to get him to the bunker below the White House. Cheney himself says the agents “hoisted me up and moved me very rapidly down the hallway, down some stairs” (see [\(9:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([White House 9/16/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#))

[\(9:18 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: FAA Command Center Warns Flight Controllers Nationwide to Watch for Suspicious Aircraft](#)

The FAA Command Center finally issues a nationwide alert to flight controllers to watch for planes disappearing from radar or making unauthorized course changes. ([Phillips 11/3/2001](#))

[\(9:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: FAA Sets Up Ineffectual Hijacking Teleconference](#)

The FAA sets up a hijacking teleconference with several agencies, including the Defense Department. This is almost one hour after the FAA’s Boston flight control began notifying the chain of command (see [8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) and notified other flight control centers about the first hijacking at 8:25 a.m. (see [8:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). According to the Acting FAA Deputy Administrator Monte Belger, this teleconference (called the “hijack net”) is “the fundamental primary source of information between the FAA, DOD, FBI, Secret Service, and... other agencies.” Yet even after the delay in setting it up, FAA and Defense Department participants later claim it plays no role in coordinating the response to the hijackings. The 9/11 Commission says, “The NMCC [National Military Command Center inside the Pentagon] officer who participated told us that the call was monitored only periodically because the information was sporadic, it was of little value, and there were other important tasks. The FAA manager of the teleconference also remembered that the military participated only briefly before the Pentagon was hit.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 36](#)) According to a statement provided by the FAA to the 9/11 Commission in 2003,

this teleconference began significantly earlier—“[w]ithin minutes after the first aircraft hit the World Trade Center” (see [\(8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#))

(Between 9:20 a.m. and 9:27 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Mineta Reaches Bunker, Meets Cheney



Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta. [Source: *US Department of Transportation*] Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta arrives at the White House bunker—the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC)—containing Vice President Dick Cheney and others. Mineta will tell NBC News that he arrives there at “probably about 9:27,” though he later says to the 9/11 Commission that he arrives at “about 9:20 a.m.” He also later recalls that Cheney is already there when he arrives. ([Mineta 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#); [Martin 7/4/2004](#); [Mineta 6/3/2006](#)) This supports accounts of Cheney reaching the bunker not long after the second WTC crash (see [\(9:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Questioned about this in 2007 by an activist group, Mineta will confirm that Cheney was “absolutely... already there” in the PEOC when he arrived, and that “This was before American Airlines [Flight 77] went into the Pentagon,” which happens at 9:37. Yet, while admitting there is “conflicting evidence about when the vice president arrived” in the PEOC, the 9/11 Commission will conclude that the “vice president arrived in the room shortly before 10:00, perhaps at 9:58.” Mineta also later claims that when he arrives in the PEOC, Mrs. Lynne Cheney, the wife of the vice president, is already there. Yet the 9/11 Commission will claim she only arrives at the White House at 9:52 (see [\(9:52 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 40](#); [Mineta 6/26/2007](#)) Once in the PEOC, Mineta establishes open phone lines with his office at the Department of Transportation and with the FAA Operations Center. ([Mineta 6/3/2006](#))

(9:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Barbara Olson Said to Call from Flight 77, but Account Is Full of Contradictions



Barbara Olson. [Source: Richard Eillis/ Getty Images] A passenger on Flight 77, Barbara Olson, calls her husband, Theodore (Ted) Olson, who is Solicitor General at the Justice Department. ([San Francisco Chronicle 7/23/2004](#)) Ted Olson is in his Justice Department office watching WTC news on television when his wife calls. A few days later, he says, "She told me that she had been herded to the back of the plane. She mentioned that they had used knives and box cutters to hijack the plane. She mentioned that the pilot had announced that the plane had been hijacked." ([CNN 9/14/2001](#)) He tells her that two planes have hit the WTC. ([Harnden 3/5/2002](#)) She feels nobody is taking charge. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#)) He doesn't know if she was near the pilots, but at one point she asks, "What shall I tell the pilot? What can I tell the pilot to do?" ([CNN 9/14/2001](#)) Then she is cut off without warning. ([Isikoff 9/29/2001](#)) Ted Olson's recollection of the call's timing is extremely vague, saying it "must have been 9:15 [am.] or 9:30 [am.]. Someone would have to reconstruct the time for me." ([CNN 9/14/2001](#)) Other accounts place it around 9:25 a.m. ([Tanfani and Chardy 9/14/2001](#); [Wald 9/15/2001](#); [Maranis 9/21/2001](#)) The call is said to have lasted about a minute. ([Fisher and Phillips 9/12/2001](#)) By some accounts, his message that planes have hit the WTC comes later, in a second phone call. ([Maranis 9/21/2001](#)) In one account, Barbara Olson calls from inside a bathroom. ([Arkell and France 9/12/2001](#)) In another account, she is near a pilot, and in yet another she is near two pilots. ([Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) Ted Olson's account of how Barbara Olson made her calls is also conflicting. Three days after 9/11, he says, "I found out later that she was having, for some reason, to call collect and was having trouble getting through. You know how it is to get through to a government institution when you're calling collect." He says he doesn't know what kind of phone she used, but he has "assumed that it must have been on the airplane phone, and that she somehow didn't have access to her credit cards. Otherwise, she would have used her cell phone and called me." ([Olson 9/14/2001](#)) Why Barbara Olson would have needed access to her credit cards to call him on her cell phone is not explained. However, in another interview on the same day, he says that she used a cell phone and that she may have been cut off "because the signals from cell phones coming from airplanes don't work that well." ([CNN 9/14/2001](#)) Six months later, he claims she called collect "using the phone in the passengers' seats." ([Harnden 3/5/2002](#)) However, it is not possible to call on seatback phones, collect or otherwise, without a credit card, which would render making a collect call moot. Many other details are conflicting, and Olson faults his memory and says that he "tends to mix the two [calls] up because of the emotion of the events." ([CNN](#)

[9/14/2001](#)) The couple liked to joke that they were at the heart of what Hillary Clinton famously called a “vast, right-wing conspiracy.” Ted Olson has been a controversial choice as Solicitor General since he argued on behalf of Bush before the Supreme Court in the 2000 presidential election controversy before being nominated for his current position.

(9:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Fire Chief Concerned about Possible Explosives in the WTC

Fire Chief Ray Downey is on the corner of West Street and Vesey Street, where the chiefs in charge of the response at the WTC have gathered to survey the scene. ([Downey 2004, pp. 233](#)) Downey is the head of the New York Fire Department’s Special Operations Command, where he has pioneered techniques for responding to terrorist attacks. ([CBS News 9/11/2006](#)) Reportedly, he had felt certain that a big attack on American soil was due. Worst in his mind had been “a situation in which there was a secondary device timed to explode after rescuers had rushed to the scene” of a terrorist attack. As he now checks in with the fire chiefs who are trying to put together a response plan, he tells them “he is worried about secondary devices in the towers, explosive devices that could hurt the firemen.” ([Downey 2004, pp. 224 and 233](#)) Shortly after the South Tower comes down, Downey will in fact say he thought bombs in the building had caused it to collapse (see [Shortly After 9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Delendick 12/6/2001](#)) He will be killed when the North Tower collapses at 10:28 a.m. ([Dwyer and O'Donnell 9/9/2005](#))

(9:20 a.m.-9:42 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Firefighters Responding to Car Crash at Reagan Airport Quickly Respond to Pentagon Attack

Shortly before the Pentagon is attacked, firefighters with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) respond to a multiple vehicle car crash at the upper level of Terminal B of Reagan National Airport, which is less than a mile from the Pentagon. Captain Michael Defina, the acting shift commander, has seen the World Trade Center attacks on television and, although the airport is not on alert, he later claims he has a feeling that Washington could be another terrorist target. Although the shift commander doesn’t usually respond to motor vehicle accidents, Defina accompanies the rescue engine and medic unit to the crash at Terminal B because, he says, “something didn’t sound right about it.” He then hears a “dull roar” when the Pentagon is struck, and turns to see smoke rising above it. ([Murphy 11/1/2001](#); [Ward 4/2002](#)³⁴) Fire Communications initially tells him that a Boeing 757 crashed off the end of Runway 1-19 at Reagan Airport. This report is soon corrected, and the MWAA is directed to respond to the Pentagon attack. It has substantial resources for this, including two foam units and two mass casualty units. MWAA has authority to automatically respond to plane crashes within 5 miles of Reagan Airport, so two of its heavy rescue units self-dispatch to the Pentagon. Its fire and medical units arrive at the crash site within 5 minutes of the attack. ([US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. A6-A7](#)) The Airports

Authority firefighters are able to set up directly in front of the impact hole, and their foam units knock down much of the fire within seven minutes of arriving. ([Murphy 11/1/2001](#))

(9:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FAA Command Center Notifies Field Facilities That Flight 77 Is Lost; Indianapolis Flight Control Reportedly Finally Learns of National Crisis

According to the 9/11 Commission, Indianapolis flight control learns that there are other hijacked aircraft by this time (presumably at least Flights 11 and 175). Millions of people have known about the crashes since CNN and all other media began broadcasting images from New York at 8:48 a.m., but Indianapolis is reportedly unaware until this time. The Indianapolis flight controllers begin to doubt their assumption that Flight 77 has crashed and consider that it might be hijacked. After a discussion between the Indianapolis manager and the FAA Command Center, the Command Center notifies some other FAA facilities that Flight 77 is lost. By 9:21 a.m., the Command Center, some FAA field facilities, and American Airlines join the search for Flight 77. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(9:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FBI Washington Office Is Warned Flight 77 Has Been Hijacked



Arthur Eberhart. [*Source: Spc. Edgar R. Gonzalez*] In a government report analyzing the effectiveness of rescue worker response to the Pentagon crash, it is mentioned that, “At about 9:20 a.m., the WFO [FBI Washington Field Office] Command Center [is] notified that American Airlines Flight 77 had been hijacked shortly after takeoff from Washington Dulles International Airport. [Special Agent in Charge Arthur] Eberhart dispatche[s] a team of 50 agents to investigate the Dulles hijacking and provide additional security to prevent another. He sen[ds] a second team to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport as a precautionary step. At the WFO Command Center, Supervisory Special Agent (SSA) Jim Rice [is] on the telephone with the Pentagon when Flight 77 crashe[s] into the building.” ([US Department of Health & Human Services 7/2002, pp. C-55](#)) Yet according to the 9/11 Commission, NORAD is not

told that Flight 77 had been hijacked at this time or any time before it crashes. However, the FAA has claimed they officially warned NORAD at 9:24 a.m. (see [\(9:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) and informally warned them even earlier (see [\(9:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

9:21 a.m. September 11, 2001: All New York City Bridges and Tunnels Are Closed

The New York City Port Authority closes all bridges and tunnels in New York City. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [New York Times 9/12/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/22/2001](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#))

9:21 a.m. September 11, 2001: Boston Air Traffic Control Center Mistakenly Tells NEADS Flight 11 Is Still Airborne

According to the 9/11 Commission, NEADS is contacted by Boston flight control. Colin Scoggins, Boston Center's military liaison, tells them, "I just had a report that American 11 is still in the air, and it's on its way towards—heading towards Washington.... That was another—it was evidently another aircraft that hit the tower. That's the latest report we have.... I'm going to try to confirm an ID for you, but I would assume he's somewhere over, uh, either New Jersey or somewhere further south." The NEADS official asks, "He—American 11 is a hijack?... And he's heading into Washington?" Scoggins answers yes both times and adds, "This could be a third aircraft." Somehow Boston has been told by FAA headquarters that Flight 11 is still airborne, but the commission will say it hasn't been able to find where this mistaken information came from. Vanity Fair magazine will later add, "In Boston, it is Colin Scoggins who has made the mistaken call." Scoggins will explain why he believes he made this error: "With American Airlines, we could never confirm if [Flight 11] was down or not, so that left doubt in our minds." He says he was monitoring a conference call between FAA centers (see [8:28 a.m.-8:32 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), "when the word came across—from whom or where isn't clear—that American 11 was thought to be headed for Washington." However, Boston Center was never tracking Flight 11 on radar after losing sight of it near Manhattan: "The plane's course, had it continued south past New York in the direction it was flying before it dipped below radar coverage, would have had it headed on a straight course toward DC. This was all controllers were going on." Scoggins says, "After talking to a supervisor, I made the call and said [American 11] is still in the air." ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [Bronner 8/1/2006](#))

9:21 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Command Center Advises Dulles Airport Control to Be on Lookout

According to the 9/11 Commission, the FAA Command Center advises the Dulles Airport terminal control facility in Washington to look for primary targets. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) By at least one account, Dulles notices Flight 77 a few minutes later.

9:21 a.m. September 11, 2001: One Langley Pilot Claims to Be Put on Battle Stations Now, Not 12 Minutes Earlier



Major Dean Eckmann. [*Source: US Air Force*] Major Dean Eckmann, an F-16 fight pilot at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia, recalls, “The scramble horn goes off and we get the yellow light, which is our battle stations. So at that point I go running out to the airplanes—to my assigned alert airplane—get suited up and I get into the cockpit ready to start.” ([BBC 9/1/2002](#)) A few minutes before the battle stations order, Eckmann is told that a plane has hit the WTC. He assumes it’s some kind of accident. ([Sullivan 8/19/2002](#)) However, another pilot, codenamed Honey (apparently Craig Borgstrom), claims the battle stations command happens at 9:24 a.m. (see [9:24 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)); while the 9/11 Commission claims it happens at 9:09 a.m. (see [9:09 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:21-9:26 a.m.) September 11, 2001: United Airlines Dispatchers Advise Pilots to Secure Cockpit Doors; Flight 93 Gets the Message

At 9:21 a.m., United Airlines dispatchers are told to advise their flights to secure cockpit doors. Flight dispatcher Ed Ballinger has apparently already started doing this on his own a couple of minutes earlier. Sending electronic messages one by one, at 9:24 he sends a message to Flight 93 reading: “Beware of cockpit intrusion. Two aircraft in New York hit Trade Center buildings.” Ballinger claims that he was specifically instructed by superiors not to tell pilots why they needed to land (apparently he added the detail about the WTC against orders). ([Sheehy 6/17/2004](#)) Flight 93 pilot Jason Dahl acknowledges the message two minutes later, replying, “Ed, confirm latest message please Jason.” This is the last

vocal contact from the cockpit of Flight 93. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#)) Note that this formal warning is in addition to an informal one sent by Ballinger that reached Flight 93 around 9:00 a.m. In contrast to United Airlines, the 9/11 Commission finds no evidence that American Airlines sends such warnings to their pilots at any time during the hijackings.

(9:21 a.m.-9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001): Exterior Wall of South Tower May Bow Outwards or Inwards before Collapse

The exterior wall on the east side of the World Trade Center's South Tower apparently bows before the building collapses. The first inquiry into the collapse, by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Society of Civil Engineers, states that the perimeter walls bow outward. "Expansion of floor slabs and framing results in outward deflection of columns and potential overload," the investigation concludes. ([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 2-25](#)) However, a subsequent report by the National Institute of Standards and Technology states that the east wall of the South Tower bows inward. In places the wall is said to bow inward by between seven and nine inches at floor 80, and NIST interprets this bowing to mean that the floors must be sagging. NIST will find that the sagging and bowing are two of the seven major factors that led to the collapse of each tower, as the bowing walls are no longer able to support their share of the buildings' weight, causing the buildings to tilt and the upper sections to fall. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 43-46, 87](#)) A wall in the North Tower also apparently bows before the building collapses (see [10:23 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(After 9:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FAA Administrator Frustrated That Military Is Not Involved in Teleconference



Monte Belger [*Source: FAA*] At 9:20 a.m. (or earlier, according to some accounts), the FAA set up a hijacking teleconference with several agencies (see [\(9:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). FAA records indicate that the National Military Command Center within the Pentagon was included in the communication network "no later than 9:20 a.m." ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Yet at some point later in the

morning, Acting FAA Deputy Administrator Monte Belger becomes aware that the military is not involved in the teleconference in any meaningful way. Presumably referring to tape recordings of the FAA headquarters, 9/11 Commissioner Jamie Gorelick will later say to Belger, “We heard some rather colorful language came from your mouth at that point.” The absence of the NMCC from the teleconference is unusual. Belger says, “I’ve lived through dozens of hijackings in my 30-year FAA career... and [the NMCC] were always there. They were always on the net, and were always listening in with everybody else.” He adds, “The most frustrating after-the-fact scenario for me to understand is to explain... the communication link on that morning between the FAA operations center and the NMCC.... I know how it’s supposed to work, but... it’s still a little frustrating for me to understand how it actually did work on that day.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 36](#))

(9:22 a.m.) September 11, 2001: White House Begins Slowly Evacuating

In a 9:52 a.m. report, CNN White House correspondent John King will state that, “about 30 minutes ago,” the White House had begun slowly evacuating. This evacuation proceeds in an orderly fashion. But later on, around 9:45 a.m., those evacuating will be ordered to run (see [\(9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([CNN 9/11/2001](#))

9:23 a.m. September 11, 2001: NEADS Wants Fighters to Track Phantom Flight 11



Major Kevin

Nasypany inside NEADS [Source: Mark Schafer/ Vanity Fair] According to the 9/11 Commission, NEADS has just been told that the hijacked Flight 11 is still in the air and heading toward Washington. Major Kevin Nasypany, the mission crew commander, says to NEADS Commander Robert Marr, "Okay, uh, American Airlines is still airborne. Eleven, the first guy, he's heading towards Washington. Okay? I think we need to scramble Langley right now. And I'm gonna take the fighters from Otis, try to chase this guy down if I can find him." After receiving approval to do so, Nasypany issues the order. "Okay... scramble Langley," he says. "Head them towards the Washington area." The Langley, Virginia, base gets the scramble order at 9:24 a.m. (see [9:24 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). NEADS keeps its fighters from the Otis base over New York City. In 2004 the 9/11 Commission will state, "this response to a phantom aircraft, American 11, is not recounted in a single public timeline or statement issued by FAA or DOD. Instead, since 9/11, the scramble of the Langley fighters has been described as a response to the reported hijacking of American 77, or United 93, or some combination of the two." Yet the "report of American 11 heading south as the cause of the Langley scramble is reflected not just in taped conversations at NEADS, but in taped conversations at FAA centers, on chat logs compiled at NEADS, Continental Region headquarters, and NORAD, and in other records." ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [Bronner 8/1/2006](#))

9:24 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Regional Center Contacts Headquarters about Flight 77

The FAA's Great Lakes Regional Operations Center notifies the Operations Center at FAA's Washington headquarters of the simultaneous loss of radar identification and radar

communications with Flight 77. ([Federal Aviation Administration 9/17/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 32](#)) This is almost 30 minutes after this loss of contact occurred (see [\(8:56 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and 15 minutes after the Great Lakes regional center was informed of it (see [9:09 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:24 a.m.) September 11, 2001: By Some Accounts, FAA Notifies NORAD Flight 77 Is Hijacked and Washington-Bound; 9/11 Commission Claims This Never Happens

Shortly after 9/11, NORAD reported that the FAA notified them at this time that Flight 77 “may” have been hijacked and that it appears headed toward Washington. ([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/17/2001](#); [North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#)) Apparently, flight controllers at Dulles International Airport discover a plane heading at high speed toward Washington; an alert is sounded within moments that the plane appears to be headed toward the White House. ([Phillips 11/3/2001](#)) In 2003, the FAA supported this account, but claimed that they had informally notified NORAD earlier. “NORAD logs indicate that the FAA made formal notification about American Flight 77 at 9:24 a.m. (see [\(9:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), but information about the flight was conveyed continuously during the phone bridges before the formal notification.” ([Federal Aviation Administration 5/22/2003](#)) Yet in 2004, the 9/11 Commission claims that both NORAD and the FAA are wrong. The 9/11 Commission explains that the notification NEADS received at 9:24 a.m. was the incorrect information that Flight 11 had not hit the WTC and was headed south for Washington, D.C. Thus, according to the 9/11 Commission, NORAD is never notified by the FAA about the hijacking of Flight 77, but accidentally learns about it at 9:34 a.m. (see [9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(9:24 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Langley Fighters Are Ordered to Scramble; but One Pilot Claims the Order Is Only a Battle Stations Alert



Captain Craig Borgstrom. [Source: US Air Force / Austin

Knox]The BBC later reports that at this time, Robert Marr, head of NEADS, gives the scramble order to the F-16 fighters based in Langley, Virginia: “North East sectors back on. We ought to be getting the weapons crews back in. Get the scramble order rolling. Scramble.” ([BBC 9/1/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission concurs that the scramble order is given now. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) NORAD also has agreed. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#)) However, many media reports have placed it later. ([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [Graham 9/15/2001](#); [CNN 9/17/2001](#); [CNN 9/17/2001](#)) A pilot codenamed Honey gives a slightly different account. He claims that at this time a battle stations alert sounds and two other pilots are given the order to climb into their F-16s and await further instructions. Then, Honey, the supervising pilot, talks to the two other pilots. Then, “five or ten minutes later,” a person from NORAD calls and Honey speaks to him at the nearby administrative office. He is told that all three of them are ordered to scramble. Honey goes to his living quarters, grabs his flight gear, puts it on, runs to his plane, and takes off. ([Longman 2002, pp. 64-65](#)) Honey appears to be the codename for Capt. Craig Borgstrom, because in another account, Borgstrom is given an alert and then talks to the two other pilots. ([Sullivan 8/19/2002](#)) A different pilot account has the battle stations warning three minutes earlier, while the 9/11 Commission claims that it happens fifteen minutes earlier. Pilot Major Dean Eckmann recalls, “They go ‘active air scramble, vector zero one zero one, max speed.’ And then I push us over to the tower frequency and get our departure clearance and they launch us out right away.... We can carry M9-Heat Seekers, Side Winders for the M7-Sparrow, plus we have an internal 20mm Vulcan Cannon, and we were pretty much armed with all that. We had a pretty quick response time. I believe it was four to five minutes we were airborne from that point.” The BBC reports, “Even while last minute pre-launch checks are being made, the controllers learn that a third plane—American Airlines flight 77 out of Washington—may have been hijacked.” Just before the fighters take off, the BBC says, “The pilots get a signal over the plane’s transponder—a code that indicates an emergency wartime situation.” ([BBC 9/1/2002](#))

9:25 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Command Center Finally Tells FAA Headquarters About Flight 77

According to the 9/11 Commission, the FAA Command Center advises FAA headquarters that American 77 is lost in Indianapolis flight control's airspace, that Indianapolis has no primary radar track, and is looking for the aircraft. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) When exactly the Command Center first learned that Flight 77 was lost is unclear. The earliest time reported by the 9/11 Commission is when an American Airlines employee mentioned it when calling the center at 9:16 a.m. (see [9:16 a.m.-9:18 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 24](#)) American Airlines headquarters was notified of the loss of contact with Flight 77 before 9:00 a.m. (see [\(Before 9:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), but had mistakenly thought this was the aircraft that hit the second WTC tower minutes later (see [9:08 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

9:25 a.m. September 11, 2001: 9/11 Commission's Conflicting Account of Clarke-Led Video Conference Begins at This Time

According to his own account, counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke, started a video teleconference from the White House's Secure Video Conferencing Center, next to the Situation Room, at around 9:10 a.m.(see [\(9:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). However, the 9/11 Commission says that logs indicate this conference beginning 15 minutes later than this. Included in the conference are the FBI, the CIA, the FAA, the departments of State, Justice, and Defense, and the White House shelter. The FAA and CIA join at 9:40 a.m. The 9/11 Commission says, "It is not clear to us that the video teleconference was fully under way before 9:37, when the Pentagon was struck." Furthermore, it states: "We do not know who from Defense participated, but we know that in the first hour none of the personnel involved in managing the crisis did. And none of the information conveyed in the White House video teleconference, at least in the first hour, was being passed to the NMCC [in the Pentagon]." Clarke's video teleconference is not connected into the area of the NMCC from where the crisis is being managed. Consequently, "the director of the operations team-who was on the phone with NORAD-did not have the benefit of information being shared on the video teleconference." And, "when the Secretary [of Defense Rumsfeld] and Vice Chairman [of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Myers] later participated in the White House video teleconference, they were necessarily absent from the NMCC and unable to provide guidance to the operations team." Clarke, however, gives a specific recollection of Myers speaking over video at 9:28, which is seemingly at odds with the 9/11 Commission's account (see [9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). One witness later recalls: "[It] was almost like there were parallel decision-making processes going on; one was a voice conference orchestrated by the NMCC... and then there was the [White House video teleconference].... [I]n my mind they were competing venues for command and control and decision-making." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#))

9:25 a.m. September 11, 2001: Otis Fighters Arrive over New York, According to Later Report by 9/11 Commission

According to the 9/11 Commission, the two fighters launched from Otis Air Force Base (see [\(8:46 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) arrive over Manhattan at this time, after exiting their holding pattern off the Long Island coast at 9:13 a.m. They then establish a combat air patrol (CAP) over New York. The commission bases this conclusion on its analysis of FAA radar data and interviews with the two Otis pilots. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 24 and 460](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 26 and 92](#)) However, numerous eyewitnesses on the ground will report first noticing fighters over New York significantly later, more than an hour after the 9/11 Commission claims according to some accounts (see [\(9:45 a.m.-10:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(After 9:25 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Passenger Call Reaches Justice Department and Beyond



Ted Olson. [*Source: US Justice Department*] Theodore (Ted) Olson, the Justice Department's Solicitor General, calls the Justice Department's control center to relate his wife Barbara's call from Flight 77. Accounts vary whether the Justice Department already knows of the hijack or not. ([Fisher and Phillips 9/12/2001](#); [Channel 4 News \(London\) 9/13/2001](#); [Wald 9/15/2001](#)) Olson merely says, "They just absorbed the information. And they promised to send someone down right away." He assumes they then "pass the information on to the appropriate people." ([Olson 9/14/2001](#))

(9:26 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Rookie FAA Manager Bans All Take Offs Nationwide, Including Most Military Flights? Mineta Asserts He Issues Order Minutes Later



FAA Administrator Jane Garvey. [Source: FAA]Time magazine later reports that Jane Garvey, head of the FAA, “almost certainly after getting an okay from the White House, initiate[s] a national ground stop, which forbids takeoffs and requires planes in the air to get down as soon as is reasonable. The order, which has never been implemented since flying was invented in 1903, applie[s] to virtually every single kind of machine that can takeoff—civilian, military, or law enforcement.” Military and law enforcement flights are allowed to resume at 10:31 a.m. (see [10:31 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) A limited number of military flights—the FAA will not reveal details—are allowed to fly during this ban. ([Donnelly 9/14/2001](#)) Garvey later calls it “a national ground stop... that prevented any aircraft from taking off.” ([US Congress 9/21/2001](#)) Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta later says he was the one to give the order: “As soon as I was aware of the nature and scale of the attack, I called from the White House to order the air traffic system to land all aircraft, immediately and without exception.” ([US Congress. Senate. Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation 9/20/2001](#)) According to Mineta, “At approximately 9:45... I gave the FAA the final order for all civil aircraft to land at the nearest airport as soon as possible.” ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) At the time, 4,452 planes are flying in the continental US. A later account states that Ben Sliney, the FAA’s National Operations Manager, makes the decision without consulting his superiors, like Jane Garvey, first. It would be remarkable if Sliney was the one to make the decision, because 9/11 is Sliney’s first day on the job as National Operations Manager, “the chess master of the air traffic system.” ([Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#)) When he accepted the job a couple of months earlier, he had asked, “What is the limit of my authority?” The man who had promoted him replied, “Unlimited.” ([Adams, Levin, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#)) Yet another account, by Linda Schuessler, manager of tactical operations at the FAA Command Center where Sliney was located, says, “... it was done collaboratively... All these decisions were corporate decisions. It wasn’t one person who said, ‘Yes, this has got to get done.’” ([Bond 12/17/2001](#)) About 500 planes land in the next 20 minutes, and then much more urgent orders to land are issued at 9:45 a.m. (see [\(9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Donnelly 9/14/2001](#); [US Congress 9/21/2001](#); [Adcock, Donovan, and Gordon 9/23/2001](#); [Scott 6/3/2002](#); [Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [Adcock 9/10/2002](#))

(9:26 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Cheney Given Updates on Unidentified Flight 77 Heading toward Washington; Says ‘Orders Still Stand’

According to some accounts, Vice President Cheney is in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) below the White House by this time, along with Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta and National Security Adviser Rice. Mineta says that, while a suspicious plane is heading toward Washington, an unidentified young man comes in and says to Cheney, “The plane is 50 miles out.” Mineta confers with Acting FAA Deputy Administrator Monte Belger, who is at the FAA’s Washington headquarters. Belger says to him, “We’re watching this target on the radar, but the transponder’s been turned off. So we have no identification.” According to Mineta, the young man continues updating the vice president, saying, “The plane is 30 miles out,” and when he gets down to “The plane is 10 miles out,” asks, “Do the orders still stand?” In response, Cheney “whipped his neck around and said, ‘Of course the orders still stand. Have you heard anything to the contrary?’” Mineta says that “just by the nature of all the events going on,” he infers that the order being referred to is a shoot-down order. Nevertheless, Flight 77 continues on and hits the Pentagon. ([BBC 9/1/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#); [Martin 7/4/2004](#)) However, the 9/11 Commission will later claim the plane heading toward Washington is only discovered by the Dulles Airport air traffic control tower at 9:32 a.m. (see [9:32 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). But earlier accounts, including statements made by the FAA and NORAD, will claim that the FAA notified the military about the suspected hijacking of Flight 77 at 9:24 a.m., if not before (see [\(9:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The FBI’s Washington Field Office was also reportedly notified that Flight 77 had been hijacked at about 9:20 a.m. (see [\(9:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission will further contradict Mineta’s account saying that, despite the “conflicting evidence as to when the Vice President arrived in the shelter conference room [i.e., the PEOC],” it has concluded that he only arrived there at 9:58 a.m. It also claims that Condoleezza Rice only entered the PEOC shortly after Cheney did. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) According to the Washington Post, the discussion between Cheney and the young aide over whether “the orders” still stand occurs later than claimed by Mineta, and is in response to Flight 93 heading toward Washington, not Flight 77. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))

(9:27 a.m.-10:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Passengers See Only Three Hijackers on Flight 93

According to journalist and author Jere Longman, “On all phone calls made from [Flight 93], passengers reported seeing only three hijackers. Not a single caller reported four hijackers.” ([Longman 2002, pp. 120](#)) (As an exception, one article in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette claims that passenger Todd Beamer describes four hijackers; however, other reports say he describes only three (see [9:45 a.m.-9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#))) Yet the official claim is that there are four hijackers on this plane. ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 9/27/2001](#); [9/11 Commission](#)

[7/24/2004, pp. 4](#)) Some family members of the passengers and crew will later be suspicious that one of the hijackers was in the plane's cockpit from takeoff (see [9:16 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). However, according to Longman, "Investigators, pilots, flight attendants and United officials tended to discount this theory.... Paperwork would have to be filled out in advance if an observer requested to sit in the cockpit. No request was made for Flight 93, United officials later reported.... Flight 93 was hijacked approximately forty-five minutes after it left Newark. Other pilots agreed that Captain Dahl likely would have requested that any observer return to his regular seat by that time." ([Longman 2002, pp. 120](#)) The 9/11 Commission's explanation for the reports of three hijackers instead of four is that Ziad Jarrah, "the crucial pilot-trained member of [the hijacker's] team, remained seated and inconspicuous until after the cockpit was seized; and once inside, he would not have been visible to the passengers." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 12](#))

(9:27 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Passenger Tom Burnett Calls Wife, Mentions Bomb, Knife, and Gun



Tom Burnett. [*Source: Family photo*] Tom Burnett calls his wife, Deena, using a cell phone and says, "I'm on United Flight 93 from Newark to San Francisco. The plane has been hijacked. We are in the air. They've already knifed a guy. There is a bomb on board. Call the FBI." Deena connects to emergency 9-1-1. ([Ruppe 9/12/2001](#); [Mandel 9/16/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 107](#); [MSNBC 7/30/2002](#)) Deena wonders if the call might have been before the cockpit was taken over, because he spoke quickly and quietly as if he was being watched. He also had a headset like phone operators use, so he could have made the call unnoticed. Note that original versions of this conversation appear to have been censored. The most recent account has the phone call ending with, "We are in the air. The plane has been hijacked. They already knifed a guy. One of them has a gun. They're saying there is a bomb onboard. Please call the authorities." ([Longman 2002, pp. 107](#)) The major difference from earlier accounts, is the mention of a gun. The call wasn't recorded, but Deena's call to 9-1-1 immediately afterwards was, and on that call she states, "They just knifed a

passenger and there are guns on the plane.” ([Longman 2002, pp. 108](#)) Deena Burnett later says of her husband: “He told me one of the hijackers had a gun. He wouldn’t have made it up. Tom grew up around guns. He was an avid hunter and we have guns in our home. If he said there was a gun on board, there was.” ([Baxter 8/11/2002](#)) This is the first of over 30 phone calls by passengers inside the plane. ([MSNBC 7/30/2002](#)) Passengers are told what happened at the WTC in least five of the phone calls. Five calls show an intent to revolt against the hijackers. ([San Francisco Chronicle 7/23/2004](#))

9:28 a.m. (or Before) September 11, 2001: Erratic Flight 93 Movements Noticed by Cleveland Flight Controller



Stacey Taylor. [*Source: NBC News*] Cleveland flight controller Stacey Taylor has been warned to watch transcontinental flights heading west for anything suspicious. She later recalls, “I hear one of the controllers behind me go, ‘Oh, my God, oh my God,’ and he starts yelling for the supervisor. He goes, ‘What is this plane doing? What is this plane doing?’ I wasn’t that busy at the time, and I pulled it up on my screen and he was climbing and descending and climbing and descending, but very gradually. He’d go up 300 feet, he’d go down 300 feet. And it turned out to be United 93.” (Note the time of this incident is not specified, but presumably it is prior to when Cleveland controllers note Flight 93 descends 700 feet at 9:29 a.m. ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#)))

9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001: CNN Reports US Officials Think Attacks Caused by Terrorists

CNN quotes the Associate Press as reporting that a US official believes the attacks are believed to have been carried out by terrorists. ([Ottawa Citizen 9/11/2001](#))

9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001: Myers Updates Clarke Videoconference on Fighter Response

According to his own account, during a video conference with top officials that he is directing, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke asks Joint Chiefs of Staff Vice Chairman Richard Myers, “I assume NORAD has scrambled fighters and AWACS. How

many? Where?” Myers, who is at the Pentagon, replies, “Not a pretty picture, Dick. We are in the middle of Vigilant Warrior, a NORAD exercise, but... Otis has launched two birds toward New York. Langley is trying to get two up now [toward Washington]. The AWACS are at Tinker and not on alert.” Vigilant Warrior may be a mistaken reference to either the on-going war game Vigilant Guardian, or perhaps another exercise called Amalgam Warrior (see [9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Otis Air National Guard Base is in Massachusetts, 188 miles east of New York City; Langley is in Virginia, 129 miles south of Washington; Tinker Air Force Base is in Oklahoma. Clarke asks, “Okay, how long to CAP [combat air patrol] over DC?” Myers replies, “Fast as we can. Fifteen minutes?” ([Clarke 2004, pp. 5](#)) The first fighters don’t reach Washington until perhaps more than 30 minutes later (see [9:55 a.m.-10:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). However, this account—or at least the time Clarke alleges the conversation occurs—is contradicted by Myers himself and Senator Max Cleland (D). Myers claims he has been at a meeting on Capitol Hill with Cleland since about 9 o’clock, and does not arrive back at the Pentagon until after it is hit, which is at 9:37 a.m. ([Rhem 10/23/2001](#); [Myers 9/11/2002](#); [CNN 4/15/2003](#); [Garamone 9/8/2006](#)) Cleland confirms the existence of this meeting, and claims that Myers is with him until around the time of the Pentagon attack. ([CNN 11/20/2001](#); [Baxter and Galloway 6/16/2003](#)) (There are, though, some inconsistencies in Myers and Cleland’s accounts of this period (see [\(Shortly After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

[\(9:28 a.m.\) September 11, 2001: Cleveland Flight Control Hears Sounds of Struggle as Flight 93 Is Hijacked](#)



Jason Dahl. [*Source: Publicity photo*]Flight 93

acknowledges a transmission from Cleveland flight control. John Werth, the controller handling the plane, has told it that another plane is 2,000 feet above it, at 37,000 feet. This is the last normal contact with the plane. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [Hirschhorn 9/10/2006](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission, less than a minute later, the controller, and pilots of aircraft in the vicinity, hear “a radio transmission of unintelligible sounds of possible screaming or a struggle from an unknown origin.” ([Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Breslau,](#)

[Clift, and Thomas 11/26/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Someone, presumably pilot Jason Dahl, is overheard by controllers as he shouts, “Mayday!” ([Wald 7/22/2004](#)) Seconds later, the controller responds: “Somebody call Cleveland?” Then there are more sounds of screaming and someone yelling, “Get out of here, get out of here.” ([Mandel 9/16/2001](#); [Breslau 9/22/2001](#); [Vulliamy 12/2/2001](#); [MSNBC 7/30/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Then the voices of the hijackers can be heard talking in Arabic. The words are later translated to show they are talking to each other, saying, “Everything is fine.” ([Breslau, Clift, and Thomas 11/26/2001](#)) Later passenger phone calls describe two dead or injured bodies just outside the cockpit; presumably these are the two pilots. ([Wald 7/22/2004](#))

9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001: NORAD Possibly Holding ‘Live-Fly’ Training Exercise

According to former counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke, around this time the acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers speaks to him via video link (see [9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). During their conversation, Myers mentions, “We are in the middle of Vigilant Warrior, a NORAD exercise.” ([Clarke 2004, pp. 5](#)) However, no other references have been found to this exercise, “Vigilant Warrior.” Considering that exercise terms are “normally an unclassified nickname,” ([Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 4/23/1998](#)) this is perhaps a little odd. Could Richard Clarke have mistakenly been referring to the Vigilant Guardian exercise (see [\(6:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), which is taking place on 9/11? According to a later news report though, NORAD confirms that “it was running two mock drills on Sept. 11 at various radar sites and Command Centers in the United States and Canada,” one of these being Vigilant Guardian. ([Kelly 12/5/2003](#)) If this is correct then there must be another NORAD exercise on 9/11. If not “Vigilant Warrior,” a possibility is that the exercise referred to by Richard Clarke is in fact “Amalgam Warrior,” which is a NORAD-sponsored, large-scale, live-fly air defense and air intercept field training exercise. Amalgam Warrior usually involves two or more NORAD regions and is held twice yearly, in the spring for the West Coast and in the autumn for the East Coast. ([US Congress n.d.](#); [McKenna 1996](#); [Arkin 2005, pp. 254](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 4/27/2005](#)) Is it possible that in 2001 the East Coast Amalgam Warrior is being held earlier than usual (like Global Guardian (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#))) and is taking place on 9/11? In support of this possibility is a 1997 Defense Department report that describes the Stratcom exercise Global Guardian, saying it “links with other exercise activities sponsored by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Unified Commands.” The exercises it links with are Crown Vigilance (an Air Combat Command exercise), Apollo Guardian (a US Space Command exercise), and—significantly—the NORAD exercises Vigilant Guardian and Amalgam Warrior. ([US Department of Defense 5/1997](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 10/10/2002](#)) Since in 2001, Vigilant Guardian (see [\(6:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) is occurring the same time as Global Guardian, might Amalgam Warrior be as well? In his book Code Names, William Arkin says that Amalgam Warrior is “sometimes combined with Global Guardian.” ([Arkin 2005, pp. 254](#)) Amalgam Warrior tests such activities as tracking, surveillance, air interception, employing rules of engagement, attack assessment, electronic warfare, and

counter-cruise-missile operations. A previous Amalgam Warrior in 1996 involved such situations as tracking unknown aircraft that had incorrectly filed their flight plans or wandered off course, in-flight emergencies, terrorist aircraft attacks, and large-scale bomber strike missions. Amalgam Warrior 98-1 was NORAD's largest ever exercise and involved six B-1B bombers being deployed to Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, to act as an enemy threat by infiltrating the aerial borders of North America. ([McKenna 1996](#); [Arkin 2005, pp. 254](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 4/27/2005](#)) Another Amalgam Warrior in fall 2000 similarly involved four B-1 bombers acting as enemy forces trying to invade Alaska, with NORAD going from tracking the unknown aircraft to sending up "alert" F-15s in response. ([Price 10/27/2000](#); [Associated Press 10/29/2000](#)) If either one (or both) of these exercises ending with the name "Warrior" is taking place on 9/11, this could be very significant, because the word "Warrior" indicates that the exercise is a Joint Chiefs of Staff-approved, Commander in Chief, NORAD-sponsored field training exercise. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 8/25/1989](#)) Real planes would be pretending to be threats to the US and real fighters would be deployed to defend against them.

9:29 a.m. September 11, 2001: Autopilot on Flight 77 Disengaged

Flight 77's autopilot is disengaged. The plane is flying at 7,000 feet and is about 38 miles west of the Pentagon. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 9](#)) Information from the plane's recovered flight data recorder (see [September 13-14, 2001](#)) later will indicate the pilot had entered autopilot instructions for a course to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (which is nearby the Pentagon). ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#))

9:29 a.m. September 11, 2001: President Bush Makes a Scheduled Speech; Proclaims Terrorist Attack on Our Country



President Bush begins speaking at 9:29 in the library of Booker Elementary School. [*Source: Booker Elementary website*] (click image to enlarge) Still inside Booker Elementary School, President Bush gives a brief speech in front of about 200 students, plus many teachers and reporters. ([Churcher 9/8/2002](#)) He says, "Today we've had a national tragedy. Two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Center in an apparent terrorist attack on our

country.” ([Federal News Service 9/11/2001](#)) The talk occurs at exactly the time and place stated in his publicly announced advance schedule—making Bush a possible terrorist target. ([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [CNN 9/12/2001](#); [New York Times 9/12/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/22/2001](#)) This is the last most Americans will see of Bush until the evening. reporters at Booker Elementary School.

(9:29 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Confirmation of Strange Sounds Coming from Flight 93; NORAD Not Notified



John Werth. [Source: CBS] Shortly after hearing strange noises from the cockpit of Flight 93, Cleveland flight controllers notice the plane has descended about 700 feet. John Werth, the controller who is handling the plane, tells the supervisor nearest to him, “I think we have another one [i.e., another hijacking].” He will repeatedly radio the cockpit over the next four minutes, asking the pilot to confirm the hijacking, but receive no response. At 9:30 a.m., a controller asks other nearby flights on his frequency if they’ve heard screaming; several say that they have. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [Hirschhorn 9/10/2006](#)) However, despite these disturbing sounds and lack of contact with the plane, Cleveland doesn’t notify anyone else about it.

(9:29 a.m.-9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Pentagon Command Center Begins High Level Conference Call



The National Military Command Center, inside the Pentagon. [Source: *National Military Command Center*] Captain Charles

Leidig is temporarily in command of the National Military Command Center (NMCC), “the military’s worldwide nerve center.” In response to the attacks on the World Trade Center, he convenes a conference call. ([CNN 9/4/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#).) Telephone links are established between the NMCC located inside the Pentagon (but on the opposite side of the building from where the explosion will happen), Canada’s equivalent Command Center, Strategic Command, theater commanders, and federal emergency-response agencies. At one time or another, President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, key military officers, leaders of the FAA and NORAD, the White House, and Air Force One are heard on the open line. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) NORAD command director Captain Michael Jellinek claims this call was initiated “at once” after the second WTC tower was hit. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) However, the 9/11 Commission concludes it starts at 9:29 a.m. According to the commission, it begins as an all-purpose “significant event” conference. But at 9:30, Leidig states that it has just been confirmed that Flight 11 is still airborne and is heading toward Washington, DC. (This incorrect information apparently arose minutes earlier during a conference call between FAA centers (see [9:21 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).) In response to this erroneous report, the significant event conference is ended at around 9:34. It then resumes at about 9:37 as an air threat conference call, which lasts for more than eight hours. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 37](#)) This is broadcast over a loudspeaker inside the NMCC. ([Ragavan and Mazzetti 8/31/2003](#)) Brigadier General Montague Winfield, who later takes over from Leidig in charge of the NMCC, says, “All of the governmental agencies that were involved in any activity going on in the United States at that point, were in that conference.” ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) The call continues right through the Pentagon explosion; the impact is not felt within the NMCC. ([CNN 9/4/2002](#)) However, despite being in the Pentagon when it is hit, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld doesn’t enter the NMCC or participate in the call until 10:30 a.m. (see [10:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

9:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: United Flights Are Instructed to Land Immediately; American Follows Suit

United Airlines begins landing all of its flights inside the US (Note: All planes nationwide were already ordered down at 9:26 a.m. (see [9:26 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) and told to land in a reasonable amount of time. Now they’re told to land immediately.) American Airlines begins landing all of their flights five minutes later. ([Mccartney and Carey 10/15/2001](#))

9:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Langley Fighters Take Off Toward Washington; They Could Reach City in Six Minutes but Take Half an Hour



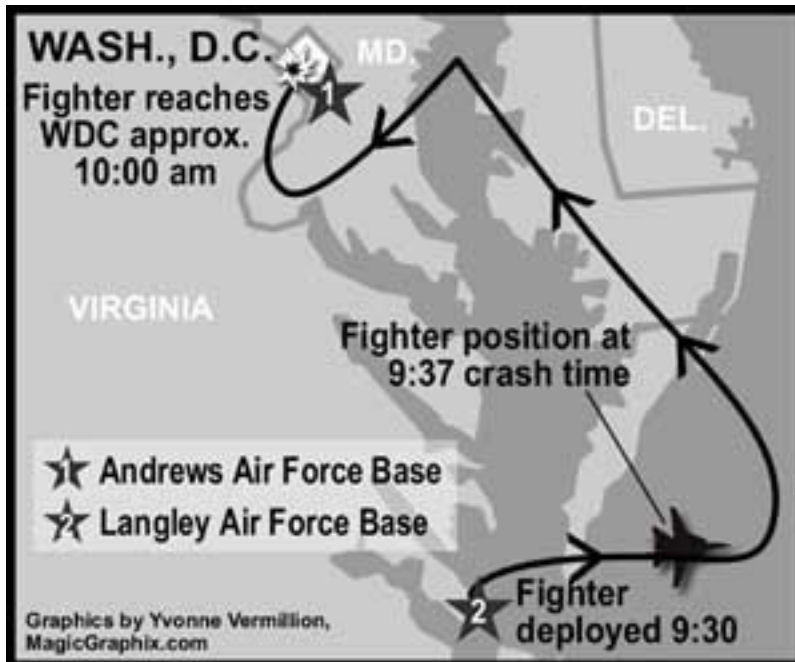
Major Brad Derrig. [Source: ABC] The three F-16s at Langley, Virginia, get airborne. ([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) The pilots are Major Brad Derrig, Captain Craig Borgstrom, and Major Dean Eckmann, all from the North Dakota Air National Guard's 119th Fighter Wing stationed at Langley. ([Sullivan 8/19/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) If the assumed NORAD departure time is correct, the F-16s would have to travel slightly over 700 mph to reach Washington before Flight 77 does. The maximum speed of an F-16 is 1,500 mph. ([Associated Press 6/16/2000](#)) Even traveling at 1,300 mph, these planes could have reached Washington in six minutes—well before any claim of when Flight 77 crashed. Yet it is claimed they are accidentally directed over the Atlantic Ocean instead, and they will only reach Washington about 30 minutes later. NORAD commander Major General Larry Arnold admits in 2003 testimony that had the fighters been going at full speed, “it is physically possible that they could have gotten over Washington” before Flight 77. But asked if the fighters would have had shootdown authorization had they reached the hijacked plane, Arnold says no, claiming that even by this time in the morning it is only “through hindsight that we are certain that this was a coordinated attack on the United States.” ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#) Sources: [Larry Arnold](#))

(9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Office of Emergency Management Command Center is Evacuated; Exact Time is Unclear



Thomas Von Essen. [Source: Publicity photo] The headquarters of New York's Office of Emergency Management (OEM), which is on the 23rd floor of WTC Building 7, is evacuated at approximately 9:30 a.m., according to the 9/11 Commission. The headquarters was opened in 1999 and was specifically intended to coordinate the city's response to disasters such as terrorist attacks (see [June 8, 1999](#)). A senior OEM official orders the evacuation after being told by a Secret Service agent that additional commercial planes are unaccounted for (see [\(9:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 283-284 and 305](#)) OEM personnel do not initially respond to the evacuation order with a sense of urgency. According to a 2003 report by the Mineta Transportation Institute, "They calmly collected personal belongings and began removing OEM records, but they were urged to abandon everything and leave the building quickly." ([Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow 9/2003, pp. 16](#)) However, there are contradictory accounts of when the OEM command center is evacuated. The National Institute of Standards of Technology (NIST) claims the evacuation happens slightly later than stated by the 9/11 Commission, at "approximately 9:44 a.m." ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 109](#)). Other accounts suggest it may have happened before 9:03, when the second attack occurred (see [\(Soon After 8:46 a.m.-9:35 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#) and [\(Shortly Before 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen will arrive at WTC 7 shortly before the collapse of the South Tower, looking for Mayor Giuliani. Learning that the OEM headquarters has been evacuated, he later claims that he thinks, "How ridiculous. We've got a thirteen-million-dollar command center and we can't even use it." ([Essen 2002, pp. 26](#)) He says in frustration, "How can we be evacuating OEM? We really need it now." He will later tell an interviewer that he'd headed for the OEM headquarters because, "I thought that was where we should all be because that's what [it] was built for." ([Fink and Mathias 2002, pp. 230](#)) All civilians were evacuated from WTC 7 earlier on, around the time the second WTC tower was hit (see [\(9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:30 a.m.-9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Langley Fighters Fly East to Ocean Instead of North to Washington; Explanations Differ



Route of the Langley Air

Base fighters to Washington. [Source: Yvonne Vermillion/ MagicGraphix.com] The three Langley fighters are airborne, but just where they go and how fast are in dispute. There are varying accounts that the fighters are ordered to Washington, New York, Baltimore, or no destination at all. The 9/11 Commission Reports that, in fact, the pilots don't understand there is an emergency and head east. They give three reasons. "First, unlike a normal scramble order, this order did not include a distance to the target, or the target's location. Second, a 'generic' flight plan incorrectly led the Langley fighters to believe they were ordered to fly due east (090) for 60 miles. The purpose of the generic flight plan was to quickly get the aircraft airborne and out of local airspace. Third, the lead pilot and local FAA controller incorrectly assumed the flight plan instruction to go '090 for 60' was newer guidance that superseded the original scramble order." (9/11 Commission 6/17/2004) However, the Wall Street Journal gives a different explanation, surprisingly from 9/11 Commission testimony. "Once they got in the air, the Langley fighters observed peacetime noise restrictions requiring that they fly more slowly than supersonic speed and takeoff over water, pointed away from Washington, according to testimony before the [9/11 Commission]." The fighters that departed to New York City over 30 minutes earlier at 8:52 a.m. (see 8:52 a.m. September 11, 2001) traveled faster than supersonic because they realized they were in a national emergency. (Paltrow 3/22/2004) In 2003 testimony, NORAD Commander Major General Larry Arnold explains that the fighters head over the ocean because NORAD is "looking outward" and has to have clearance to fly over land. (9/11 Commission 5/23/2003) One of the Langley pilots, Craig Borgstrom, later says that after taking off, "They (NEADS) [are] giving us the heading and altitude of north-northeast up to 20,000 feet. Then shortly after takeoff they changed our heading more north-westerly and gave us max-subsonic. That's as fast as you can go without breaking the sound barrier." Reportedly, the Langley fighters are now being vectored toward Washington, instead of New York. (Filson 2004, pp. 63-65) Yet, in contrast to these accounts, the BBC reports that just before takeoff at 9:24 a.m., the pilots are specifically told that Flight 77 may have been hijacked, and they get a cockpit signal

indicating they are in an emergency wartime situation (see [\(9:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). All the above accounts concur that, for whatever reason, the fighters go too far east. They don't reach Washington until roughly around 10:00 a.m.

9:30 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Requests a New Flight Plan

Shortly before Flight 93 reverses direction and heads east, someone in its cockpit radios in and asks the FAA for a new flight plan, with a final destination of Washington, DC. ([ABC News 9/11/2001](#); [ABC News 9/14/2001](#)) Jeff Krawczyk, the chief operating officer of a company that tracks aircraft movements, later comments, "We hardly ever get a flight plan change. Very unusual." ([Lincoln 9/11/2001](#)) Who it is that makes this request is unclear. The hijacker takeover of Flight 93 occurred around 9:28 a.m. (see [\(9:28 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 11](#)) , so it is presumably made by one of the hijackers. Twenty-five minutes later the pilot hijacker will also program a new destination into the plane's navigational system (see [9:55 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: American Airlines Confirms That Flight 11 Hit the North Tower

According to the 9/11 Commission, by 9:30 a.m. American Airlines confirms that Flight 11 crashed into the World Trade Center. This is almost 45 minutes after the attack occurred. Earlier, at around 9:16, an American air traffic control specialist had only told the FAA that the airline "thought" the first plane to hit the WTC had been Flight 11 (see [9:16 a.m.-9:18 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 15-16](#)) However, Colin Scoggins, a civilian manager at the FAA's Boston Center, will later claim that American Airlines refused to confirm that its plane had hit the WTC for several hours afterwards. He will claim this lack of confirmation was a factor in his mistakenly reporting that Flight 11 was still airborne at 9:21 (see [9:21 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). He says, "When we phoned United [after the second tower was hit], they confirmed that United 175 was down, and I think they confirmed that within two or three minutes. With American Airlines, we could never confirm if it was down or not, so that left doubt in our minds." ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) Yet American Airlines had the advantage over United that two of its flight attendants on Flight 11 had been in extensive contact by phone, up until a couple of minutes before their plane crashed. Amy Sweeney had been talking to Michael Woodward, a manager at the American Airlines flight services office at Boston's Logan Airport (see [8:22 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). And Betty Ong had been in contact with the airline's Southeastern Reservations Office in North Carolina, with details of this call being continuously relayed to its System Operations Control (SOC) in Fort Worth, Texas (see [\(8:21 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 8-14](#))

(9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Nonessential Personnel Evacuated From NSA Headquarters

At the National Security Agency (NSA) headquarters in Fort Meade, Maryland, Michael Hayden, the agency's director, orders the evacuation of all nonessential personnel from the NSA complex. His two reasons for this, he later says, are "just pure safety," and to protect the people who work at the agency by sending "them home on the dispersal plan." In a 2007 speech, he will state that he gave this order at 9:30 a.m. But in the account of author James Bamford, around the time Hayden gives the order he hears "some early reports about the explosion at the Pentagon." Yet the attack on the Pentagon does not occur until 9:37 (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). The reason for this discrepancy is unclear. Hayden's evacuation order is announced over loudspeakers throughout the NSA, and many of the 16,000 employees there leave. After hearing for sure that the Pentagon has been struck and that one or more hijacked aircraft is heading toward Washington, Hayden orders the three to four thousand remaining essential personnel to immediately evacuate the agency's three tall towers and relocate to the low-rise Ops 1 Building. However, as Hayden later says, "[W]e really couldn't afford to move the counterterrorism shop" where experts and linguists who track terrorists' foreign communications work, even though it is located near the top of one of the NSA's high-rise buildings. Maureen Baginski, the NSA's director of signals intelligence, goes up there shortly after the time of the Pentagon attack to calm down the workers who, according to Hayden, are "emotionally shattered." ([US Congress 10/17/2002](#); [Bamford 2004, pp. 52-54](#); [Harris 6/19/2006](#); [Hayden 5/4/2007](#)) At 9:53, analysts in the counterterrorism office will pick up and quickly translate a phone call from a bin Laden operative in Afghanistan, apparently referring to the attacks (see [9:53 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Clarke Asks Cheney's Bunker for Air Force One Fighter Escort and Shootdown Authorization; Neither Happen for Some Time

As President Bush begins a speech in Florida, counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke orders all US embassies overseas closed and orders all military bases to an alert level named Combat Threatcon. Over the next few minutes, Clarke discusses with aides where Bush should go from Sarasota, Florida. He telephones PEOC, the command bunker containing Vice President Cheney and National Security Adviser Rice, and says, "Somebody has to tell the president he can't come right back here [to Washington]. Cheney, Condi, somebody, Secret Service concurs. We do not want them saying where they are going when they take off. Second, when they take off, they should have fighter escort. Three, we need to authorize the Air Force to shoot down any aircraft—including a hijacked passenger flight—that looks like it is threatening to attack and cause large-scale death on the ground. Got it?" ([Clarke 2004, pp. 5-7](#)) However, when Bush departs on Air Force One about half an hour later, there are no fighter escorts, and none appear for an hour or so. In addition, if Clarke requests authorization for a shootdown order at this time, it is apparently ignored; neither President Bush nor Vice President Cheney give shootdown authorization for at least another 30 minutes (see [\(Between 10:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Dulles Flight Controllers Track Flight 77; Timing Disputed



Danielle O'Brien. [Source: ABC News] Radar tracks Flight 77 as it closes within 30 miles of Washington. ([CBS News 9/21/2001](#)) Todd Lewis, flight controller at Washington's Dulles Airport, later recalls, "... my colleagues saw a target moving quite fast from the northwest to the southeast. So she—we all started watching that target, and she notified the supervisor. However, nobody knew that was a commercial flight at the time. Nobody knew that was American 77.... I thought it was a military flight." ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#)) Another account is similar, saying that just before 9:30 a.m., a Dulles Airport controller sees an aircraft without a transponder traveling almost 500 mph headed toward Washington. ([Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#)) In yet another account, Danielle O'Brien, the Dulles flight controller said to be the first to spot the blip, claims she doesn't spot it until it is around 12 to 14 miles from Washington. ([Ross and Jarriel 10/24/2001](#); [News 10/24/2001](#)) There are also accounts that Vice President Cheney is told around 9:27 a.m. that radar is tracking Flight 77, 50 miles away from Washington. The 9/11 Commission says the plane isn't discovered until 9:32 a.m.

(9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FAA Emergency Operations Center Is Finally Operational

The FAA's Emergency Operations Center gets up and running, five minutes after the FAA issues an order grounding all civilian, military, and law enforcement aircraft. ([Donnelly 9/14/2001](#)) This center's role in the crisis response remains unclear.

(9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Who Warns Who of Flight 77's Impending Approach to D.C.?

Chris Stephenson, head flight controller at Washington's Reagan National Airport tower, says that he is called by the Secret Service around this time. He is told an unidentified aircraft is speeding toward Washington. Stephenson looks at the radarscope and sees Flight 77 about five miles to the west. He looks out the tower window and sees the plane turning to the right and descending. He follows it until it disappears behind a building in

nearby Crystal City, Virginia. ([Levin 8/11/2002](#)) However, according to another account, just before 9:30 a.m., a controller in the same tower has an unidentified plane on radar, “heading toward Washington and without a transponder signal to identify it. It’s flying fast, she says: almost 500 mph. And it’s heading straight for the heart of the city. Could it be American Flight 77? The FAA warns the Secret Service.” ([Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#)) In short, it is unclear whether the Secret Service warns the FAA, or vice versa.

(9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Delta Flight Mistakenly Suspected by Cleveland Flight Control

Flight controllers mistakenly suspect that Delta Flight 1989, flying west over Pennsylvania, has been hijacked. The controllers briefly suspect the sound of hijackers’ voices in Flight 93 is coming from this plane, only a few miles away. USA Today reports the flight “joins a growing list of suspicious jets. Some of their flight numbers will be scrawled on a white dry-erase board throughout the morning” at FAA headquarters. Miscommunications lead to further suspicion of Flight 1989 even after the source of the hijackers’ message is confirmed to come from Flight 93. At some point, the Cleveland Airport flight control tower is evacuated for fear Flight 1989 will crash into it. Flight 1989 lands in Cleveland at 10:10 a.m. ([Adams, Levin, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission later has another explanation as to why Flight 1989 is suspected. They claim that Boston flight control identifies it as a possible hijacking strictly because it is a transcontinental 767 that had departed from Logan Airport. Although NEADS never loses track of the flight, it directs fighters from Ohio and Michigan to intercept it soon after 10:00 a.m. Delta 1989 is one of many erroneous reports of hijackings during the course of the morning (see [\(9:09 a.m. and After\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Emergency Responders Receive False Report of a Third Plane Approaching New York



Joseph Callan. [Source: *FDNY*] Emergency responders in the lobby of the north WTC tower hear an unconfirmed report of a third plane heading toward New York. Consequently, Assistant Fire Chief Joseph Callan orders all firefighters to evacuate the tower. The third plane report is soon found to be incorrect. One firefighter tells a colleague over radio, "That plane is ours, I repeat, it is ours." Rescue operations therefore continue. ([Dwyer, Flynn, and Fessenden 7/7/2002](#); [New York City Fire Department 8/19/2002, pp. 32](#); [Fire Engineering 9/2002](#); [Gold 11/16/2002](#)) The source of the incorrect report is apparently Richard Rotanz, the deputy director of the New York Office of Emergency Management (OEM), who is reportedly in the OEM command center on the 23rd floor of WTC Building 7. A Secret Service agent in WTC 7 reportedly told him there were unconfirmed reports of other planes in the air. When OEM Director Richard Sheirer called Rotanz some time after the second WTC tower was hit, Rotanz relayed this information, telling him there were "still planes unaccounted for that may [be] heading for New York." Sheirer then told people in the North Tower lobby "that another plane was on the way." Journalists Wayne Barrett and Dan Collins, in their book *Grand Illusion*, blame Sheirer for "instantly converting unspecific information into a very specific false alarm." This false alarm quickly ends up on fire and police department dispatches. Sheirer is apparently so unnerved by it that he instructs the police department aviation unit to not let another plane hit the WTC. As he will later tell the 9/11 Commission, though, "We were grasping at straws," since no police helicopter could "stop a commercial jet going over 400 miles per hour." ([Hayden 4/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#); [Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 32-33](#)) Emergency medical technician Richard Zarrillo is currently in WTC 7, and is informed by an OEM rep there of the alleged third plane inbound for New York. While the rest of Building 7 was evacuated earlier on (see [\(9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), this false threat reportedly leads to the evacuation of the OEM command center as well (see [\(9:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Zarrillo 10/25/2001](#)) (However, some accounts indicate the command center may have been evacuated earlier (see [\(Soon After 8:46 a.m.-9:35 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#) and [\(Shortly Before 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).) Soon after hearing this false report of a third inbound plane, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, and OEM Director Richard Sheirer will all leave the North Tower lobby and relocate to a temporary command post on Barclay Street (see [\(9:50 a.m.-10:10 a.m.\)](#)

[September 11, 2001](#)). ([Kerik 2001, pp. 334](#); [9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#); [Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 342](#))

(Between 9:30-10:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Cockpit Voice Recording Begins



Key events of Flight 93 (times are based on a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette map and otherwise interpolated). [*Source: Yvonne Vermillion/ MagicGraphix.com*] (click image to enlarge) Apparently, the only cockpit voice recording recovered undamaged from any of the 9/11 crashes is from Flight 93. It recorded on a 30-minute reel, which means that the tape is continually overwritten and only the final 30 minutes of any flight is recorded, though in practice sometimes the tape is slightly longer. Flight 93's recording lasts 31 minutes and begins at this time. ([Longman 2002, pp. 206-207](#); [Hirschhorn and Mattingly 4/19/2002](#); [Hartford Courant 4/19/2004](#)) According to one account, it begins seconds before the plane is hijacked. ([Lane 11/17/2001](#)) However, the version of the tape later played for the victims' relatives begins "too late to pick up the sounds of the hijackers' initial takeover." ([MSNBC 4/18/2002](#))

(After 9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Secret Service Finally Rushes Bush Out of School

Kevin Down, a Sarasota police officer, recalls that immediately after President Bush's speech concludes, "The Secret Service agent [runs] out from the school and [says] We're under terrorist attack, we have to go now." ([BBC 9/1/2002](#)) The motorcade departs a few minutes later.

(After 9:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Van Stopped Near Temporary Command Post Shows Plane Crashing into WTC

The command center of New York's Office of Emergency Management (OEM), based in WTC Building 7, was evacuated around 9:30 a.m., according to the 9/11 Commission (though other accounts suggest it is evacuated earlier or later than this) (see [\(9:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 305](#)) Subsequently, OEM staff

members request the OEM command bus, which is equipped with radios and computers, to use as a mobile operations center. This is then used to set up a temporary command post, located at one point in front of 70 Barclay Street, with Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, OEM Commissioner John Odermatt, and the police and fire commissioners all present. Giuliani is apparently at this post when forewarned of the WTC collapse (see [\(Before 9:59 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Alarm is raised when a panel truck is stopped near the temporary command post, with a painting of a plane flying into the World Trade Center on it. Fearing that it might be a truck bomb, the New York Police Department immediately evacuates the surrounding area and calls out the bomb squad. NYPD temporarily detains the truck's occupants, who turn out to be a group of Middle Easterners who speak no English, and have rented the truck. According to a report by the Mineta Transportation Institute, the vehicle turns out to be an innocent delivery truck. The report does not state who rented the truck to the Middle Easterners, or why it shows a picture of a plane hitting the WTC. ([Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow 9/2003, pp. 20](#); [9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#))

(9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Learning of Attacks, Colin Powell Prepares to Head Back From Peru

Secretary of State Colin Powell is in Lima, Peru for a meeting of the Organization of American States. He is having breakfast with the president of Peru and his cabinet. As Powell later recalls, “[S]uddenly a note was handed to me saying that something had happened in New York City, some planes had crashed into the World Trade Center.... And then a few moments later, more information came in, and it was... obviously a terrorist attack. So we concluded the breakfast.... I told my staff, ‘Get the plane ready. We got to get home.’ Because clearly this was—this was [a] catastrophe and I had to get back to the United States.” It will take an hour to get his plane ready, so Powell stops off at the Organization of American States conference where he gives a brief statement, and other foreign ministers give speeches of support. Powell then leaves immediately for Lima’s military airport to fly back to Washington. ([Campbell 9/12/2001](#); [Woodward 2002, pp. 9-10](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [Powell 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#)³¹) However, his plane reportedly does not take off until about 12:30 p.m. EDT. ([US Department of State 9/11/2001](#)) His flight will take seven hours, during which time he has significant problems communicating with colleagues in Washington (see [\(12:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [Powell 9/11/2002](#))

(After 9:31 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Attendant Is Stabbed



Flight attendant Debbie Welsh is apparently stabbed.

[Source: Family photo] A few minutes after 9:31 a.m., a hijacker on board Flight 93 can be heard on the cockpit voice recorder ordering a woman to sit down. A woman, presumably a flight attendant, implores, “don’t, don’t.” She pleads, “Please, I don’t want to die.” Patrick Welsh, the husband of flight attendant Debbie Welsh, is later told that a flight attendant was stabbed early in the takeover, and it is strongly implied it was his wife. She was a first-class attendant, and he says, “knowing Debbie,” she would have resisted. ([Longman 2002, pp. 207](#))

9:32 a.m. September 11, 2001: Stock Exchange Closes

The New York Stock Exchange closes. It is a short distance from the WTC. ([MSNBC 9/22/2001](#))

9:32 a.m. September 11, 2001: Cheney Is Notified That Flight 77 Is Headed To Washington



Vice President Cheney pointing a finger inside the Presidential Emergency Operations Center. Footage of the World Trade Center plays on the televisions in the background (exact time is unknown). [Source: White House] According to the 9/11 Commission, the Dulles Airport terminal control facility in Washington has been looking for unidentified primary radar blips since 9:21

a.m. (see [9:21 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) and now finds one. Several Dulles flight controllers “observed a primary radar target tracking eastbound at a high rate of speed” and notify Reagan Airport. FAA personnel at both Reagan and Dulles airports notify the Secret Service. The identity or aircraft type is unknown. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) However, other accounts place the discovery of this plane by Dulles around 9:24 a.m. (see [\(9:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) or 9:30 a.m. (see [\(9:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and Vice President Cheney is told radar is tracking Flight 77 at 9:27 a.m. (see [\(9:26 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:32 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FAA Notifies United Airlines About Flight 93

The FAA notifies United Airlines’ headquarters that Flight 93 is not responding to radio calls. This lack of response, combined with the plane’s turning to the east, causes United to believe, by 9:36 a.m., that the plane has been hijacked. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 456](#))

(9:32 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Hijacker Tells Passengers Bomb Is Onboard; Flight Controllers Overhear

A hijacker says over the radio to Flight 93’s passengers: “Ladies and gentlemen, here is the captain, please sit down. Keep remaining sitting. We have a bomb aboard.” Apparently, Cleveland flight controllers can understand about a minute of screams, before a voice again says something about a “bomb on board.” A hijacker says in broken English that they are returning to the airport. ([Breslau 9/22/2001](#); [Hillston 10/28/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/3/2002](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission’s account, the hijacker’s voice says, “Keep remaining sitting. We have a bomb on board.” The controller understands, but chooses to respond, “Calling Cleveland [flight control], you’re unreadable. Say again, slowly.” Apparently there’s no answer. The controller notifies his supervisor, who soon passes the notice to FAA headquarters. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

9:33 a.m. September 11, 2001: Planes Warned Away from Washington

The BBC reports that pilot Major Dean Eckmann gets a message as he’s flying from Langley, Virginia. “They said—all airplanes, if you come within (I believe it was) 30 miles of Washington, D.C., you will be shot down.” ([BBC 9/1/2002](#)) It’s not clear who “they” are and what authority they have. However, fighters are not actually given shootdown orders until later, if at all.

(9:33 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FAA Notifies Video Conference United 93 Is Suspected Hijack

FAA Administrator Jane Garvey notifies the video conference chaired by counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke that all aircraft have been ordered to land at the nearest field and reads a list of potential hijacks including Delta 1989 and United 93. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 5](#)) Although, according to Clarke’s account, both General Richard Myers and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld are present at the conference at this point, the 9/11 Commission will later claim that the military was not notified about the hijacking of United 93 until over half an hour later (see [10:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:33-9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Eyewitness Reports Indicate There Was No Loss of Control on Flight 77

Radar data shows Flight 77 crossing the Capitol Beltway and headed toward the Pentagon. However, the plane, flying more than 400 mph, is too high when it nears the Pentagon at 9:35 a.m., crossing the Pentagon at about 7,000 feet up. ([CBS News 9/21/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) The plane then makes a difficult high-speed descending turn. It makes a “downward spiral, turning almost a complete circle and dropping the last 7,000 feet in two-and-a-half minutes. The steep turn is so smooth, the sources say, it’s clear there [is] no fight for control going on.” ([CBS News 9/21/2001](#)) It gets very near the White House during this turn. “Sources say the hijacked jet... [flies] several miles south of the restricted airspace around the White House.” ([CBS News 9/21/2001](#)) The Daily Telegraph later writes, “If the airliner had approached much nearer to the White House it might have been shot down by the Secret Service, who are believed to have a battery of ground-to-air Stinger missiles ready to defend the president’s home. The Pentagon is not similarly defended.” ([Wastell and Jacobson 9/16/2001](#)) White House spokesman Ari Fleischer suggests the plane goes even closer to the White House, saying, “That is not the radar data that we have seen. The plane was headed toward the White House.” ([CBS News 9/21/2001](#) Sources: [Ari Fleischer](#))

9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA’s Headquarters Notified There Might Be a Bomb Onboard Flight 93; NORAD Not Notified

According to the 9/11 Commission, word of Flight 93’s hijacking reaches FAA headquarters. By this time, headquarters has established an open line of communication with the FAA Command Center at Herndon, Virginia. It had instructed the center to poll all flight control centers about suspect aircraft. So, at this time, the Command Center passes on Cleveland’s message: “United 93 may have a bomb on board.” The FAA headquarters apparently does not forward this information to the military, despite having

the responsibility for doing so. Ben Sliney, the FAA's national operations manager at its Herndon Command Center, will later recount, "I do know that all the information was being relayed to headquarters and, at least as far as we were concerned, it should have been. We thought it had been given to the military at each juncture." The Command Center continually updates FAA headquarters on Flight 93 until it crashes. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [CBC 9/12/2006](#))

9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Mentions in Passing to NORAD That Flight 77 Is Missing

According to the 9/11 Commission, NEADS contacts Washington flight control to ask about Flight 11. A manager there happens to mention, "We're looking—we also lost American 77." The commission claims, "This was the first notice to the military that American 77 was missing, and it had come by chance.... No one at FAA Command Center or headquarters ever asked for military assistance with American 77." ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Yet, 38 minutes earlier, flight controllers determined Flight 77 was off course, out of radio contact, and had no transponder signal (see [\(8:56 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). They'd warned American Airlines headquarters within minutes. By some accounts, this is the first time NORAD is told about Flight 77, but other accounts have them warned around 9:25 a.m.

9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Passenger Burnett Calls Again, Learns It's a Suicide Mission

Tom Burnett calls his wife Deena a second time. He says, "They're in the cockpit." He has checked the pulse of the man who was knifed (later identified as Mark Rothenberg, sitting next to him in seat 5B) and determined he is dead. She tells him about the hits on the WTC. He responds, "Oh my God, it's a suicide mission." As they continue to talk, he tells her the plane has turned back. By this time, Deena is in constant communication with the FBI and others, and a police officer is at her house. ([Longman 2002, pp. 110](#))

(9:34 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Leaves Booker Elementary School for Sarasota Airport, Initially Heading in Wrong Direction; Possible Threat En Route



Bush, €™s

motorcade on its way to the Sarasota airport. [Source: CBC] President Bush's motorcade leaves Booker Elementary School bound for Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport. It initially heads off in the wrong direction, though, and has to perform a U-turn in order to proceed toward the airport. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Sammon 10/8/2002](#); [Paltrow 3/22/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/10/2006](#)) A few days after 9/11, Sarasota's main newspaper reports, "Sarasota barely skirted its own disaster. As it turns out, terrorists targeted the president and Air Force One on Tuesday, maybe even while they were on the ground in Sarasota and certainly not long after. The Secret Service learned of the threat just minutes after Bush left Booker Elementary." ([Davis 9/16/2001](#)) Kevin Down, a Sarasota police officer at the scene, recalls, "I thought they were actually anticipating a terrorist attack on the president while we were en route." ([Hewitt 8/30/2002](#)) ABC News reporter Ann Compton, who is part of the motorcade, recalls, "It was a mad-dash motorcade out to the airport." ([BBC 9/1/2002](#)) A year later, Chief of Staff Andrew Card says, "As we were heading to Air Force One, we did hear about the Pentagon attack, and we also learned, what turned out to be a mistake, but we learned that the Air Force One package could in fact be a target." ([MSNBC 9/9/2002](#))

9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001: NEADS Sergeant Notices Langley Jets are Off Course

At NEADS, Staff Sergeant William Huckabone is the first to notice on his radar scope that the three fighters launched from Langley Air Force Base are off course. Reportedly, they have headed east into a military training airspace over the ocean, instead of north toward the Baltimore area as instructed (see [\(9:30 a.m.-9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Along with Master Sergeant Steve Citino, another controller who is sitting next to him, Huckabone orders a Navy air traffic controller who is handling the fighters to get them turned around. The Navy controller appears not to understand the urgency of the situation. He responds, "You've got [the fighters] moving east in airspace. Now you want 'em to go to Baltimore?" Huckabone replies yes, and says, "Have him contact us on auxiliary frequency 2-3-4 decimal 6. Instead of taking handoffs to us and us handing 'em back, just tell Center they've got to go to Baltimore." The Navy controller says, "Stand

by. We'll get back to you." Citino retorts, "What do you mean, 'We'll get back to you'? Just do it!" Huckabone jokes, "I'm gonna choke that guy!" ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#))

Before 9:36 a.m. September 11, 2001: Officials Claim NORAD is Monitoring Flight 93

According to one account given by NEADS Commander Robert Marr, some time before around 9:36 when it changes direction, while it is still flying west, Flight 93 is being monitored by NEADS. Marr describes how, "We don't have fighters that way and we think [Flight 93 is] headed toward Detroit or Chicago." He says he contacts a base in the area "so they [can] head off 93 at the pass." Not only does NORAD know about the flight, but also, according to NORAD Commander Larry Arnold, "We watched the 93 track as it meandered around the Ohio-Pennsylvania area and started to turn south toward DC." (This change of direction occurs around 9:36 a.m.) ([Filson 2004](#)) This account completely contradicts the 9/11 Commission's later claim that NEADS is first notified about Flight 93 at 10:07 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

9:35 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Attendant Warns United Airlines About Hijacking; Account Spreads but Not to NORAD

The San Francisco United Airlines maintenance center receives a call from an unnamed flight attendant on Flight 93 saying that the flight has been hijacked. The information is quickly passed on. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#)) Within ten minutes, "everyone" in the United Airlines crisis center "now [knows] that a flight attendant on board had called the mechanics desk to report that one hijacker had a bomb strapped on and another was holding a knife on the crew." ([Mccartney and Carey 10/15/2001](#))

(9:35 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Silent Flight 93 Climbs and Drops; NORAD Still Not Notified

When Flight 93 is over Youngstown, Ohio, Stacey Taylor and other Cleveland flight controllers see it rapidly climb 6,000 feet above its assigned altitude of 35,000 feet and then rapidly descend. The plane drops so quickly toward Cleveland that the flight controllers worry they might be the target. Other accounts say the climb occurs around 9:35 a.m. Controllers continue to try to contact the plane but still get no response. ([Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(9:35 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Treasury Department Evacuates; Pentagon and Other Washington Department Do Not

The Treasury Department is evacuated a few minutes before Flight 77 crashes. ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004](#)) Yet, CNN notes that “after the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) warned the military’s air defense command that a hijacked airliner appeared to be headed toward Washington, the federal government failed to make any move to evacuate the White House, Capitol, State Department, or the Pentagon.” ([Plante 9/16/2001](#)) A Pentagon representative says, “The Pentagon was simply not aware that this aircraft was coming our way.” Even Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and his top aides in the Pentagon remain unaware of any danger up to the moment of impact. ([Adcock, Donovan, and Gordon 9/23/2001](#)) Senators and congresspeople are in the Capitol building, which is not evacuated until 9:48 a.m. (see [9:48 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) Only Vice President Cheney, National Security Adviser Rice, and possibly a few others are evacuated to safety a few minutes after 9:03 a.m. (see [\(After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Yet, supposedly, since at least the Flight 11 crash, “military officials in a Command Center [the National Military Command Center] on the east side of the [Pentagon] [are] urgently talking to law enforcement and air traffic control officials about what to do.” ([New York Times 9/15/2001](#)) The White House is evacuated at 9:45 a.m. (see [\(9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#))

(Between 9:35 a.m. and 10:35 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NORAD Commander Spends 45 Minutes Driving to Operations Center

In the middle of the 9/11 attacks, General Ralph Eberhart, the commander of NORAD, drives from his NORAD headquarters office at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado to the NORAD operations center in Cheyenne Mountain, about a dozen miles away. The journey reportedly takes him 45 minutes and en route he loses a cell phone call with Vice President Cheney. The reason he makes this journey is unknown, though it is reported that there are superior communications capabilities available at Cheyenne Mountain. ([Zubeck 6/16/2006](#); [Finley 7/28/2006](#); [Reid 7/29/2006](#)) The exact times when Eberhart departs Peterson AFB and arrives at Cheyenne Mountain are unclear. General Richard Myers says that Eberhart phones him from Peterson either just before or just after the Pentagon is hit, which suggests that Eberhart heads out some time between 9:35 a.m. and 9:40 a.m. ([Armed Forces Radio And Television Service 10/17/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Eberhart tells the 9/11 Commission that when he arrives at the NORAD operations center, the order to shoot down hijacked aircraft has already been passed down NORAD’s chain of command. According to the commission’s timeline, this would indicate he arrives after 10:31 a.m. (see [10:31 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 42](#)) Yet other reports state that the massive blast doors to

Cheyenne Mountain are shut at around 10:15 a.m. (see [10:15 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), which suggests that Eberhart arrives earlier.

(9:35 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Contractors Evacuate Pentagon Just Before it is Hit

A contract crew has been installing furniture in the southwest perimeter of the Pentagon. Construction workers are currently doing the final touching up, after more than three years of renovation work on this area of the building, and some Defense Department employees are already moving into their new office spaces. But the wife of one crewmember phones her husband after seeing footage of the attacks in New York on CNN and says she feels he is in danger at the Pentagon. Hearing of the attacks, the crew leader instructs his 23 workers to abandon what they are doing and evacuate. Moments later, as they are crossing the parking lot, they see the airliner crash into the exact area of the Pentagon they had just left. ([Cahlink 5/1/2002](#); [Freni 2003, pp. 43-44](#)) There is no evidence that anyone else in the Pentagon evacuates the building before it is struck (see [\(9:35 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Adcock, Donovan, and Gordon 9/23/2001](#)) Another report, which appears to be describing the same incident, says the construction crew evacuates for a different reason: to discuss security with a customer in the parking lot. ([Ryan 9/14/2001](#))

(9:34 a.m.-11:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: President's Attempts at Communicating with White House Severely Hindered

After departing the Booker Elementary School, President Bush experiences problems trying to communicate with the White House. On his way to Air Force One, he is unable to get a secure phone line to Dick Cheney, and has to rely instead on using a borrowed cell phone. According to the CBC, even this cell phone doesn't work. Lee Hamilton, vice chair of the 9/11 Commission, claims the difficulty is because the members of Bush's entourage, all suddenly trying to call Washington, create a "communication jam." ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [Shenon and Marquis 6/18/2004](#); [Burke and Harris 6/20/2004](#); [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/10/2006](#)) Yet after boarding Air Force One the problems continue, despite the plane's elaborate communications equipment. Bush will later tell the 9/11 Commission "that he was deeply dissatisfied with the ability to communicate from Air Force One," and that "this was a very major flaw." Thomas Kean, chair of the commission, says Bush's inability to communicate with the White House is "scary on both sides because the President is the only one who can give certain orders that need to be given." ([NBC 4/4/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/10/2006](#)) Some time before 11:45 a.m., Bush's senior adviser Karen Hughes tries calling him through the White House switchboard. In a shaky voice, the operator tells her, "Ma'am, we can't reach Air Force One." Hughes is very frightened as, she says, "I never had that happen before." ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/10/2006](#))

(Before 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Sheer Coincidence Brings Emergency Rescue and Secret Service Near to Pentagon

In response to an emergency 9-1-1 telephone call, the Arlington County Emergency Communications Center dispatches several units to deal with an apartment fire in Rosslyn, Virginia—within the vicinity of the Pentagon. Because this fire is in a high-rise building, nine different fire and medical service units are dispatched. However, the first engine crew to arrive radios to the other units that the fire has gone out. Consequently, by “sheer coincidence,” at the time when the Pentagon is hit, there are a significant number of available fire and medical service units already on the road nearby. ([US Department of Health & Human Services 7/2002](#); [Eversburg 11/2002](#)) Additionally, Secret Service personnel are concentrated around the heliport a short distance from where Flight 77 will hit: “President Bush was scheduled to fly from Florida that afternoon, and his helicopter, Marine One, would carry him to the Pentagon. That meant Secret Service everywhere and their cars blocking the driveway.” ([Alessi and Sprengelmeyer 8/1/2002](#))

(Before 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Turns, Then Disappears from Radar

Washington flight controllers are watching Flight 77’s radar blip. Just before radar contact is lost, FAA headquarters is told, “The aircraft is circling. It’s turning away from the White House.” ([Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#)) Then the blip disappears. Its last known position is six miles from the Pentagon and four miles from the White House. The plane is said to be traveling 500 mph, or a mile every seven seconds. ([CBS News 9/21/2001](#); [Seely 1/25/2002](#); [Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#))

(Before 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Said to Make Eerie Predictions, but Witness Who Gives Account Is Long Gone

Representative Christopher Cox later claims he is still meeting with Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. They are still discussing missile defense, apparently completely oblivious of the approaching Flight 77. Watching television coverage from New York City, Rumsfeld says to Cox, “Believe me, this isn’t over yet. There’s going to be another attack, and it could be us.” According to the Daily Telegraph, Flight 77 hits the building “moments later.” ([Langley 12/16/2001](#)) In another telling, Cox claims that Rumsfeld says, “If we remain vulnerable to missile attack, a terrorist group or rogue state that demonstrates the capacity to strike the US or its allies from long range could have the power to hold our entire country hostage to nuclear or other blackmail. And let me tell you, I’ve been around the block a few times. There will be another event.” Rumsfeld repeats that

sentence for emphasis. According to Cox, “Within minutes of that utterance, Rumsfeld’s words proved tragically prophetic.” Cox also claims, “I escaped just minutes before the building was hit.” ([Office of Representative Christopher Cox 9/11/2001](#)) However, Rumsfeld claims that this meeting with Cox ended before the second WTC crash, which occurred at 9:03 a.m. Cox himself said that after being told of the WTC, “[Rumsfeld] sped off, as did I.” Cox says he immediately headed to his car, making it impossible for him to still be in the Pentagon “just minutes before” it is hit. ([Theimer 9/11/2001](#)) Another account puts Rumsfeld’s “I’ve been around the block a few times. There will be another event” comment two minutes before the first WTC crash at 8:46 a.m., when Rumsfeld reportedly makes other predictive comments. ([Woodward 9/16/2001](#))

9.36 a.m. September 11, 2001: Military Cargo Plane Asked to Identify Flight 77



A typical C-130. [*Source: US Air Force Reserve Command*]/Reagan Airport flight control instructs a military C-130 (Golfer 06) that has just departed Andrews Air Force Base to intercept Flight 77 and identify it. ([New York Times 10/16/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#)) Remarkably, this C-130 is the same C-130 that is 17 miles from Flight 93 when it later crashes into the Pennsylvania countryside (see [10:08 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Pittsburgh Channel 9/15/2001](#); [Sternberg 9/11/2002](#)) The pilot, Lt. Col. Steve O’Brien, claims he took off around 9:30 a.m., planning to return to Minnesota after dropping supplies off in the Caribbean. He later describes his close encounter: “When air traffic control asked me if we had him [Flight 77] in sight, I told him that was an understatement—by then, he had pretty much filled our windscreen. Then he made a pretty aggressive turn so he was moving right in front of us, a mile and a half, two miles away. I said we had him in sight, then the controller asked me what kind of plane it was. That caught us up, because normally they have all that information. The controller didn’t seem to know anything.” O’Brien reports that the plane is either a 757 or 767 and its silver fuselage means it is probably an American Airlines plane. “They told us to turn and follow that aircraft—in 20 plus years of flying, I’ve never been asked to do something like that.” ([Sternberg 9/11/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission Reports that it is a C-130H and the pilot specifically identifies the hijacked plane as a 757. Seconds after impact, he reports, “Looks like that aircraft crashed into the Pentagon, sir.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Clinic Has Crisis Equipment Ready Due to Inventory



Major Lorie Brown. [Source: *US Medicine*] The DiLorenzo Tricare Health Clinic inside the Pentagon has its equipment for dealing with mass casualty (MASCAL) incidents out of storage this morning, because staff members are doing an inventory. Major Lorie Brown, the chief nurse, will need to initiate the clinic's MASCAL disaster plan after the Pentagon is hit at 9:37 a.m. (see [Soon after 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). She later says, "So there were many pieces that just fell into place and worked so well on that day. It was just fortuitous. It was just amazing that way that things kind of happened the way they did." ([Boivin 9/24/2001](#); [Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 7](#))

9:36 a.m. September 11, 2001: Report of Airliner Approaching White House Sets off 'Frenzy' at NEADS

Colin Scoggins at Boston flight control calls NEADS to report a low-flying airliner he has spotted six miles southeast of the White House. He can offer no details regarding its identity. The plane is reportedly Flight 77, but as it has its transponder turned off, no one realizes this at the time. The news of the plane "sets off a frenzy." Major Kevin Nasypany orders Major James Fox, head of the NEADS Weapons Team, "Get your fighters there as soon as possible!" Staff Sergeant William Huckabone says, "Ma'am, we are going AFIO [emergency military control of the fighters] right now with Quit 2-5 [the Langley fighters]. They are going direct Washington." ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) The Langley fighters will arrive over Washington some time around 10 a.m. (see [9:55 a.m.-10:15 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:36 a.m.-10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Military Claims it is Tracking Flight 93 and Ready to Shoot it Down; 9/11 Commission Says Otherwise

Several senior officials claim that the US military is tracking Flight 93 as it heads east and is ready to shoot it down if necessary.

■ Brigadier General Montague Winfield says that the Pentagon's National Military Command Center (NMCC) has "received the report from the FAA that Flight 93 had turned off its transponder, had turned, and was now heading towards Washington, DC." He adds, "The decision was made to try to go intercept Flight 93." ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#))

■Major General Larry Arnold, the commander of the Continental United States NORAD Region, says, “I was personally anxious to see what 93 was going to do, and our intent was to intercept it.” Three fighters have taken off from Langley Air Force Base in Virginia (see [9:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). According to Arnold, “we launched the aircraft out of Langley to put them over top of Washington, DC, not in response to American Airline 77, but really to put them in position in case United 93 were to head that way.” ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) He says, “as we discussed it in the conference call, we decided not to move fighters toward 93 until it was closer because there could have been other aircraft coming in,” but adds, “I had every intention of shooting down United 93 if it continued to progress toward Washington, DC... whether we had authority or not.” ([Filson 2004, pp. 73](#))

■NEADS Commander Robert Marr is reportedly “focused on United Flight 93, headed straight toward Washington.” He concurs with Arnold, saying, “United Airlines Flight 93 would not have hit Washington, DC. He would have been engaged and shot down before he got there.” ([Filson 2004, pp. 73](#)) Marr and Arnold both say they were tracking Flight 93 even earlier on, while it was still heading west (see [Before 9:36 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

Yet, completely contradicting these claims, the 9/11 Commission will conclude that the military only learned about Flight 93 around the time it crashed. It says the NMCC learned of the hijacking at 10:03 a.m. (see [10:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Based upon official records, including recordings of the NEADS operations floor, it says NEADS never followed Flight 93 on radar and was first alerted to it at 10:07 a.m. (see [10:07 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 30-31, 34 and 42](#); [Farmer 4/30/2006](#); [Bronner 8/1/2006](#))

Shortly Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Navy Intelligence Unit at Pentagon Learns of Third Hijacked Plane Approaching Washington



Dan Shanower. [*Source: Family photo / Associated Press*] Petty Officer Jason Lhuillier is on duty at the Chief of Naval Operations Intelligence Plot (CNO-IP). This small intelligence unit is located within the Navy Command Center at the Pentagon, on the first floor of the building's southwest face. Since learning of the second plane hitting the WTC, he and his colleagues have been trying to build the intelligence picture, liaising with such agencies as the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Shortly before the Pentagon is struck, Lhuillier receives a phone call from the National Military Joint Intelligence Center (NMJIC). ([Becker, Vogel, and Ruane 9/16/2001](#); [Leiby 1/20/2002](#); [Harnden 9/11/2002](#)) Like the National Military Command Center (NMCC), the NMJIC is located in the Joint Staff area of the Pentagon. It constantly monitors worldwide developments for any looming crises that might require US involvement. ([Joint Chiefs of Staff n.d.](#); [Blazar 9/25/1997](#)) The caller informs Lhuillier, “We’ve got indications of another aircraft that’s been hijacked. It’s heading out to DC.” ([Harnden 9/11/2002](#)) The caller may possibly be referring to the same incorrect report that was received by the NMCC at around 9:30 a.m., that Flight 11 is still airborne and heading toward Washington (see [\(9:29 a.m.-9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 37](#)) Lhuillier then interrupts a meeting between Commander Dan Shanower, who is in charge of the CNO-IP, and six others, to tell them about this third plane. Commander David Radi, an aide to Admiral William Fallon, the vice chief of naval operations, is in his Pentagon office about 100 yards from the CNO-IP. He has also heard fragmentary reports about another hijacked plane heading towards Washington, and that fighter jets are being scrambled. He calls the CNO-IP for more information, but is only told, “We’re working on it.” Radi later recalls that he’d wondered where the plane might be heading: “I’m thinking to myself, ‘Well, the Pentagon, the White House or the Capitol.’” Within minutes, the Pentagon is struck. The CNO-IP will be destroyed in the impact, and seven people working in it will be killed. ([Leiby 1/20/2002](#); [Arlington County Police Department 2/21/2002](#); [Harnden 9/11/2002](#))

(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Airborne Command Post Launched from Near Washington

An E-4B National Airborne Operations Center (NAOC) takes off from an unspecified airfield outside of Washington, DC. The aircraft, which is carrying civilian and military officials, is launched in order to participate in a pre-scheduled military exercise. This would be Global Guardian, which is being conducted on this day by the US Strategic Command (Stratcom) to test its ability to fight a nuclear war (see [8:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). E-4Bs are a militarized version of a Boeing 747. They serve as an airborne command center that could be used by the president, vice president, and Joint Chiefs of Staff, in order to execute war plans and coordinate government operations during a national emergency. Two other such planes are also participating in Global Guardian on this day (see [Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). For the exercise, the E-4B launched from outside Washington is supposed to be using and testing its sophisticated technology and communications equipment. ([Dejka 2/27/2002](#); [Verton 2003, pp. 143-144](#)) Global Guardian was reportedly canceled after 9:03, when the second WTC tower was hit. ([Dejka 9/8/2002](#)) But according to journalist and author Dan Verton, the E-4B located outside Washington has “only just taken off” at the time the Pentagon is hit (which is at 9:37 a.m.). Verton says the aircraft is then “immediately ordered to cease the military exercise it was conducting and prepare to become the actual national airborne operations center.” ([Verton 2003, pp. 144](#)) Minutes after the Pentagon attack, an unidentified four-engine jet plane is seen circling above the White House (see [\(9:42 a.m.\) September 11,](#)

2001). CNN later suggests this is an E-4B, so it is possible it is the same plane as is launched from the airfield outside Washington. ([CNN 9/12/2007](#))

(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: E-mail Informs Pentagon Staff that Alert Level Is Still ‘Normal’



Peter Murphy. [Source: *Gerry J. Gilmore*] Peter Murphy, the counsel to the commandant of the Marine Corps, is in his office on the fourth floor of the Pentagon's outer E-ring, watching the CNN coverage of the attacks in New York. Having seen what happened, Murphy had asked Robert Hogue, his deputy counsel, to check with their administrative clerk, Corporal Timothy Garofola, on the current security status of the Pentagon. Yet despite what has happened in New York, Garofola has reportedly "just received an e-mail from the security manager to all Department of Defense employees that the threat condition remained 'normal.'" Garofola passes this information to Hogue. As Hogue is stepping into Murphy's office to relay the message to him, there is a tremendous explosion as the Pentagon is hit. ([Allison 11/2001](#); [Bhatti 9/11/2002](#)) However John Jester, the chief of the Defense Protective Service, which guards the Pentagon, later claims that after the second attack in New York, he'd ordered the Pentagon's threat level to be raised, though only by one notch, from "normal" to "alpha" (see [Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Murphy 2002, pp. 243-244](#)) The aircraft crashes two floors below and just yards to the right of Murphy's office. Fortunately, neither he nor any of the men with him are hurt, and they all manage to make it safely outside. ([Gilmore 8/16/2002](#))

(9:36 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Force Officer Sees a Military Helicopter Circling the Pentagon?

An unnamed senior Air Force officer tells a CNN reporter minutes later that, just prior to the Pentagon being hit, he is outside the building and sees what appears to be a US military helicopter circling the Pentagon. He says it disappears behind the building where the helicopter landing pad is, and then he sees an explosion. ([CNN 9/11/2001](#)) The Guardian reports one witness claiming that the explosion occurring when the Pentagon is hit blows up a helicopter circling overhead. ([Borger et al. 9/12/2001](#)) No other witnesses are known to report seeing this helicopter. However, Dick Cheney will later tell NBC's

Meet the Press that “the first reports on the Pentagon attack suggested a helicopter” hit it. ([Cheney 9/16/2001](#)) Interestingly, New York Times columnist William Safire will report that, at approximately this time, Dick Cheney is told that either another plane or “a helicopter loaded with explosives” is heading for the White House. ([Safire 9/13/2001](#))

(9:36 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Reverses Course

Having followed a seemingly normal course until now, after reaching the Cleveland area, Flight 93 suddenly makes a sharp turn to the south. It then makes another turn back eastward, cutting through West Virginia’s Northern Panhandle before re-entering Pennsylvania. ([Lane and Pan 9/12/2001](#); [Silver 9/13/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 41](#)) Having thus turned 180 degrees, it now heads toward Washington, DC. ([NPA 9/13/2001](#))

(9:36 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Cleveland Flight Control Wants NORAD Notified; FAA Command Center Says People Are Working on It



FAA, €™s Cleveland Center [*Source: ABC News*] According to the 9/11 Commission, at about this time Cleveland flight control specifically asks the FAA Command Center whether someone has requested the military to launch fighters toward Flight 93. Cleveland offers to contact a nearby military base. The Command Center replies that FAA personnel well above them in the chain of command have to make that decision and are working on the issue. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Cleveland overheard a hijacker say there was a “bomb on board” at 9:32 a.m. and passed the message to FAA higher ups (see [\(9:32 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to John Werth, the Cleveland controller handling Flight 93, “Within three or four minutes, probably, of when [the hijacking] happened, I asked if the military was advised yet. Had anybody called the military? They said, ‘don’t worry. That’s been taken care of,’ which I think to them, meant they had called the command center in Washington.” ([Hirschhorn 9/10/2006](#))

(9:36 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Cleveland Center Receives Numerous Bomb Threats Concerning Planes

According to a book about the FAA's response to the 9/11 attacks, Cleveland Center air traffic controllers follow Flight 93 as it turns south and reverses course (see [\(9:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). But, "bomb threats called in concerning four other planes focused their attention onto what they believed to be more critical maneuvers." ([Freni 2003, pp. 40](#)) One of these four planes is presumably Delta Flight 1989, which is mistakenly thought to be hijacked and to have a bomb aboard (see [\(9:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([O'Mara 9/11/2006](#)) The identities of the other three planes are unknown. By this time, Cleveland Center has already overheard a radio transmission from Flight 93 stating, "We have a bomb on board" (see [\(9:32 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and has acknowledged this, reporting, "United 93 may have a bomb on board," so it seems unlikely that other threatened aircraft would be regarded as "more critical maneuvers." ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

Before 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Army Base near Pentagon Holding Air Field Fire Fighting Training

At the Education Center at Fort Myer, an army base 1.5 miles northwest of the Pentagon, the base's firefighters are undertaking training variously described as "an airport rescue firefighters class"; "an aircraft crash refresher class"; "a week-long class on Air Field Fire Fighting"; and a "training exercise in airport emergency operations." Despite hearing of the first WTC crash during a break, with no access to a TV, the class simply continues with its training. According to Bruce Surette, who is attending the session: "We had heard some radio transmissions from some other units in Arlington about how they thought they had a plane down here or a plane down there. So you're thinking, 'Hey this could be real.' But it really didn't strike home as being real until our guy came on the radio and said where the plane crash was." The Fort Myer firefighters then immediately head for the Pentagon, arriving there at 9:40 a.m., only three minutes after it is hit, and participate in the firefighting and rescue effort there. The fire station at the Pentagon heliport is actually operated by the Fort Myer Fire Department, and is manned on the morning of 9/11 by three Fort Myer firefighters who have already undertaken the airfield firefighting training. ([Brewster 10/4/2001](#); [Lilly and Walz 11/2/2001](#); [Ward 4/2002](#); [US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002](#); [Wallace 4/17/2003](#)) The Fort Myer military community, which includes Fort Myer and Fort Lesley J. McNair—another army base, just two miles east of the Pentagon—was scheduled to hold a "force protection exercise" the week after 9/11. However this has been cancelled, so just prior to the attacks the morning of September 11, "some of its participants [are] breathing a sigh of relief." ([Norris 9/14/2001](#))

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Fireman Dodges Flight 77; Immediately Notifies Superior About Crashed Jumbo Jet



Internet researchers have put together this image showing how an object the size of a jumbo jet clips a number of light poles and then destroys columns inside the Pentagon. [From website] [Source: *Eric Bart*] (click image to enlarge) Fireman Alan Wallace is busy with a safety crew at the Pentagon's heliport pad. As Wallace is walking in front of the Pentagon, he looks up and sees Flight 77 coming straight at him. It is about 25 feet off the ground, with no landing wheels visible, a few hundred yards away, and closing fast. He runs about 30 feet and dives under a nearby van. ([Maranis 9/21/2001](#)) The plane is traveling at about 460 mph, and flying so low that it clips the tops of streetlights. ([CBS News 9/21/2001](#)) Using the radio in the van, he calls his fire chief at nearby Fort Myer and says, "We have had a commercial carrier crash into the west side of the Pentagon at the heliport, Washington Boulevard side. The crew is OK. The airplane was a 757 Boeing or a 320 Airbus." ([Alessi and Sprengelmeyer 8/1/2002](#))

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Crashes into Reinforced Section of the Pentagon



The Pentagon explodes. [Source: Donley/

Sipa] Flight 77 crashes into the Pentagon. All 64 people on the plane are killed. A hundred-and-twenty-four people working in the building are killed, and a further victim will die in hospital several days later. ([CNN 9/17/2001](#); [North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Vogel 11/21/2001](#); [Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [MSNBC 9/3/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [Minutes 9/11/2002](#)) Flight 77 hits the first floor of the Pentagon's west wall. The impact and the resulting explosion heavily damage the building's three outer rings. The path of destruction cuts through Army accounting offices on the outer E Ring, the Navy Command Center on the D Ring, and the Defense Intelligence Agency's comptroller's office on the C Ring. ([Vogel 2007, pp. 431 and 449](#)) Flight 77 strikes the only side of the Pentagon that had recently been renovated—it was “within days of being totally [renovated].” ([US Department of Defense 9/15/2001](#)) “It was the only area of the Pentagon with a sprinkler system, and it had been reconstructed with a web of steel columns and bars to withstand bomb blasts. The area struck by the plane also had blast-resistant windows—two inches thick and 2,500 pounds each—that stayed intact during the crash and fire. While perhaps, 4,500 people normally would have been working in the hardest-hit areas, because of the renovation work only about 800 were there.” More than 25,000 people work at the Pentagon. ([Schrader 9/16/2001](#)) Furthermore, the plane hits an area that has no basement. As journalist Steve Vogel later points out, “If there had been one under the first floor, its occupants could easily have been trapped by fire and killed when the upper floors collapsed.” ([Vogel 2007, pp. 450](#))

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Witnesses See Military Cargo Plane Near Flight 77; Pilot Implies He's Far Away

A C-130 transport plane that has been sent to follow Flight 77 is trailing only a short distance behind the plane as it crashes. This curious C-130, originally bound for Minnesota, is the same C-130 that will be 17 miles from Flight 93 when it later crashes into the Pennsylvania countryside. ([Pittsburgh Channel 9/15/2001](#); [Sternberg 9/11/2002](#)) A number of people see this plane fly remarkably close to Flight 77:

- Kelly Knowles says that seconds after seeing Flight 77 pass, she sees a “second plane that seemed to be chasing the first [pass] over at a slightly different angle.” ([Scanlon 9/15/2001](#))

- Keith Wheelhouse says the second plane was a C-130; two other witnesses aren't certain. ([Scanlon 9/15/2001](#)) Wheelhouse "believes it flew directly above the American Airlines jet, as if to prevent two planes from appearing on radar, while at the same time guiding the jet toward the Pentagon." As Flight 77 descends toward the Pentagon, the second plane veers off west. ([Scanlon 9/14/2001](#))
- USA Today reporter Vin Narayanan, who saw the Pentagon explosion, says, "I hopped out of my car after the jet exploded, nearly oblivious to a second jet hovering in the skies." ([Narayanan 9/17/2001](#))
- USA Today Editor Joel Sucherman sees a second plane but gives few details. ([Dodge 9/13/2001](#)) Brian Kennedy, press secretary for a congressman, and others also see a second plane. ([Doyle 9/15/2001](#))
- An unnamed worker at Arlington National Cemetery "said a mysterious second plane was circling the area when the first one attacked the Pentagon." ([Gibb 12/20/2001](#))
- John O'Keefe is driving a car when he sees the Pentagon crash. "The first thing I did was pull over onto the shoulder, and when I got out of the car I saw another plane flying over my head.... Then the plane—it looked like a C-130 cargo plane—started turning away from the Pentagon, it did a complete turnaround." ([New York Law Journal 9/12/2001](#))
- The pilot of the C-130, Lieutenant Colonel Steve O'Brien, is later interviewed, but his account differs from the on-the-ground eyewitnesses. He claims that just before the explosion, "With all of the East Coast haze, I had a hard time picking him out," implying he is not nearby. He also says that just after the explosion, "I could see the outline of the Pentagon," again implying he is not nearby. He then asks "the controller whether [I] should set up a low orbit around the building," but he is told "to get out of the area as quickly as possible." "I took the plane once through the plume of smoke and thought if this was a terrorist attack, it probably wasn't a good idea to be flying through that plume." ([Sternberg 9/11/2002](#))

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Langley Fighters Still Short of Washington; Where and Why Is Not Clear



A typical F-16. [*Source: NORAD*]Accounts differ as to how far from Washington the F-16 fighters scrambled from Langley are when Flight 77 crashes. The Langley, Virginia, base is 129 miles from Washington. NORAD originally claimed that, at the time of the crash, the fighters are 105 miles away, despite having

taken off seven minutes earlier. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission claims that at 9:36 a.m., NEADS discovers that Flight 77 is only a few miles from the White House and is dismayed to find the fighters have headed east over the ocean. They are ordered to Washington immediately, but are still about 150 miles away. This is farther away than the base from which they took off. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) The F-16 pilot codenamed Honey (who is apparently Captain Craig Borgstrom) offers a different explanation. As previously mentioned, he says they are flying toward New York, when they see a black column of smoke coming from Washington, about 30 or 40 miles to the west. He is then asked over the radio by NEADS if he can confirm the Pentagon is burning. He confirms it. He says that the mission of the Langley pilots at this time is clear: to keep all airplanes away from Washington. The F-16s are then ordered to set up a defensive perimeter above Washington. ([Longman 2002, pp. 76](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 66](#); [Sheehy 2/11/2004](#)) The maximum speed of an F-16 is 1,500 mph. ([Associated Press 6/16/2000](#)) Had the fighters traveled straight to Washington at 1,300 mph, they would have reached Washington at least one minute before Flight 77. Furthermore, at the time the Pentagon is hit, according to Craig Borgstrom, he and the other Langley pilots are hearing a lot of chatter over their radios, but nothing about airliners crashing into buildings. He says they are “all three on different frequencies... and [are] getting orders from a lot of different people.” ([Filson 2004, pp. 66](#))

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Either Being Briefed by CIA or with Clarke Video Conference When Pentagon Is Hit

There are conflicting accounts of what Defense Secretary Rumsfeld does in the 35 minutes between the second WTC crash and the Pentagon crash. In his 9/11 Commission testimony, he covers the time with the phrase “shortly thereafter:” “I was in my office with a CIA briefer and I was told that a second plane had hit the other tower. Shortly thereafter, at 9:38 a.m., the Pentagon shook with an explosion of then unknown origin.” ([9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#)) In the book *Bush at War*, Bob Woodward writes, “Aware of the attacks on the World Trade Center, Rumsfeld had been proceeding with his daily intelligence briefing in his office” when the Pentagon gets hit. ([Woodward 2002](#)) However, according to counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke, Rumsfeld joins a video conference at 9:10 a.m. (see [\(9:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), shortly after the second WTC hit, and stays with the conference, possibly from his office. After being told the Pentagon has been hit, Clarke says, “I can still see Rumsfeld on the screen, so the whole building didn’t get hit”. The military response to the 9/11 crisis is being coordinated in the NMCC, apparently located only around 200 feet away, directly below Rumsfeld’s office. ([Aldinger 9/11/2001](#); [Clarke 9/15/2001](#))

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: United Flights Are Told to Bar Cockpit Entry

Captain Jim Hosking, piloting United Flight 890 from Japan to Los Angeles, is sent a warning message to his cockpit printer. It reads, "There has been a terrorist attack against United Airlines and American Airlines aircraft. We are advised there may be additional hijackings in progress. Shut down all access to the flight deck. Unable to elaborate further." He tells his first officer, "Get out the crash axe." Other pilots are receiving similar messages around this time. ([Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#))

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Navy Command Center Employees Killed While Trying to Get More Fighters Launched

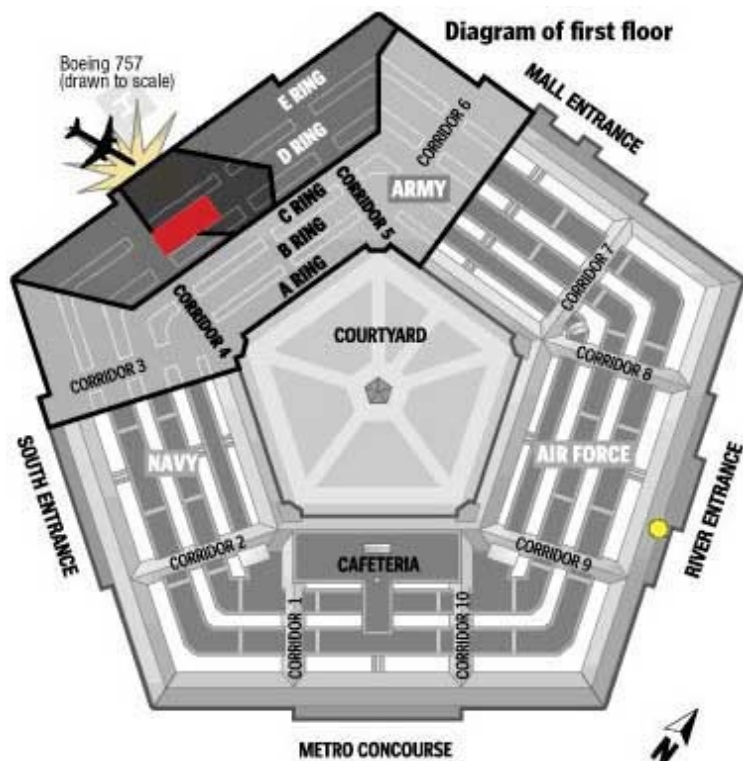


Diagram showing the area of impact at the Pentagon. The Navy Command Center is highlighted in red. [Source: *Washington Post*] (click image to enlarge) Edward Earhart, Matthew Flocco, and their supervisor Lt. Nancy McKeown are inside the Pentagon, watching the televised footage of the burning World Trade Center. They belong to a small meteorological unit based in the Navy Command Center, located on the first floor of the building's southwest face. McKeown asks her two young aides to bring up New York on the computer because the Command Center is going to send some fighter jets there, in case there is another attack on the city. She orders them to program weather updates for military aircraft converging on New York. However, very soon after this, the Command Center is directly impacted when the Pentagon is hit, and both Flocco and Earhart are killed. ([Becker, Vogel, and Ruane 9/16/2001](#); [McConnell 9/2002](#); [CNN 9/8/2002](#); [Riley 4/12/2006](#)) Ronald Vauk, the watch commander in the Navy Command Center, is on the phone trying to get more fighters scrambled at the time the Pentagon is hit, though news reports say he wants them

to protect Washington, not New York. ([John Hopkins Magazine 11/2001](#); [Clines 11/17/2001](#); [Shane 9/11/2002](#)) At 9:24 a.m., NORAD had ordered fighters at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia to scramble (see [\(9:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), though these will not arrive over the Pentagon until after it is hit (see [\(9:55 a.m.-10:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) According to Lt. Kevin Shaeffer, who works in the Command Center, just prior to the attack on the Pentagon, the watch section and watch leaders in the center are actively engaged in logging and recording the events going on in New York. He later says, “they all responded in exactly the way they were trained,” and, “Had the Command Center not been destroyed it surely would have been able to provide the highest levels of our Navy leadership with updates as to exactly what was occurring.” ([Chips 3/2003](#))

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 77 Misses Key Pentagon Officials

When Flight 77 hits the Pentagon, it misses the parts of the building known to house the military’s most senior leaders. Journalist and author Steve Vogel later says, “The hijackers had not hit the River or Mall sides” of the building, “where the senior military leadership had been concentrated since 1942.” At the time of the attack, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is “sitting in the same third-floor office above the River entrance as every secretary of defense since Louis Johnson in 1949, a location that had been a matter of public record all that time. The joint chiefs and all the service secretaries were arrayed in various prime E-Ring offices on the River and Mall sides.” Furthermore, “All the command centers save the Navy’s were on the River or Mall sides; the National Military Command Center could have been decimated as the Navy Command Center was, a disaster that could have effectively shut down the Pentagon as the first American war of the twenty-first century began.” Instead, the area hit comprises Army accounting offices, the Navy Command Center, and the Defense Intelligence Agency’s comptroller’s office. ([Vogel 2007, pp. 431 and 449-450](#)) Due to recent renovation work, many offices in that section of the Pentagon are currently empty. ([Government Executive 9/11/2001](#))

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon’s ‘War Room’ Doesn’t Realize Building Has Been Hit, Despite Hearing Explosion

Those inside the Pentagon’s Executive Support Center (ESC) feel and hear the impact when the building is hit, yet supposedly do not realize what has happened. Torie Clarke, the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, who is in the ESC at this time, calls the center “the Pentagon’s war room, with instant access to satellite images and intelligence sources peering into every corner of the globe.” She describes it as “the place where the building’s top leadership goes to coordinate military operations during national emergencies.” In it with her are Stephen Cambone, Donald Rumsfeld’s closest aide, and Larry Di Rita, Rumsfeld’s personal chief of staff. They’d been discussing how to go about getting every plane currently in the air back on the ground when, according to

Clarke, “we felt a jarring thump and heard a loud but still muffled explosion. The building seemed to have shifted.” Yet, despite all the ESC’s resources, they supposedly do not initially realize exactly what has happened. Clarke says to the others, “It must have been a car bomb.” Di Rita replies, “A bomb of some kind.” But one unnamed staffer who frequently uses the ESC for meetings points to the ceiling and says, “No, it’s just the heating and cooling system. It makes that noise all the time.” Clarke later claims, “The notion of a jetliner attacking the Pentagon was exactly that unfathomable back then. Our eyes were glued to television screens showing two hijacked planes destroying the World Trade Center and it still didn’t occur to any of us, certainly not me, that one might have just hit our own building.” Clarke guesses aloud that the noise was something other than the heating and cooling system. In the ensuing minutes, she and the others with her will scramble “for information about what exactly *had* happened, how many were hurt or killed, and [analyze] what we could do to prevent further attacks.” Yet, she will later claim, it is only when Donald Rumsfeld comes into the ESC at 10:15 a.m., after having gone to the crash scene, that they receive their first confirmation that a plane has hit the Pentagon (see [\(10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Clarke 2006, pp. 219-221](#)) Those inside the National Military Command Center (NMCC), located next door to the ESC, supposedly do not feel the impact when the Pentagon is hit, and one officer there claims he only learns of the attack from television reports (see [Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([CNN 9/4/2002](#); [Garamone 9/7/2006](#); [Cockburn 2007, pp. 5](#)) But Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, who is in his office about 200 feet away from the ESC, feels the building shake due to the explosion. After seeing nothing out of his window, he immediately dashes outside to determine what has happened (see [9:38 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Clarke 9/15/2001](#); [Rumsfeld 10/12/2001](#); [Rumsfeld 1/9/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#))

(9:37 a.m.-10:03 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Some Flight 93 Passengers and Crew Able to Remain Calm Despite Hijacking



Lyz Glick. [Source: NBC] In phone calls made from Flight 93, some passengers and crew members sound as if they are able to keep surprisingly calm, despite the crisis:

■ Passenger Jeremy Glick calls his wife, Lyz, at 9:37. She later recalls, “He was so calm, the plane sounded so calm, that if I hadn’t seen what was going on on the TV, I wouldn’t have believed it.” She says, “I was surprised by how calm it seemed in the background. I

didn't hear any screaming. I didn't hear any noises. I didn't hear any commotion."

([Brown 10/5/2001](#); [Pauley 9/11/2006](#))

■Passenger Lauren Grandcolas calls her husband, Jack, at 9:39, and leaves a message on the answering machine. According to journalist and author Jere Longman, "It sounded to Jack as if she were driving home from the grocery store or ordering a pizza." Jack Grandcolas later says, "She sounded calm." He describes, "There is absolutely no background noise on her message. You can't hear people screaming or yelling or crying. It's very calm, the whole cabin, the background, there's really very little sound."

([Longman 2002, pp. 128](#); [Kate Solomon 2006](#); [Segal 4/26/2006](#))

■Passenger Mark Bingham speaks on the phone with his mother and aunt, reportedly from around 9:42. His aunt finds him sounding "calm, matter-of-fact." His mother later recalls, "His voice was calm. He seemed very much composed, even though I know he must have been under terrible duress." She also says the background discussion between passengers, about taking back the plane, sounds like a "calm boardroom meeting." ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 129-130](#); [Hirschhorn 4/21/2006](#))

■Passenger Todd Beamer speaks with GTE supervisor Lisa Jefferson for 13 minutes, starting at 9:45. Jefferson later says that Beamer "stayed calm through the entire conversation. He made me doubt the severity of the call." She tells Beamer's wife, "If I hadn't known it was a real hijacking, I'd have thought it was a crank call, because Todd was so rational and methodical about what he was doing." ([Beamer and Abraham 2002, pp. 211](#); [Jefferson 2006](#))

■Passenger Honor Elizabeth Wainio speaks with her stepmother, Esther Heymann, from around 9:54. Heymann later tells CNN that Wainio "really was remarkably calm throughout our whole conversation." (However, according to Jere Longman, although she speaks calmly, Wainio's breathing is "shallow, as if she were hyperventilating.") When her stepdaughter is not talking, Heymann reportedly cannot "hear another person. She could not hear any conversation or crying or yelling or whimpering. Nothing." ([Longman 2002, pp. 168 and 171-172](#); [CNN 2/18/2006](#))

■Flight attendant Sandy Bradshaw calls her husband at 9:50. He later says, "She sounded calm, but like her adrenaline was really going." ([Cannon 10/21/2001](#))

■At 9:58, flight attendant CeeCee Lyles phones her husband. He later says, "She was surprisingly calm," considering the screaming he heard in the background. Her relatives attribute her calmness to her police training (she is a former police officer). ([Townsend, Brown, and Fraley 9/17/2001](#); [Tsuruoka 4/18/2002](#))

Longman later writes, "I heard tapes of a couple of the phone calls made from [Flight 93] and was struck by the absence of panic in the voices." ([Longman 2002, pp. xi](#))

(9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Myers Speaks to NORAD Commander

According to his own account, Richard Myers, the acting chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is on Capitol Hill, where he has been meeting with Senator Max Cleland (D). Apparently soon after he leaves this meeting, someone hands Myers a cell phone on which NORAD Commander Ralph Eberhart is calling. Myers later recalls that Eberhart "said, you know, we've got several hijack codes, meaning that the transponders in the

aircraft are talking to the ground, and they're saying we're under, we're being hijacked, several hijack codes in the system, and we're responding with, with fighter aircraft." ([Rhem 10/23/2001](#); [Myers 9/11/2002](#)) Eberhart also tells him, "The decision I'm going to make is, we're going to land everybody, and we'll sort it out when we get them on the ground." ([Myers 6/29/2006](#)) He is presumably referring to a plan called SCATANA, which clears the skies and gives the military control over US airspace. However, Eberhart does not implement this until around 11:00 a.m. (see [\(11:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) It is unclear exactly when this phone call is meant to take place, but it appears to be just before the time the Pentagon is hit, or just before Myers is informed of the Pentagon attack. ([Myers 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [Myers 6/29/2006](#); [Garamone 9/8/2006](#)) Max Cleland will confirm that Myers meets with him on this morning, and is with him up to the time of the Pentagon attack, or shortly before. ([US Congress 9/13/2001](#); [CNN 11/20/2001](#); [Baxter and Galloway 6/16/2003](#)) But according to counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke, Myers is back at the Pentagon speaking over a video conference around ten minutes before the Pentagon is struck (see [9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Clarke 2004, pp. 5](#))

9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Unlike Other Three Crashes, Pentagon Attack Does Not Produce Clear Seismic Signal

The strike on the Pentagon does not generate a clear seismic signal. A study by the Maryland Geological Survey will state, "We analyzed seismic records from five stations in the northeastern United States, ranging from 63 to 350 km from the Pentagon. Despite detailed analysis of the data, we could not find a clear seismic signal. Even the closest station... did not record the impact. We concluded that the plane impact to the Pentagon generated relatively weak seismic signals." The study, which is conducted at the request of the Army, states that there are seismic signals for the two planes impacting the World Trade Center and for the Flight 93 crash in Pennsylvania, which allow times to be determined for these events. ([Kim and Baum 2002](#))

(9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Passenger Jeremy Glick Describes Hijackers, Bomb



Jeremy Glick. [Source: Family photo] Jeremy Glick calls his wife, Lyz, from Flight 93. He describes the hijackers as Middle Eastern- and Iranian-looking. According to Glick, three of them put on red headbands, stood up, yelled, and ran into the cockpit. He had been sitting in the front of the coach section, but he was then sent to the back with most of the passengers. Glick says the hijackers claimed to have a bomb, which looked like a box with something red around it. Family members immediately call emergency 9-1-1 on another line. New York State Police are patched in midway through the call. Glick finds out about the WTC towers. Two others onboard also learn about the WTC at about this time. Glick's phone remains connected until the very end of the flight. ([Mandel 9/16/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [Longman 2002](#), pp. 143; [MSNBC 7/30/2002](#))

(Between 9:37-9:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Clarke Orders Combat Air Patrols over All Major Cities; Order Apparently Not Passed On

At an indeterminate time after Flight 77 hits the Pentagon, counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke is given a note by the head of the Secret Service. The note reads, "Radar shows aircraft headed this way. I'm going to empty out the [White House]." The Secret Service knows this because they have equipment that can see what the FAA's radar is seeing around Washington. However, the note is too late: Flight 77 has already crashed. At almost the same time, another aide says to Clarke, "A plane just hit the Pentagon." He replies, "I can still see Rumsfeld on the screen, so the whole building didn't get hit. No emotion in here. We are going to stay focused." He orders an aide, "Find out where the fighter planes are. I want Combat Air Patrol over every major city in this country. Now!" ([Clarke 2004](#), pp. 7-8; [Australian 3/27/2004](#)) NORAD does give this nationwide order around 9:49 a.m. (see [9:49 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), but bases had been calling into NORAD and asking for permission to send up fighters since the second WTC crash. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Other cities generally remain unprotected until after 11:00 a.m. ([Sallah and Mahr 12/9/2001](#)) The Secret Service order to evacuate the White House takes place at 9:45 a.m. (see [9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#))

(Between 9:37-9:58 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Seven Planes Unaccounted For New York City

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani is told by his chief of staff that the White House knows of seven planes that are unaccounted for. He is told that the Pentagon has been hit, but also hears erroneous reports that the Sears Tower and other buildings have been hit. ([9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#))

(After 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FBI Confiscates Film of Pentagon Crash

An employee at a gas station located across the street from the Pentagon servicing military personnel later says the station's security cameras should have recorded the moment of impact. However, he says, "I've never seen what the pictures looked like. The FBI was here within minutes and took the film." ([McKelway 12/11/2001](#)) A security camera atop a hotel close to the Pentagon also records the impact. Hotel employees watch the film several times before the FBI confiscates the video. ([Gertz and Scarborough 9/21/2001](#)) The Justice Department will refuse to release the footage, claiming that if they did it might provide intelligence to someone who would want to harm the US, but some Pentagon officials say they see no national security value to the video. ([CNN 3/7/2002](#)) The gas station footage and video taken from one nearby hotel, the Doubletree, will eventually be released in 2006, but do not show much (see [September 13, 2006-Early December 2006](#)). Reporter Sandra Jontz, who is evacuated from the Pentagon some time after it is hit, notices a Department of Transportation camera that monitors traffic backups pointed towards the crash site. ([Bull and Erman 2002, pp. 281](#)) As of the end of 2006, the footage from this camera has not been released.

(After 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Cheney Tells Bush to Stay Away from Washington



Bush speaks on a cell phone while sitting next to Andrew Card as his motorcade nears the Sarasota airport. [Source: *Associated Press*] Having learned that the Pentagon had been hit, Vice President Cheney telephones President Bush, who is on his way to the Sarasota airport, and tells him that the White House has been “targeted.” Bush says he wants to return to Washington, but Cheney advises him not to “until we could find out what the hell was going on.” According to *Newsweek*, this call takes place in a tunnel on the way to the PEOC underground bunker. Cheney reaches the bunker “shortly before 10:00 a.m.” ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission’s account largely follows *Newsweek*’s. He reaches the tunnel around the time of the Pentagon crash and lingers by a television and secure telephone as he talks to Bush. The commission has Cheney enter the bunker just before 10:00, but they note, “There is conflicting evidence as to when the vice president arrived in the shelter conference room.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Indeed, in other accounts, including those of Richard Clarke and Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, Cheney reaches the bunker before the Flight 77 crash at 9:37 a.m. ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 3-4](#) Sources: [Norman Mineta](#), [Richard A. Clarke](#)) Regardless of Cheney’s location, as Cheney and Bush talk on the phone, Bush once again refrains from making any decisions or orders about the crisis. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(After 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Andrews Pilots Aware of Crisis but Still on Ground

After the Pentagon is hit, fighters at nearby Andrews Air Force Base are still preparing to launch. At some unknown point, flight squad commander Lieutenant Colonel Marc Sasseville assembles three F-16 pilots and gives them a curt briefing. He recalls saying, “I have no idea what’s going on, but we’re flying. Here’s our frequency. We’ll split up the area as we have to. Just defend as required. We’ll talk about the rest in the air.” All four of them dress up and get ready. One officer at Andrews recalls, “After the Pentagon was hit, we were told there were more [airliners] coming. Not ‘might be’—they were coming.” Meanwhile, a “flood” of calls from the Secret Service and local FAA flight control centers pour into Andrews, as the fighter response is coordinated. ([Scott 9/9/2002](#)) However, the loading of missiles onto the fighters is very time consuming, and when

these fighters finally take off nearly an hour later, they will launch without the missiles installed.

9:38 a.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Dashes Toward Crash Site Seconds After Pentagon is Hit

At the time the Pentagon is hit, Donald Rumsfeld is in his office proceeding with his regularly scheduled CIA briefing, despite being aware of the two attacks on the World Trade Center earlier on. Waiting outside his door is Officer Aubrey Davis of the Pentagon police, who is assigned to the defense secretary's personal bodyguard, and has come of his own initiative to move Rumsfeld to a better-protected location. According to Davis, there is "an incredibly loud 'boom,'" as the Pentagon is struck. Just 15 or 20 seconds later, Rumsfeld walks out of his door looking composed, having already put on the jacket he normally discards when in his office. Davis informs him there is a report of an airplane hitting a section of the Pentagon known as the Mall. Rumsfeld sets off without saying anything or informing any of his command staff where he is going, and heads swiftly toward the Mall, with Davis accompanying him. Finding no sign of damage at the Mall, Davis tells him, "[N]ow we're hearing it's by the heliport," which is along the next side of the building. Despite Davis's protests that he should head back, Rumsfeld continues onward, and they go outside near where the crash occurred. ([Cockburn 2007, pp. 1-2](#); [Democracy Now! 3/7/2007](#)) The Pentagon was hit on the opposite site of the huge building to Rumsfeld's office. ([Aldinger 9/11/2001](#)) Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Torie Clarke says Rumsfeld is "one of the first people" to arrive at the crash scene. ([Clarke 9/15/2001](#)) He spends a brief time there (see [Between 9:38 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), before returning to the building by about 10 a.m., according to his own account (see [10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#)) Rumsfeld will later justify his actions following the attack, saying, "I was going, which seemed to me perfectly logically, towards the scene of the accident to see what could be done and what had happened." ([Rumsfeld 8/12/2002](#)) As journalist Andrew Cockburn points out, though, "the country was under attack, and yet the secretary of defense disappears for 20 minutes." ([C-SPAN 2/25/2007](#)) The numerous reports of Rumsfeld going outside to the crash scene are apparently contradicted by counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke. In his 2004 book *Against All Enemies*, Clarke gives the impression that Rumsfeld never leaves a video conference for very long after the Pentagon is hit, except to move from one secure teleconferencing studio to another elsewhere in the Pentagon. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 7-9](#)) However, video footage confirms that Rumsfeld does indeed go to the crash site. ([CNN 8/17/2002](#))

After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Navy Leaders Gather at Antiterrorist Center



Vern Clark. [Source: US Navy] The Navy Command Center at the Pentagon is mostly destroyed when the building is hit at 9:37 a.m. ([Leiby 1/20/2002](#)) After the attack, the Navy's leaders start arriving instead at the Navy's Antiterrorist Alert Center (ATAC), which is located at the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) headquarters in southeast Washington, DC. ([US Naval Criminal Investigative Service n.d.](#); [US Department of the Navy 2/2002](#); [CNN 8/27/2002](#)) Those who arrive at the center include Admiral Vern Clark, the chief of naval operations; Admiral William Fallon, the vice chief of naval operations; Gordon England, the secretary of the Navy; and Rear Admiral Jeffrey Hathaway of the US Coast Guard, who is currently in charge of Navy Anti-Terrorism Force Protection. According to Hathaway, the NCIS headquarters is "not the official backup," but "There was not a plan in place that if somebody flew into the Pentagon where would we take folks." From the center, these officials are able to hold secure video-teleconferences throughout the rest of the day, and also on the following day. Eventually the Naval Operations staff will relocate to the Navy Annex, which is about a mile away from the Pentagon. This will act as their temporary base in the following weeks. ([Hathaway 6/20/2002](#); [GlobalSecurity \(.org\) 4/26/2005](#))

Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Officer in Pentagon Command Center Only Learns From TV that Pentagon Has Been Hit

The Pentagon's National Military Command Center (NMCC) is located on the other side of the building to where it is hit. Therefore, when the attack on the Pentagon occurs, those inside it supposedly do not feel the impact. ([CNN 9/4/2002](#)) According to Newsweek, the NMCC has been called "the primary nerve system" of the Pentagon, from where "commanders can monitor and communicate with American forces around the world." ([Newsweek 9/28/2001](#)) A military instruction for dealing with hijacked aircraft describes it as "the focal point within Department of Defense for providing assistance" in response to hijackings. ([US Department of Defense 6/1/2001](#)) But supposedly NMCC personnel do not initially realize the Pentagon has been attacked. Steve Hahn, an operations officer at the center, later says, "I didn't know [the Pentagon had been hit] until I heard the news report on television." ([Garamone 9/7/2006](#)) Yet an article in the New York Times later claims, "During the hour or so that American Airlines Flight 77 was under the control of hijackers, up to the moment it struck the west side of the Pentagon, military officials in [the NMCC] were urgently talking to law enforcement and air traffic control officials

about what to do” (see [\(After 8:56-9:24 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Wald 9/15/2001](#)) Furthermore, at about 8:50 a.m. according to the FAA, or 9:20 a.m. according to the 9/11 Commission, the FAA had established several phone bridges linking key players, including the NMCC (see [\(8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) (see [\(9:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The FAA states that it shares “real-time information on the phone bridges,” which includes “actions being taken by all the flights of interest, including Flight 77.” ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 36](#)) Why NMCC personnel do not therefore know immediately that the Pentagon has been hit is unclear. Also around this time, Officer Aubrey Davis of the Pentagon police is outside Donald Rumsfeld’s office. He hears what he later describes as “an incredibly loud ‘boom,’” when the Pentagon is struck (see [9:38 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Yet no mention is made of anyone in the NMCC hearing this “boom,” even though the center is located only around 200 feet from where Davis is standing. ([Clarke 9/15/2001](#); [Cockburn 2007, pp. 1](#)) Dan Mangino, an operations officer in the NMCC, went out earlier to withdraw some money from a cash machine (see [9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), and rushes back to the center after the Pentagon is hit. He finds the people in it are very calm. He says, “There was no panic, no raised voices. We train for emergencies all the time, and that training took over.” ([Garamone 9/7/2006](#))

[After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Air Force Crisis Action Team Responds to Attacks](#)



Harry Brososky. [*Source: Syracuse University*] Inside the Air Force Operations Center at the Pentagon, personnel do not feel when the building is hit. The Operations Center is located in the basement of the building’s C Ring, on the opposite side to where the impact occurs. But alarms go off, and television news reports confirm that the Pentagon has been attacked. Secretary of the Air Force James Roche and Air Force Chief of Staff John Jumper arrive at the Operations Center shortly after the attack (see [\(After 9:03 a.m.-Shortly After 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to Roche, the first thing they do there is “try and find out where our people were to make sure they were safe and safely out of the building.” Then, “The second thing we did was to try and hook up with the North American Air Defense Command, NORAD, and then to stand by and start to think of how we, the Air Force, could support any casualties or any other things that might develop during the day.” Air Force Major Harry Brososky also arrives at the Operations Center shortly after the Pentagon is hit, to help the Air Force’s Crisis Action Team (CAT) there. When he arrives, the CAT is taking calls coming in on

numerous phone lines. As Brosofsky later describes, “We became the eyes and ears of the Air Force.” The CAT works with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to monitor flight activity over the US. It also coordinates with NORAD to put fighter jets on alert in Alaska and Hawaii. Brosofsky says that while “We’re trained to know what to do in a crisis,... at times we had information overload and had to decide quickly what to do with all the information that was pouring in.” Around midday, the decision is made to leave the building, and the CAT relocates to a secret location outside Washington. ([Brown 9/19/2001](#); [CNN 10/10/2001](#); [Yackel 12/2001](#); [Airman 10/2002](#); [Prospectus 9/2006](#), pp. 3-6.)

Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Airborne Command Center Launched From Ohio Air Base

Minutes after the attack on the Pentagon, an E-4B National Airborne Operations Center plane takes off from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, near Dayton, Ohio, bound for an undisclosed location. E-4Bs are highly modified Boeing 747s, fitted with sophisticated communications equipment, that act as flying military command posts. Nicknamed “Doomsday” planes during the Cold War, they serve the president and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They can also support the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) during major disasters, like hurricanes or earthquakes. Wright-Patterson is one of the few designated bases for these special planes. The US military possesses four of them in total, one of which is constantly kept on alert. ([Federation of American Scientists 4/23/2000](#); [Gaffney 9/12/2001](#)) Three of the E-4Bs are airborne this morning, due to their role in a pre-scheduled military exercise called Global Guardian (see [Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) (see [\(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Dejka 2/27/2002](#)) The E-4B from Wright-Patterson will return to the base later in the day. ([Gaffney 9/12/2001](#))

(After 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Aircraft Carriers Called to Defend US; Uncertainty Over When This Happens



The USS *George Washington*. [Source: Summer Anderson / Department of Defense] After the attack on the Pentagon, Navy ships and aircraft squadrons that are stationed, or at sea, along the coast of the United States are, reportedly, “rapidly pressed into action” to defend the country. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Vern Clark is evacuated from his office in the Pentagon after the building is hit, and soon relocates to the Navy’s Antiterrorist Alert Center in southeast Washington, DC, where a backup Navy command center is being established (see [After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Clark later explains, “We had carriers at sea. I talked to Admiral Natter [Adm. Robert J. Natter, commander in chief, US Atlantic Fleet] and Admiral Fargo [Adm. Thomas B. Fargo, commander in chief, US Pacific Fleet] about immediate loadouts [of weapons and armed aircraft] and the positioning of our air defense cruisers. Fundamentally, those pieces were in place almost immediately and integrated into the interagency process and with the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration].” The aircraft carrier USS *George Washington* is currently at sea conducting training exercises. It is dispatched to New York, “following the recovery of armed F-14 Tomcats and F/A-18 Hornets from Naval Air Station Oceana,” in Virginia Beach, Virginia. According to Sea Power magazine, another aircraft carrier—the USS *John F. Kennedy*—that is departing Mayport, Florida, is ordered to patrol the waters off Hampton Roads, Virginia, “to protect the Navy’s vast shore complex in Norfolk.” ([Breed 9/12/2001](#); [Peterson 1/2002](#); [Burns 4/2007](#)) The *John F. Kennedy* has nearly a full air wing of 75 fighter, attack, and reconnaissance planes aboard it, while the *George Washington* has only a limited number of aircraft on board. ([Dorsey 9/12/2001](#)) Admiral Natter orders two amphibious ships—the USS *Bataan* and the USS *Shreveport*—to proceed to North Carolina, to pick up Marines from Camp Lejeune, in case additional support is needed in New York. “Within three hours, an undisclosed number of Aegis guided-missile cruisers and destroyers also were underway, their magazines loaded with Standard 2 surface-to-air missiles. Positioned off New York and Norfolk, and along the Gulf Coast, they provided robust early-warning and air-defense capabilities to help ensure against follow-on terrorist attacks.” Vern Clark later recalls that, after the Pentagon attack, “We were thinking about the immediate protection of the United States of America.” ([Peterson 1/2002](#)) Yet, according to CNN, it is not until 1:44 p.m. that the Pentagon announces that five warships and two aircraft carriers—the USS *George Washington* and the USS *John F. Kennedy*—are to depart the Naval Station in Norfolk, Virginia, so as to protect the East Coast (see [1:44 p.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([CNN](#)

[9/12/2001](#)) And, according to some reports, the Navy only dispatches missile destroyers toward New York and Washington at 2:51 p.m. ([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [Fox News 9/13/2001](#); [Associated Press 9/11/2006](#))

(Shortly After 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Myers Learns of Pentagon Attack; Heads Back to Pentagon

According to his own account, acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers was in a meeting on Capitol Hill with Senator Max Cleland (D) since just before 9:00 a.m. (see [Shortly Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Myers 9/11/2002](#)) It is unclear exactly when this meeting ended. But Myers says he first learns of the Pentagon attack (which occurs at 9:37) around the time he is leaving the building for the drive back to the Pentagon. In an early interview, he says he hears somebody say the Pentagon has been hit just after he comes out of his meeting with Cleland. ([Armed Forces Radio And Television Service 10/17/2001](#)) In some accounts, he says he hears that the Pentagon has been hit just as he is leaving Capitol Hill. ([Myers 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)).³⁸ In a meeting in 2006, he says, “my security guy got the call the Pentagon had been hit,” as he is making his way out of the building. ([Myers 6/29/2006](#)) Myers says that, as his car crosses the 14th Street Bridge across the Potomac River, he can see all the black smoke rising up out of the Pentagon. ([Myers 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#), pp. 463; [Garamone 9/8/2006](#)) Max Cleland later confirms that Myers meets with him on this morning, and is with him until the time of the Pentagon attack, or slightly before. ([US Congress 9/13/2001](#); [CNN 11/20/2001](#); [Baxter and Galloway 6/16/2003](#)) However, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke gives a contradictory account. He claims that Myers is back at the Pentagon, speaking to him over a video conference, around ten minutes before the Pentagon is struck (see [9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Clarke 2004](#), pp. 5)

(9:38 a.m.-10:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Senior Officials Unable to Contact Rumsfeld



Stephen Cambone. [Source: US Department of Defense] Immediately after the Pentagon was hit, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld left his office and headed to the crash scene (see [9:38 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). For the 20 minutes or so that he is gone, others are desperately trying to contact him. Among

those seeking Rumsfeld are Stephen Cambone, his closest aide, who is currently in the Pentagon's Executive Support Center (see [Shortly After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), and also the National Military Command Center (see [9:39 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Officer Aubrey Davis of the Pentagon police, who is accompanying Rumsfeld, is receiving frantic calls over his radio saying, "Where's the secretary? Where's the secretary?" Davis is unable to answer these requests. He later recalls, "I kept saying, 'We've got him,' but the system was overloaded, everyone on the frequency was talking, everything jumbled, so I couldn't get through and they went on asking." A senior White House official, who is in its Situation Room trying to coordinate a response to the attacks, will later angrily condemn Rumsfeld for having been out of touch during such a critical period. He says, "What was Rumsfeld doing on 9/11? He deserted his post. He disappeared. The country was under attack. Where was the guy who controls America's defense? Out of touch! How long does it take for something bad to happen? No one knew what was happening. What if this had been the opening shot of a coordinated attack by a hostile power? Outrageous, to abandon your responsibilities and go off and do what you don't need to be doing, grandstanding." ([Cockburn 2007, pp. 2-4](#); [C-SPAN 2/25/2007](#))

Between 9:38 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Spends Brief Time at Pentagon Crash Scene and Helps Carry a Stretcher; Accounts Conflict over Details



Rumsfeld show on a video broadcast on CNN helping carry a stretcher shortly after the Pentagon attack. He is in the center of the picture, wearing a dark jacket. [Source: CNN] Within seconds of the Pentagon being hit, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld rushed out of his office and headed toward the crash scene (see [9:38 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). According to Officer Aubrey Davis, who is currently accompanying Rumsfeld as his bodyguard, when they reach the site, "There were the flames, and bits of metal all around. The secretary picked up one of the pieces of metal. I was telling him he shouldn't be interfering with a crime scene when he looked at some inscription on it and said, 'American Airlines.'" According to Rumsfeld, a person who'd seen the attack on the Pentagon informs him a plane had flown into it. Rumsfeld later recalls, "I saw people on the grass, and we just, we tried to put them in stretchers and then move them out across the grass towards the road and lifted them over a jersey wall so the people on that side could stick them into the ambulances. I was out there for a

while, and then people started gathering, and we were able to get other people to do that, to hold IVs for people. There were people lying on the grass with clothes blown off and burns all over them.” ([Rumsfeld 10/12/2001](#); [Cockburn 2007, pp. 1-2](#)) Versions of this story appear elsewhere. ([Doyle 9/12/2001](#); [Rumsfeld 12/5/2001](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [Wolfowitz 5/9/2003](#)) Video footage confirms that Rumsfeld helps carry a stretcher at the crash scene. ([CNN 8/17/2002](#)) One report even has him pulling budget analyst Paul Gonzalez to safety from the burning wreckage. ([Alderson et al. 9/16/2001](#)) However, Gonzalez later offers his own detailed recollections of pulling other people to safety, which fail to involve Rumsfeld in any way. ([Vogel 3/11/2002](#)) Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Torie Clarke says Rumsfeld is gone from the building for “about half an hour.” ([Clarke 9/15/2001](#)) A Pentagon spokesperson has Rumsfeld helping at the crash site for “15 minutes or so.” ([Aldinger 9/11/2001](#)) Another account claims he loads the wounded onto stretchers for 15 minutes. ([Sprengelmeyer and Alessi 9/11/2001](#)) However, considering the time it would have taken to walk to the crash site—each side of the enormous Pentagon is the length of three football fields—journalist Andrew Cockburn later concludes that Rumsfeld could only have been at the crash scene for a brief period. ([Cockburn 2007, pp. 3](#)) Rumsfeld reportedly heads back into the Pentagon at the urging of a security agent, though in an interview soon after 9/11 he will claim the decision to go back inside was his own, saying, “I decided I should be in [the building] figuring out what to do, because your brain begins to connect things, and there were enough people there to worry about that.” ([Rumsfeld 10/12/2001](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#)) He tells the 9/11 Commission, “I was back in the Pentagon with a crisis action team shortly before or after 10:00 a.m.” (see [\(10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#)) While Rumsfeld is at the crash scene, others are frantically trying to get in touch with him but are unable to do so (see [\(9:38 a.m.-10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

9:39 a.m. September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Is Wanted at Pentagon Teleconference but Cannot Be Reached



This picture of Rumsfeld (center), taken from the US Army website, is captioned, “Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld returns to Pentagon inner offices Tuesday morning after surveying the damage from the hijacked plane which crashed into the building moments before.” This contradicts his claim that he was helping victims for nearly an hour after the attack. However, there is video footage of Rumsfeld helping a person on a stretcher and it is not known when this picture is taken exactly. [Source: *US Army*] Captain Charles Leidig, a deputy who is temporarily in charge of the Pentagon’s National Military Command Center (NMCC), is handling the NMCC’s crisis teleconference. He opens the call saying, “An air attack against North America may be in progress.” He mentions reports of a crash into the opposite side of the Pentagon, and requests that Defense Secretary Rumsfeld be added to the conference. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Rumsfeld has a crucial role to play in coordinating the military response to an attack on the US. According to journalist and author Andrew Cockburn, since the Cold War, “In an age when an enemy attack might allow only a few minutes for detection and reaction, control of American military power became vested in the National Command Authority, which consists of the president and the secretary of defense. Collectively, the NCA is the ultimate source of military orders, uniquely empowered, among other things, to order the use of nuclear weapons. In time of war, therefore, Rumsfeld was effectively the president’s partner, the direct link to the fighting forces, and all orders had to go through him. Such orders were supposed to be transmitted from... the National Military Command Center.” Cockburn adds that the NMCC is “the operational center for any and every crisis, from nuclear war to hijacked airliners.” Yet, rather than join the NMCC conference, Rumsfeld has already gone out of the Pentagon to see the crash site, without telling any of his command staff where he was going, and remains out of contact for some time (see [Between 9:38 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Therefore, a few minutes after Leidig makes his request, Rumsfeld’s office will report back that he is nowhere to be found. Cockburn concludes, “The chain of command was broken.” ([Cockburn 2007, pp. 4-5](#); [Democracy Now! 3/7/2007](#)) It is unknown whether Rumsfeld has a cell phone or pager on him, and if so, why he cannot be reached.

9:39 a.m.-9:44 a.m. September 11, 2001: Media Reports Pentagon Explosion

Television news reports describe an explosion and fire occurring at the Pentagon, but do not specify that a plane hit it:

■Two seconds after 9:39 a.m., reporter Jim Miklaszewski states on NBC News: “I don’t want to alarm anybody right now, but apparently, there—it felt, just a few moments ago, like there was an explosion of some kind here at the Pentagon. We’re on the E-ring of the Pentagon. We have a window that faces out toward the Potomac, toward Kennedy Center. We haven’t been able to see or—or hear anything after the initial blast. I just stepped out in the hallway. Security guards were herding people out of the building, and I saw just a moment ago as I looked outside, a number of construction workers who have been working here, have taken flight. They’re running as far away from the building as they can right now. I—I hear no sirens going off in the building; I see no smoke, but the building shook for just a couple of seconds. The windows rattled and security personnel are doing what they can momentarily to clear this part of the building. Again, I have no idea whether it was part of the construction work, whether it was an accident or what is going on. We’re going to try to find those details and get them to you as soon as possible. But interestingly enough, one intelligence official here in the building said when he saw what appeared to be the coordinating attack on the World Trade Center, his advice was to stay away from the outside of the building today just in case.” ([NBC 9/11/2001](#))

■At 9:40, CNN coverage includes a banner stating, “Reports of fire at Pentagon.” ([CNN 9/11/2001](#)) Three minutes later, CNN producer Chris Plant reports from the Pentagon, “It’s impossible for me to say... exactly what caused this. I did not hear an explosion but there is certainly a very, very significant fire in this enormous office building.” ([CNN 9/11/2001](#))

■At 9:42, ABC News reports smoke coming from somewhere behind the Old Executive Office Building, next to the White House. Two minutes later it reports a “fire confirmed at the Pentagon.” ([ABC News 9/11/2001](#))

■At 9:43, CBS News reports “smoke pouring out of the Pentagon,” but adds, “We don’t know whether this is the result of a bomb or whether it is yet another aircraft that has targeted a symbol of the United States’ power.” ([CBS 9/11/2001](#))

However, no media outlets record video footage of the Pentagon crash, and the cause of the explosion remains unknown for some minutes afterward. The Associated Press is apparently the first source to report that a plane hit the Pentagon (see [9:43 a.m.-9:53 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

9:39 a.m.-9:44 a.m. September 11, 2001: Lauren Grandcolas Phones Husband From Flight 93 and Leaves Message, but Accounts Are Contradictory



Lauren Grandcolas. [Source: Family photo / AP] At 9:39 a.m., Flight 93 passenger Lauren Grandcolas calls her husband in San Rafael, California, leaving him a 46-second message on the answering machine. ([Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 42](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) Some reports state that she is using a cell phone. ([Houston Chronicle 9/12/2001](#); [Chicago Tribune 9/14/2001](#); [USA Today 9/25/2001](#)) But the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette says she uses an Airfone. ([Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#)) Her husband, Jack Grandcolas, later describes that she sounds “very, very calm.” ([Cohen 9/12/2001](#)) According to some early reports, she says, “We have been hijacked,” and “They”—presumably meaning the hijackers—“are being kind.” ([Houston Chronicle 9/12/2001](#); [Goldstein and Thompson 9/12/2001](#); [Chicago Tribune 9/14/2001](#); [Tyrangiel, Orecklin, and Poniewozik 9/16/2001](#)) But in other accounts, she does not specify that her plane has been hijacked. She reportedly begins, “Honey, are you there? Jack, pick up sweetie. Okay, well I just wanted to tell you I love you. We’re having a little problem on the plane.” She continues, “I’m comfortable and I’m okay... for now. Just a little problem. So I just love you. Please tell my family I love them too. Bye, honey.” According to some accounts, Grandcolas then passes the phone to fellow passenger Elizabeth Wainio, who is sitting next to her, and tells her to call her family. ([Wilgoren and Wong 9/13/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 128](#); [Pauley 9/11/2006](#)) The Wall Street Journal reports that Grandcolas’s voice can be heard at the end of her recorded message saying to another passenger, “Now you call your people.” ([Zaslow 5/26/2005](#)) Yet, according to a summary of passenger phone calls presented at the 2006 trial of Zacarias Moussaoui, this could not be the case, as Grandcolas tries to make a further seven calls over the following four minutes. These are apparently either unsuccessful or quickly disconnected, lasting between “0 seconds” and “7 seconds.” They appear to include four more attempts at calling her husband, and one attempt to call her sister Vaughn Lohec. According to the summary, Wainio does not make a phone call until later, at just before 9:54 a.m. The summary also claims that, although Wainio and Grandcolas had originally been assigned seats next to each other in row 11, they are now in different parts of the plane. While Wainio is in row 33, Grandcolas is now in row 23, and there is no passenger next to her who also makes a phone call. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))

(9:39 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Hijacker Again Warns of Bomb on Board, Flight Controllers Again Overhear; NORAD Still Not Notified

The Flight 93 hijackers (probably inadvertently) transmit over the radio: “Hi, this is the captain. We’d like you all to remain seated. There is a bomb on board. And we are going to turn back to the airport. And they had our demands, so please remain quiet.” ([Johnson 11/23/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 209](#); [MSNBC 9/3/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) The controller responds, “United 93, understand you have a bomb on board. Go ahead,” but there is no response. There was a very similar “bomb on board” warning from the same flight at 9:32 a.m. (see [\(9:32 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). The 9/11 Commission indicates that these are separate incidents. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Cleveland flight control apparently continues to wait for FAA superiors to notify NORAD. Earlier in the morning, Boston flight control directly contacted NORAD (see [\(8:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) and local air force bases when they determined Flight 11 was hijacked.

(Soon After 9:37 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Force Liaison Said to Join Teleconference; FAA Disputes Timing

A statement provided by the FAA in 2003 will claim that, minutes after the first WTC tower was hit, the FAA established a teleconference with several agencies. It will claim that the “US Air Force liaison to the FAA immediately joined the FAA headquarters phone bridge and established contact with NORAD on a separate line” (see [\(8:50 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) However the Air Force liaison subsequently disputes this, saying she only arrived at FAA headquarters five or ten minutes after the first tower was hit. She says, “I went to my office. Everybody was there around the TV. We watched the events unfold. At first, we were kind of hanging back and saying, you know, there’s something awful going on with the air traffic system... But at a certain point, not too long after that, it became obvious that... something really strange is going on and so... I relocated. I went upstairs to the 10th floor.” She therefore only joins the FAA teleconference after 9:37 a.m., when the Pentagon was hit. ([US Department of Transportation 8/31/2006](#) ²¹)

(Between 9:40 and 10:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Johnstown Airport Control Tower is Evacuated Following Reports of Approaching Plane



Johnstown-Cambria County Airport. [Source: *JMSA Today*] At some time shortly before 10 a.m.—as early as 9:40 a.m. according to one report—air traffic manager Dennis Fritz, in the control tower at Johnstown-Cambria County Airport, 70 miles east of Pittsburgh, receives a call from Cleveland Air Traffic Control reporting a large, suspicious aircraft about 20 miles south of them, descending below six thousand feet. Despite the clear day, Fritz and his colleagues can see no plane approaching through binoculars. Soon afterwards, in response to another call from Cleveland, Fritz orders trainees and custodial staff to evacuate the tower, yet he is still unable to see any plane approaching. Less than a minute later, though, Cleveland calls a third time, saying to disregard the evacuation: The plane has turned south and they have lost radar contact with it. ([Silver et al. 9/12/2001](#); [Knight Ridder 9/13/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 197](#)) Wells Morrison is the agent in charge of the FBI's Mon Valley Resident Agency, a satellite of its Pittsburgh field office. He too receives a phone call informing him of this flight, though he doesn't say whom it is from. He contacts the Johnstown FBI office and instructs its agents to head to the Johnstown Airport. ([Kashurba 2002, pp. 109-110](#)) Flight 93 crashes around 10:03 a.m. or soon thereafter (see [\(10:03 a.m.-10:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), going down in a field just 14 miles south of Johnstown. ([Eggen 9/13/2001](#))

Shortly After 9:37 a.m.: FISA Judge Grants Five Warrantless Surveillance Requests Minutes after Pentagon Attack

Royce Lamberth, head of the FISA court which grants warrants for intelligence cases, grants five warrantless surveillance requests minutes after the Pentagon attack. Lamberth will later report being stuck in a carpool lane near the Pentagon when it is hit. With his car enveloped in smoke, he calls US marshals to help him get to his office. Lamberth will later say that by the time officers reached him, "I had approved five FISA coverages

[warrants] on my cellphone.” ([Sniffen 6/24/2007](#)) Presumably this represents the start of a flurry of surveillance activity in response to the 9/11 attacks, but it is not known who was to be monitored or how their names were learned and acted on so quickly.

(Shortly After 9:39 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Andrews Commander Reacts to News of Pentagon Attack, Yet Doesn’t Want Fighters Launched Without Further Instructions

Brigadier General David Wherley, the commander of the DC Air National Guard, is in the headquarters of the 113th Wing at Andrews Air Force Base, ten miles southeast of Washington, DC. Reportedly, his “first inkling that the attacks would go beyond New York was when one of his officers, whose husband worked at the Pentagon, saw on television that the building had been hit and began shrieking.” After briefly comforting the woman, he dashes from the building and runs several hundred yards across the base to the headquarters of the DC Air National Guard’s 121st Fighter Squadron. Unlike other Guard units, the DC Air National Guard reports to the president, rather than a state governor. Squadron officers, who work closely with Secret Service agents at the Air Force One hangar at Andrews, have already been told by their contacts that the White House wants fighters launched (see [\(After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). However, Wherley says he wants more explicit authorization. He tells the officers, “We have to get instructions. We can’t just fly off half-cocked.” The first fighters to take off from Andrews are not launched until 10:38 and 10:42 a.m. (see [\(10:38 a.m.\)](#) and [\(10:42 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Vogel 4/8/2002](#); [Vogel 2007](#), pp. 445-446)

(9:40 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Transponder Signal Turned Off; Flight Still Closely Tracked

The transponder signal from Flight 93 ceases. ([CNN 9/17/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/3/2002](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) However, the plane can be—and is—tracked using primary radar by Cleveland flight controllers and at United headquarters. Altitude can no longer be determined, except by visual sightings from other aircraft. The plane’s speed begins to vary wildly, fluctuating between 600 and 400 mph before eventually settling around 400 mph. ([Longman 2002](#), pp. 77, 214; [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(9:40 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FAA Command Center Identifies Ten Possible Hijacked Planes

Newark, New Jersey, flight controller Bob Varcadapane is talking on the phone with the FAA Command Center. He is told that the Command Center is still suspicious of at least ten planes for one reason or another, all possible hijackings. ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#))

(9:40 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Hijacking Simulation Scheduled as Part of NORAD Exercise

As part of a NORAD training exercise, a simulated hijacking was scheduled to occur around this time. It was to have been based around politically motivated perpetrators taking command of an aircraft, landing it on a Cuba-like island, and seeking asylum there. The hijacking was one of several simulated scenarios prepared for the day. Details of the other scenarios are unknown. Major Kevin Nasypany, the NEADS mission crew commander who'd helped designed the exercise, initially thought the reports of Flight 11 being hijacked were because "Somebody started the exercise early." ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) The exercise was canceled after the second plane hit the World Trade Center (see [After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

Soon after 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Medical Staff Implement Mass Casualty Plan; Aided by Pre-9/11 Exercises

Soon after the Pentagon is hit, medical workers initiate their mass casualty plan (MASCAL) for dealing with disasters. Sergeant Matthew Rosenberg, a medic at the Pentagon's DiLorenzo Tricare Health Clinic, arrives at the center courtyard. Seeing smoke rising from the side of the building and patients staggering out, he radios the clinic: "You need to initiate MASCAL right now! We have mass casualties! I need medical assets to the courtyard!" Major Lorie Brown, chief nurse of the DiLorenzo Clinic, says that as soon as she sees people running down the corridor to evacuate, "we initiated the MASCAL, started galvanizing all of our assets and put our plan in action." ([Maraniss 9/16/2001](#); [Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 7, 39](#)) The Pentagon has actually conducted at least three MASCAL training exercises in the previous 12 months, based around a plane crashing into the place (see [Between October 24 and 28, 2000](#))(see [May 2001](#))(see [Early August 2001](#)). Lieutenant Colonel John Felicio, the deputy commander for administration of the DiLorenzo Clinic, says, "The saving grace to our efforts was the two MASCAL exercises we previously had conducted.... Our scenario for both MASCALS was a plane flying into the Pentagon courtyard." Furthermore, the nearby Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC), which sends ambulances in response to the attack, has recently recovered from a four-day power loss (see [August 27-31, 2001](#)). A military report will later state: "Many believe that [this] extended emergency... helped WRAMC in its response on September 11." ([Office of Medical History 9/2004, pp. 18, 146](#))

9:41 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Passenger Birtton Reports Two Killed

Flight 93 passenger Marion Birtton calls a friend. She tells him two people have been killed and the plane has been turned around. ([Hillston 10/28/2001](#))

9:41 a.m. September 11, 2001: Boston Center Contacts NEADS About Possible Hijacking of Delta 1989



Stacia Rountree. [Source:

Vanity Fair]Colin Scoggins, Boston flight control's military liaison, calls NEADS to alert it to Delta 1989, which is possibly off course and being tracked by Boston controllers. However, unlike flights 11, 175, 77, and 93, Delta 1989's beacon code, broadcast from its transponder, is still working. At NEADS, ID tech Stacia Rountree tells her boss Maureen Dooley, "They think it's possible hijack.... We have a code on him now." They quickly locate the plane on radar, just south of Toledo, Ohio, and start alerting other FAA centers. NEADS starts contacting Air National Guard bases in that area to see if anyone can launch fighters. However, it will soon learn that the plane is not hijacked after all. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [Bronner 8/1/2006](#))

(9:41 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FBI Agent Already Aware of Flight 93 Hijacking



Greg Callahan. [Source: *NBC News*]Newark, New Jersey, flight controller Greg Callahan is talking on the phone to an FBI agent. The agent says about Flight 93: "We suspect that this aircraft has now been taken over by hostile forces." The agent describes the sharp turn it has made over eastern Ohio and that it is now heading back over southwestern Pennsylvania. Callahan says he could tell the plane is on a course for Washington. ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#)) The FBI has been in contact with Deena Burnett and informed of what her husband, Flight 93 passenger Tom Burnett, has been saying

since at least 9:34 a.m. (see [9:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) ([Longman 2002, pp. 110](#)) It is unclear where in the chain of command details of these Flight 93 calls reach, and the 9/11 Commission has not clarified the issue of what the FBI knew and when.

(9:41 a.m.-10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Cleveland Controller Tracks Flight 93

Cleveland Center flight controller Bill Keaton is responsible for guiding high-altitude flights in the airspace where Flight 93 turned off its transponder (see [\(9:40 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). After its transponder goes off, he follows Flight 93 on his radar scope as it travels across his sector, headed toward Washington, DC, and is instructed not to let any other aircraft come within 20 miles of it. Because its transponder is off, he cannot tell the plane's altitude. He sees it disappear from his scope at the time it crashes. ([Levin 8/11/2002](#); [Renner 9/6/2006](#))

After 9:40 a.m. September 11, 2001: NEADS Talks to Cleveland Flight Control about Hijacking, United 93 Not Mentioned

After learning that Delta flight 1989 may have been hijacked from Boston flight control (see [9:41 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), NEADS calls Cleveland flight control, which is handling the flight, to discuss this. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 14](#)) Although Cleveland flight control has been aware that United 93 has been hijacked since before 9:30, it apparently fails to mention this to NEADS. According to the 9/11 Commission, the NMCC is not notified of United 93's hijacking until 10:03 (see [10:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

9:42 a.m. September 11, 2001: Passenger Mark Bingham Tells of Bomb Threat on Flight 93



Mark Bingham. *[Source: Family photo]* From Flight 93, Mark Bingham calls his mother and says, “I’m on a flight from Newark to San Francisco and there are three guys who have taken over the plane and they say they have a bomb.” ([Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#)) In an alternate version, he says, “I’m in the air, I’m calling you on the Airfone. I’m calling you from the plane. We’ve been taken over. There are three men that say they have a bomb.” ([Mandel 9/16/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#))

9:42 a.m. September 11, 2001: FBI Arrives at the Pentagon; Assumes Responsibility for Investigation



Logo of the FBI’s National Capital Response Squad. *[Source: FBI]* Within five minutes of the Pentagon being hit, the first group from the FBI’s National Capital Response Squad arrives there. Due to this being a terrorist attack, the Pentagon and its grounds are immediately declared a federal crime scene. Under the terms of a 1995 presidential directive, this makes them the exclusive responsibility of the FBI. The FBI immediately begins collecting evidence and is also responsible for recovering bodies. Its agents are able to confiscate security videos from a nearby gas station within minutes of the crash (see [\(After 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). More than 700 FBI agents, assisted by hundreds of individuals from other organizations, will participate in the recovery operation. ([US President 6/21/1995](#); [Dinan 9/12/2001](#); [US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. A-7, A-23, C-1, C-54](#))

(9:42 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Mystery Jet Plane Seen Circling above White House



John King. [Source: CNN] In a 9:52 a.m. report, CNN correspondent John King, who is standing about 200 yards from the White House, will state, "About ten minutes ago, there was a white jet circling overhead. Now, you generally don't see planes in the area over the White House. That is restricted air space. No reason to believe that this jet was there for any nefarious purposes, but the Secret Service was very concerned, pointing up at the jet in the sky. It is out of sight now, best we can tell." ([CNN 9/11/2001](#)) This is more than 15 minutes after the FAA had ordered a nationwide ground stop, forbidding all takeoffs and requiring planes in the air to land as soon as reasonable (see [\(9:26 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Donnelly 9/14/2001](#)) All takeoffs from Washington Reagan National Airport had been stopped even earlier, a few minutes after 9:03 a.m. (see [\(9:03 a.m.-9:08 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Levin 8/11/2002](#)) Minutes before King saw this aircraft, a C-130 cargo plane was flying in the vicinity of the Pentagon around the time it was hit (see [9:36 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), and was seen by a number of people (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). However, a C-130 is propeller-driven, not a jet plane like what King describes. ([Fitchett 6/12/1999](#)) The identity of the "white jet" is therefore unknown. Another CNN correspondent, Kate Snow, also reports seeing a plane at around this time, "circling over the Capitol." She says, "Now whether that may have been an Air Force plane, it's unclear. But that seemed to be the reason, according to security guards that I talked with, towards the evacuation of the Capitol." ([CNN 9/11/2001](#)) (The Capitol is reportedly evacuated at 9:48 a.m. (see [9:48 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Fox News 9/11/2003](#))) A CNN comparison between video footage of this plane and an official Air Force photograph will suggest it is an E-4B. This is a militarized version of a Boeing 747 that is used as a flying command post. An E-4B has in fact just been launched from an airfield outside of Washington (see [\(Shortly Before 9:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), so this could plausibly be the same plane as is witnessed by the CNN reporters. Two government sources familiar with the incident will later tell CNN the plane was a military aircraft, but that its details are classified. Even by 2007, the Pentagon, FAA, and Secret Service will have offered no public explanation for this plane over the White House. ([Verton 2003, pp. 143-144](#); [CNN 9/12/2007](#)) What appears to be a military jet plane will be witnessed circling above the Flight 93 crash site, around the time that aircraft goes down, though this is apparently a much smaller plane than the E-4B (see [\(Before and After 10:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

9:43 a.m. September 11, 2001: Bush Learns of Attack on Pentagon as Motorcade Reaches Sarasota Airport



Bush boards Air Force One in Sarasota, Florida, waving to people below as if the day were like any other. [Source: *Agence France-Presse*] President Bush's motorcade arrives at Sarasota's airport and pulls up close to Air Force One. As the motorcade nears the airport, he learns a plane has hit the Pentagon. Bush immediately boards the plane. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Sammon 10/8/2002](#)) Congressman Dan Miller and others hurry up the rear steps of the plane while Bush enters through the exposed front stairs. Bush pauses in the doorway to wave to photographers. The St. Petersburg Times notes this raises "further questions about security [on 9/11]." ([Martin 7/4/2004](#)) Security then does an extra-thorough search of all the baggage of the other passengers, delaying takeoff until 9:55 a.m. ([Adair and Hegarty 9/8/2002](#))

9:43 a.m.-9:53 a.m. September 11, 2001: Associated Press First to Report a Plane Hit the Pentagon; CNN Still Unsure What Happened for Ten More Minutes

An Associated Press news alert at 9:43 a.m. states, "An aircraft has crashed into the Pentagon, witnesses say." ([Associated Press 2001](#); [Miller 8/26/2002](#)) This is apparently the first news of the crash. Initial television reports stated there had been an explosion at the Pentagon, but not that a plane caused it (see [9:39 a.m.-9:44 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Minutes later, there is still uncertainty over what caused the explosion. At 9:49, CNN's Chris Plant reports from the Pentagon, "[I]nitial reports from witnesses indicate that there was in fact a helicopter circling the building, contrary to what the AP reported, according to the witnesses I've spoken to anyway, and that this helicopter disappeared behind the building, and that there was then an explosion" (see [9:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([CNN 9/11/2001](#)) It is not until 9:53 that CNN confirms, "it was a plane that crashed into the Pentagon." ([CNN 9/11/2001](#))

9:43 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Passenger Todd Beamer Reaches Phone Operator



Lisa Jefferson. [Source: Lisa Jefferson] Flight 93 passenger Todd Beamer reaches a GTE operator using one of the plane's seatback phones. He had tried using his credit card on the phone, but been unable to get authorization, so his call is routed to a customer service center in the Chicago area. ([Breslau 9/22/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [Longman 2002](#), pp. 198-199; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#), pp. 11.) Beamer initially reaches operator Phyllis Johnson, who calls customer service supervisor Lisa Jefferson over and informs her of the call. As Jefferson later recalls, "I asked [Johnson] information that I needed to report to our surveillance center. And by the time I came back, she appeared to be traumatized, and that's when I told her I would take the call over... She was just dazed." Having immediately contacted the FBI, airline security, and GTE operations personnel, Jefferson gets on the line and speaks to Beamer for the next 13 minutes (see [9:45 a.m.-9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([McKinnon 9/22/2001](#); [Smith 9/5/2002](#); [Jefferson 2006](#)) She later informs Beamer's wife Lisa, "[I]t was a miracle that Todd's call hadn't been disconnected. Because of the enormous number of calls that day, the GTE systems overloaded and lines were being disconnected all around her... She kept thinking, *This call is going to get dropped!* Yet Todd stayed connected... all the way to the end." ([Beamer and Abraham 2002](#), pp. 217) According to journalist and author Jere Longman, "GTE-Verizon [does] not routinely tape its telephone calls. As a supervisor, [Jefferson] would have been the one to monitor the taping, but she did not want to risk losing the call." ([Longman 2002](#), pp. 199) Yet an early article in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette will claim that, "because it was to an operator," Beamer's call "was tape-recorded." ([McKinnon 9/19/2001](#)) Lisa Beamer will only be informed of her husband's call from Flight 93 three days later, and be read a summary of it written by Jefferson (see [September 14, 2001](#)). ([Breslau, Clift, and Thomas 11/26/2001](#))

9:44 a.m. September 11, 2001: NMCC Conference Thinks Flight 1989, Not Flight 93, Is Fourth Hijack

NORAD briefs the NMCC teleconference on the possible hijacking of Delta Flight 1989. Four minutes later, a representative from the White House bunker containing Vice President Cheney asks if there are any indications of other hijacked planes. Captain Charles Leidig, temporarily in charge of the NMCC, mentions the Delta Flight and comments, “that would be the fourth possible hijack.” Flight 1989 is in the same general Ohio region as Flight 93, but NORAD doesn’t scramble fighters toward either plane at this time. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

9:45 a.m. September 11, 2001: United Headquarters Learns Flight 77 Has Crashed into the Pentagon

United Airlines headquarters receives a report that an aircraft has crashed into the Pentagon. They learn it is Flight 77. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#))

9:45 a.m. September 11, 2001: Tom Burnett Says Flight 93 Passengers Are Making Plans to Defeat Hijackers

Tom Burnett calls his wife, Deena, for the third time. She has just found out about the crash at the Pentagon and tells him, “They just hit the Pentagon. It looks like they’re taking planes and hitting designated landmarks up and down the East Coast.... Three have already crashed and they’re speculating two more have been hijacked. I’ve already called the authorities. They didn’t know about your plane until I called.” Tom says, “I think we’re going to have to do something. [The hijackers are] talking about running the plane into the ground.” ([Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 120-121](#)) Tom speaks about the bomb he’d mentioned earlier, saying, “I don’t think they have one. I think they’re just telling us that.” He says the hijackers are talking about crashing the plane into the ground. He says that “a group of us” are making a plan. ([Longman 2002, pp. 111](#)) This indicates there would have been at least 19 minutes advance notice that a passenger takeover was likely, if the contents of these phone calls are being passed on to the right authorities. Note that by Burnett’s second call at 9:34 a.m., the FBI was already listening in. ([Mandel 9/16/2001](#))

9:45 a.m.-9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001: Passenger Todd Beamer Describes Situation on Flight 93, Though Accounts Are Contradictory



Todd Beamer. *[Source: Family photo]* After having trouble getting authorization on an Airfone to call his family (see [9:43 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), Flight 93 passenger Todd Beamer is able to speak to GTE customer service supervisor Lisa Jefferson. Jefferson, who quickly alerts the FBI about Beamer's call, talks to him for 13 minutes. According to a report in the London Observer, she has the FBI simultaneously on another line, offering guidance. She immediately asks Beamer for details of the flight, like "What is your flight number? What is the situation? Where are the crew members?" With the help of a flight attendant sitting next to him, Beamer details the numbers of passengers and crew on the plane. He says the hijackers have divided the passengers into two groups, with ten of them in first class at the front of the plane, and 27 in the back. (Jefferson's written summary of the conversation will say that the larger number of passengers was in the front. However, Beamer's wife later says that Jefferson informed her it was in fact the other way around.) According to some reports, Beamer says three people have hijacked the plane. Two of them, armed with knives, are in the cockpit and have locked the door; the third is in first class with what appears to be a bomb strapped around his waist. A curtain has been closed separating first class from the coach section of the plane. Other accounts claim the hijacker with the bomb is in fact in the rear of the plane. According to one report in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Beamer describes four hijackers in total: the two in the cockpit, the one with the bomb guarding the passengers in the back of the plane, and a fourth in first class. But the Orlando Sentinel says Beamer tells Jefferson he is free to talk because the hijacker in first class has closed the curtain, indicating there is no hijacker at the back of the plane. (Beamer himself is at the back of plane, calling from a phone in row 32.) According to an early article in Newsweek, he says that one passenger is dead and he doesn't know about the pilots. However, journalist and author Jere Longman later writes that Beamer describes to Jefferson two people on the floor in first class, possibly dead. The flight attendant next to him can be overheard saying these are the plane's captain and co-pilot. The attendant does not mention their names or say they are wearing uniforms, but she sounds certain. Beamer then repeats what the attendant has told him. At some point in the call, Beamer

asks, “Do you know what [the hijackers] want? Money or ransom or what?” He seems unaware of the other hijackings that have occurred. Jefferson informs him of the two planes crashing in New York. ([Holt 9/16/2001](#); [McKinnon 9/19/2001](#); [Breslau 9/22/2001](#); [McKinnon 9/22/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [Vulliamy 12/2/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 198-200](#); [Smith 9/5/2002](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 11](#).) Beamer says of the hijackers, “It doesn’t seem like they know how to fly the plane.” ([van Derbeken 9/17/2001](#)) He also tells Jefferson about himself, including where he is from, that he has two sons, and that his wife is expecting a third child in January. ([McKinnon 9/22/2001](#)) He tells her, “I just want to talk to somebody and just let someone know that this is happening.” ([Longman 2002, pp. 204](#))

(9:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Secret Service Learns Hijacked Plane on Route to Washington, Evacuates White House



Secret Service with automatic weapons directing people away from the White House. [Source: *Associated Press*] Secret Service Director Brian Stafford informs counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke that radar shows an aircraft headed towards the White House and decides to evacuate the complex. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 5](#)) The Secret Service learns this by monitoring radar and over an open line with the FAA (the “hijack net”), which enable them to receive real time information about the hijacked aircraft. The Secret Service, which has been using an air surveillance system called Tigerwall for some time (see [\(September 2000 and after\)](#)), tracks both American 77 and United 93 as they approach Washington and assumes the White House is a target. Secret Service agent Barbara Riggs will later say, “The Secret Service prepared to defend the facility,” although the precise nature of the preparations is unclear. ([New York Times 9/12/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/22/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [PCCW Newsletter 3/2006](#)) A slow and orderly evacuation of the White House had in fact begun earlier on (see [\(9:22 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). But now the Secret Service orders people to run so as to evacuate faster. ([CNN 9/11/2001](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#))

9:45 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Hijackers Want 'Pilot' Brought Back Into Cockpit

According to the later-recovered Flight 93 cockpit voice recording, around this time one hijacker in the cockpit says to another, "Let the guys in now." A hijacker says, "Should we let the guys in?" and another says, "Inform them, and tell him to talk to the pilot. Bring the pilot back." It's not clear if this is a reference to an original pilot or a hijacker pilot. According to one description of passenger Todd Beamer's call from the plane, a flight attendant can be overheard in the background saying that two men lying on the floor in first class are the plane's captain and co-pilot, indicating that they are already dead (see [9:45 a.m.-9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). But it is not possible to determine the fate of the two pilots from the cockpit voice recording, and investigators will be unsure as to whether they were killed or allowed to live. ([Longman 2002, pp. 199 and 208-209](#); [Associated Press 4/12/2006](#))

(9:45 a.m.-10:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Witnesses First Notice Military Jets over New York, Later Than Claimed by 9/11 Commission

According to the accounts of numerous witnesses on the ground near the World Trade Center, military fighter jets are first noticed flying over Manhattan either shortly before or soon after the second collapse, at 10:28 a.m. Some witnesses recall fighters arriving just before this collapse:

- Emergency medical technicians Dulce McCorvey and Michael D'Angelo hear fighters flying over Manhattan at unspecified times after the first tower's collapse. ([McCorvey 10/3/2001](#); [D'Angelo 10/24/2001](#))
- Fire Lieutenant Sean O'Malley and firefighters Pete Giudetti and Dan Potter notice jet fighters flying overhead soon before the second collapse. ([Guidetti 10/12/2001](#); [O'Malley 12/6/2001](#); [Smith 2002, pp. 49-50](#))

Other witnesses say the fighters arrive soon after this collapse:

- Deputy Fire Chief Robert Browne, police officer Peter Moog, and emergency medical technicians Richard Zarrillo and Jason Katz notice fighters overhead immediately after, or fairly soon after, the second tower's collapse. ([Browne 10/24/2001](#); [Zarrillo 10/25/2001](#); [Katz 12/20/2001](#); [Fink and Mathias 2002, pp. 79-80](#))
- Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, and Office of Emergency Management Director Richard Sheirer are heading north together after leaving their temporary command post on Barclay Street (see [9:50 a.m.-10:10 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). In some accounts, all three of them recollect hearing the first military jets overhead soon after the second tower's collapse. ([Kerik 2001, pp. 339-340](#); [Giuliani 2002, pp. 14](#); [9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#).) However, according to another account, Giuliani hears the first jet slightly earlier, at around 10:20 a.m. And, in his private testimony before the 9/11 Commission, Kerik claims to have heard a fighter jet coming when he was heading to the temporary command post on Barclay Street, i.e. shortly before 9:50 a.m. ([Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 348-349](#))

A few witnesses claim the fighters arrive earlier on, before the first collapse at 9:59 a.m.:
■Emergency medical technician Frank Puma and Port Authority Freedom of Information Administrator Cathy Pavelec say they see fighter jets overhead at unspecified times before the first collapse. ([Puma 12/12/2001](#); [Fink and Mathias 2002, pp. 68](#))
The fighter(s) are presumably the F-15s launched from Otis Air Force Base at 8:46 a.m. (see [\(8:46 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). However, the 9/11 Commission will claim that these arrived over Manhattan at 9:25 a.m. (see [9:25 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), which is significantly earlier than most of the witnesses on the ground recall.

(9:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Senior FAA Manager, on His First Day on the Job, Orders All Planes Out of the Sky Nationwide



FAA National Operations Manager Ben Sliney. [*Source: Publicity photo*] Ben Sliney, FAA's National Operations Manager, orders the entire nationwide air traffic system shut down. All flights at US airports are stopped. Around 3,950 flights are still in the air. Sliney makes the decision without consulting FAA head Jane Garvey, Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, or other bosses, but they quickly approve his actions. It's Sliney's first day on the job. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [New York Times 9/12/2001](#); [Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/22/2001](#); [LeBlanc 8/12/2002](#); [Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [Adams, Levin, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [Adcock 9/10/2002](#)) Seventy-five percent of the planes land within one hour of the order. ([Levin 8/12/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission will later remark that this "was an unprecedented order" that the "air traffic control system handled... with great skill." ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 29](#)) The Washington Post has reported that Mineta told Monte Belger at the FAA: "Monte, bring all the planes down," even adding, "[Expletive] pilot discretion." ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#)) However, it is later reported by a different Post reporter that Mineta did not even know of the order until 15 minutes later. This reporter "says FAA officials had begged him to maintain the fiction." ([Green 4/2/2002](#))

(9:45 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush Aides Debate Where to Fly Air Force One

According to the 9/11 Commission, Chief of Staff Andrew Card, the lead Secret Service agent, the president's military aide, and Air Force One pilot Colonel Mark Tillman, confer on a possible destination for Air Force One around this time. According to witnesses, some support President Bush's desire to return to Washington, but the others advise against it. The issue is still not decided when Air Force One takes off around 9:55 a.m. (see [\(9:56 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(Between 9:45 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: FAA's Cleveland Center Evacuated; Timing Unclear

While flight controllers are working to clear the skies of all aircraft, they notice a small plane flying erratically above the FAA's Cleveland Center. Consequently, the center is evacuated, with people withdrawing to its parking lot. According to Rick Kettell, the Cleveland air traffic manager, the errant plane is never identified. He says it "flew off to the north, and we lost radar on it." Eleven months later, the FAA will reportedly still be investigating what the plane was and what it was doing. There are contradictory accounts of when the evacuation occurs. NEADS Commander Robert Marr reportedly is informed of it while Flight 93 is still airborne (see [9:49 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Cleveland flight controller Stacey Taylor will later recall, "They're evacuating the Center," at a time when Flight 93 is still airborne. However, she and another Cleveland controller say they see Flight 93 disappear from their radar scopes when it crashes, suggesting that the center is not fully evacuated, or is only fully evacuated later on. Rick Kettell claims the evacuation occurs after most planes have already been landed from the region's skies, which would be later in the morning. ([Newsnet5 8/12/2002](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 73](#); [Renner 9/6/2006](#))

(Between 9:45-9:55 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Clarke Initiates Continuity of Government Plans; Hears Shoot Down Talk from Cheney Bunker



Norman Mineta and Dick Cheney in the POEC bunker on 9/11. [Source: ABC News] At some point after the White House is evacuated, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke institutes Continuity of Government plans. Important government personnel, especially those in line to succeed the president, are evacuated to alternate Command Centers. Additionally, Clarke gets a phone call from the PEOC Command Center where Vice President Cheney and National Security Adviser Rice are positioned. An aide tells Clarke, “Air Force One is getting ready to take off with some press still on board. [President Bush will] divert to an air base. Fighter escort is authorized. And... tell the Pentagon they have authority from the president to shoot down hostile aircraft, repeat, they have authority to shoot down hostile aircraft.” However, acting Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers wants the rules of engagement clarified before the shutdown order is passed on, so Clarke orders that pilots be given guidelines before receiving shutdown authorization. (Clarke 2004, pp. 8-9) Clarke’s account that Cheney is giving shutdown authorization well before 10:00 a.m. matches Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta’s account of seeing Cheney giving what he interprets as a shutdown order before the Pentagon crash. (9/11 Commission 5/23/2003) However, the 9/11 Commission later asserts that Cheney doesn’t make the shutdown decision until about 10:00 a.m. (see [\(Between 10:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). (9/11 Commission 6/17/2004)

9:46 a.m. September 11, 2001: NMCC Teleconference Still Looking to Include Rumsfeld and Myers

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld’s office, and acting Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Myers’ office, report to the NMCC teleconference that they are still trying to track down Rumsfeld and Myers, respectively, and bring them into the conference. (9/11 Commission 6/17/2004) Rumsfeld is apparently outside the Pentagon looking at the Flight 77 crash site (see [Between 9:38 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), though counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke suggests Rumsfeld is elsewhere in the Pentagon for much of the time (see [\(Between 9:37-9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Myers’ whereabouts in the period after the Pentagon crash have not been fully explained (see [\(Between 9:55 a.m. and 10:25 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Rumsfeld and Myers do not enter the NMCC until about 10:30 a.m. (see [\(10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

9:47 a.m. September 11, 2001: Internal Collapse at WTC South Tower Reported

A man who is on the 105th floor of the South Tower calls emergency 9-1-1 to report that floors below his location, “in the 90-something floor,” have collapsed. The 9-1-1 operator types a record of this call into the Special Police Radio Inquiry Network (SPRINT) data link, which will be passed on to the New York fire department’s Emergency Medical Service (EMS). It isn’t known when the call is made exactly, but the EMS Dispatch computer apparently receives the call record at this time. However, because it is classified as a “supplement message,” it is not yet read by anyone. The police dispatcher dealing with the area around the WTC also receives the call record, but misinterprets it as meaning that the floor the person is on has collapsed. EMS dispatchers are dealing with an enormous volume of calls as well as performing many other tasks under extreme pressure during the crisis, so a report later concludes that the EMS operators didn’t have the time to review the information before the collapse of the South Tower at 9:59 (see [9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), and the fire chiefs never received the information. ([New York City Fire Department 8/19/2002](#))

(9:47 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Passenger Jeremy Glick Tells of Vote to Take Over Flight 93

On Flight 93, Jeremy Glick is still on the phone with his wife, Lyz. He tells her that the passengers are taking a vote if they should try to take over the plane or not. ([Hillston 10/28/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#)) He later says that all the men on the plane have voted to attack the hijackers. ([Mandel 9/16/2001](#)) When asked about weapons, he says they don’t have guns, just knives. This appears to contradict an earlier mention of guns. His wife gets the impression from him that the hijacker standing nearby, claiming to hold the bomb, would be easy to overwhelm. ([Longman 2002, pp. 153-154](#))

9:48 a.m. September 11, 2001: Capitol Building Finally Evacuates



Senator John Kerry looks up to the sky as he and others flee. [Source: *CBC*] The Capitol building in Washington begins evacuation. Congress is in session, but apparently the chambers are not filled with congresspeople. ([Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [Meacher 7/22/2004](#)) Senator Tom Daschle, Majority Leader of the Senate, later states, “Some capitol policemen broke into the room and said, ‘We’re under attack. I’ve got to take you out right away.’” Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert, third in line of succession to the presidency behind Vice President Cheney, is in the Capitol building with other congresspeople. Only after this time are Hastert and others in the line of succession moved to secure locations. Some time after this, Hastert and other leaders are flown by helicopter to secret bunkers. ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#))

9:49 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pittsburgh Flight Control Tower Evacuates

The FAA orders the Pittsburgh control tower evacuated. Shortly before the order, Cleveland flight controllers called Pittsburgh flight control to say that a plane is heading toward Pittsburgh and the pilot refuses to communicate. The plane is Flight 93. ([Ackerman 9/23/2001](#)) Also, around this time, while Flight 93 is heading east, NEADS Commander Robert Marr hears that the FAA is evacuating its Cleveland Center (see [\(Between 9:45 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Filson 2004, pp. 73](#))

9:49 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Headquarters Continues to Delay Decision on Contacting NORAD About Flight 93

According to the 9/11 Commission, the FAA Command Center has just twice warned FAA headquarters that United 93 is now “29 minutes out of Washington, DC.” Someone at headquarters says to someone at the Command Center, “they’re pulling Jeff [last name unknown] away to go talk about United 93.” Command Center replies, “Uh, do we want to think about, uh, scrambling aircraft [NORAD fighters]?” FAA headquarters replies, “Uh, God, I don’t know.” Command Center says, “Uh, that’s a decision somebody’s

gonna have to make probably, in the next ten minutes.” FAA headquarters answers, “Uh, ya know, everybody just left the room.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) This is 13 minutes since Cleveland flight control had asked the Command Center in vain to contact NORAD about Flight 93 (see [\(9:36 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Apparently there is only one person at FAA headquarters who is authorized to request military assistance. Ben Sliney, the FAA’s national operations manager at its Herndon Command Center, is told that no one can find them. He later recounts, “I said something like that’s incredible. There’s only one person. There must be someone designated or someone who will assume the responsibility of issuing an order, you know. We were becoming frustrated in our attempts to get some information. What was the military response?” ([Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 9/10/2006](#)) This contrasts with the FAA’s earlier response to Flight 11, where Boston flight controllers had contacted NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector themselves (see [\(8:37 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and had even directly called military bases (see [8:34 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) (see [\(8:34 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

9:49 a.m. September 11, 2001: Fighters Ordered to Scramble Nationwide



General Ralph Eberhart. [*Source: NORAD*] In the words of the 9/11 Commission, the commander of NORAD (General Ralph Eberhart) directs “all air sovereignty aircraft to battle stations fully armed.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Apparently, this means all fighters with air defense missions are to be armed and ready to scramble. This may be connected to counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke’s claim that after the Pentagon is hit, he orders an aide, “Find out where the fighter planes are. I want Combat Air Patrol over every major city in this country. Now!” (see [\(Between 9:37-9:45 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)) Another account says calls to bases to scramble don’t begin until about 10:01 a.m. (see [10:01 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Sallah and Mahr 12/9/2001](#)) It has not been explained why this order wasn’t given much earlier. Calls from Air Force bases across the country offering to help had started “pouring into NORAD” shortly after 9:03 a.m. (see [\(After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), when televised reports made an emergency situation clear. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#)) With a couple of exceptions, other fighters do not actually start taking off until about 11:00 a.m.

9:49 a.m.-9:53 a.m. September 11, 2001: Marion Britton Says Two Other Flight 93 Passengers Had Their Throats Cut



Marion Britton. [Source: *US Census Bureau*] Flight 93 passenger Marion Britton calls her longtime friend Fred Fiumano at his auto repair shop in New York City, and talks to him for just under four minutes. According to the Chicago Tribune, she is using a cell phone. ([Barker, Kiernan, and Mills 9/30/2001](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) Journalist and author Jere Longman writes that, because her own cell phone is not working, Britton is using a borrowed phone (i.e. a cell phone). She gives Fiumano the phone number belonging to another passenger and tells him to write it down. ([Longman 2002, pp. 162 and 166](#)) However, during the 2006 Zacarias Moussaoui trial, the prosecution claims that Britton, who had been assigned a seat in row 12 of the plane, makes her call from a phone in row 33, presumably meaning a seatback phone rather than a cell phone. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 12](#) ^A) Britton is crying. She tells Fiumano her plane has been hijacked and has made a U-turn. When he tells her that the World Trade Center is on fire, she replies, “I know, and we’re going to go down.” ([McKinnon 9/22/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#)) Britton says, “They’re gonna kill us, you know, we’re gonna die.” ([Pauley 9/11/2006](#)) Fiumano tries to reassure her, but she responds, “Two passengers have had their throats cut.” ([Lewis 4/13/2006](#)) (In passenger Todd Beamer’s call from Flight 93 (see [9:45 a.m.-9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), a flight attendant is reportedly heard in the background saying that two men lying on the floor in first class, possibly dead, are the plane’s pilot and co-pilot. It is unclear if these are the two people that Britton refers to as having had their throats cut, and she’d simply mistaken them for passengers. ([Longman 2002, pp. 199](#))) Fiumano hears a lot of yelling and screaming, and then the line goes dead. He tries calling Britton back but is unable to get through. ([McKinnon 9/22/2001](#))

(9:49 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Police Helicopter Reports ‘Large Pieces’ Falling from South Tower

About ten minutes prior to its collapse, a New York Police Department (NYPD) helicopter unit reports over the Special Operations Division radio channel that “large pieces” are falling from the South Tower. While police hear this transmission, the fire

department does not, and there is no police representative at the Fire Department of New York (FDNY) command post to pass the information on. ([Fire Engineering 9/2002](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 95](#)) None of the NYPD helicopter pilots predict the South Tower collapse in advance. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 304](#))

9:50 a.m. September 11, 2001: Sandy Bradshaw Tells of Preparations to Fight Three Guys with Knives



Sandra Bradshaw. [*Source: Family photo*] Sandy Bradshaw calls her husband from Flight 93. She says, “Have you heard what’s going on? My flight has been hijacked. My flight has been hijacked with three guys with knives.” ([Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) She tells him that some passengers are in the rear galley filling pitchers with hot water to use against the hijackers. ([Hillston 10/28/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#))

(9:50 a.m.-10:10 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Giuliani Goes to Temporary Command Post but Soon Evacuates It

After spending about 40 minutes at the disaster scene, on the World Trade Center site, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani relocates to a small office building at 75 Barclay Street, about two blocks from the WTC, hoping to establish a command post there. His usual command center, in WTC 7, was evacuated at around 9:30 a.m. (see [\(9:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). With him are several colleagues, including Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik and Office of Emergency Management Director Richard Sheirer. ([Kerik 2001, pp. 334](#); [Giuliani 2002, pp. 10](#); [9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#); [Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 10](#)) While at Barclay Street, Giuliani is able to get in touch with the White House, and speaks to Chris Henick, the deputy political director to President Bush (see [9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Immediately afterwards, he receives a phone call from Vice President Cheney, though this is cut off before either one is able to speak. Giuliani also claims he is given advance warning of the South Tower’s collapse while at this command post (see [\(Before 9:59 a.m.\) September 11,](#)

2001). After the South Tower collapses outside, Giuliani and his colleagues all decide to evacuate, going through the basement into a neighboring building, 100 Church Street. They will then leave this and head north, being joined by cameras and press. ([Fink and Mathias 2002, pp. 112](#); [9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#); [Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 348](#))

(9:50 a.m.-10:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Reports of Unresponsive Aircraft Prompt Evacuation of CIA Headquarters

By 9:50 a.m., CIA Director George Tenet is in his office on the seventh floor of the agency's Langley headquarters. He later describes, "[E]veryone was wondering, what next? Reports came in of several airplanes that were not responding to communications from the ground and perhaps heading toward Washington. Several [Counterterrorist Center] officers reminded us that al-Qaeda members had once discussed flying an airplane into CIA headquarters, the top floor of which we were presently occupying." Tenet himself later recalls that, in the minutes after he'd learned of the first attack, he'd "thought about the 'Bojinka' plot to blow up twelve US airliners over the Pacific and a subsequent plan to fly a small airplane into CIA headquarters" (see [\(8:55 a.m.-9:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Tenet asks Mike Hohlfelder, the chief of his security detail, for his recommendation, and is advised, "Let's evacuate." Though he later claims he was "reluctant" about this, Tenet tells his senior leadership, "We have to save our people. We have to evacuate the building." Therefore, at about 10 a.m., the word goes out for a large number of the CIA's thousands of employees to go home. Initially, the senior leadership team moves from Tenet's seventh-floor conference room to another room on the first floor, but it then exits the headquarters building and heads across the campus to the CIA's printing plant, where a crude operational capability has been set up. However, due to the objections of CIA counterterrorism chief Cofer Black, those in the Counterterrorist Center and the Global Response Center are allowed to stay in place in the headquarters (see [\(10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Tenet and his staff will leave the printing plant and return to the headquarters at around 1 p.m., by which time they will consider the danger to be over. ([Woodward 2002, pp. 7-9](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 162, 164-165 and 168](#)) The CIA headquarters evacuation is aided by the fact that a fire had occurred there just over a month earlier. Consequently, new evacuation procedures had been laid out, which Tenet follows on this day (see [August 7-September 10, 2001](#)). ([Kessler 2003, pp. 222-223](#))

(9:50 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Molten Metal Pours from South Tower



Molten metal pouring out of the side of the World Trade Center. [Source: *Cameraplanet*] Video footage later reveals that in the minutes immediately before the collapse of the WTC's South Tower, a stream of molten metal starts pouring out of a window opening around the northeast corner of its 80th floor. FEMA later suggests that this is "possibly aluminum from the airliner," and comments, "This is of particular interest because, although the building collapse appears to have initiated at this floor level, the initiation seems to have occurred at the southeast rather than the northeast corner." ([Civil Engineering 5/2002](#); [Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 2-34](#); [Dwyer and Flynn 2005, pp. 207](#)) According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, "The composition of the flowing material can only be the subject of speculation, but its behavior suggests it could have been molten aluminum." ([Pitts, Butler, and Junker 9/2005, pp. 375](#)) However physics professor Steven E. Jones will in 2006 dispute this, saying that molten aluminum is silvery and never turns yellow, like what is in the video footage. He will instead claim the presence of this molten metal supports the theory that explosives, specifically thermite, are what caused the Twin Towers to collapse. He says thermite can cause steel to melt and become yellowish. ([Dean 4/10/2006](#))

(Between 9:50-10:40 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Numerous False Reports of Terrorist Acts in Washington



A television broadcast falsely describes smoke coming from Washington Mall instead of its true source, the Pentagon. *[Source: CNN]* There are numerous false reports of additional terror attacks. Before 10:00 a.m., some hear reports on television of a fire at the State Department. At 10:20 a.m., and apparently again at 10:33 a.m., it is publicly reported this was caused by a car bomb. ([Ottawa Citizen 9/11/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Miller 8/26/2002](#)) At 10:23 a.m., the Associated Press reports, “A car bomb explodes outside the State Department, senior law enforcement officials say.” ([Miller 8/26/2002](#)) Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke hears these reports at this time and asks Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage in the State Department to see if the building he’s in has been hit. Armitage goes outside the building, finds out there’s no bomb, and calls his colleagues to inform them that the reports are false. Reports of a fire on the Capitol Mall also appear and are quickly found to be false. ([ABC News 9/15/2002](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 8-9](#)) There are numerous other false reports over the next hour, including explosions at the Capitol building and USA Today headquarters. ([Miller 8/26/2002](#)) For instance, CNN reports an explosion on Capitol Hill at 10:12 a.m. CNN then announces this is untrue 12 minutes later. ([Ottawa Citizen 9/11/2001](#))

9:52 a.m. September 11, 2001: Firefighters Reach 78th Floor of South Tower; Find Two Isolated Fires



Ronald Bucca. *[Source: Public domain]* Two firefighters climbing up the South Tower, Orio Palmer and Ronald Bucca, have reached its 78th floor, the lower end of the impact zone where Flight 175 hit. ([Dwyer and Fessenden 8/4/2002](#)) They are just two floors below the level where, minutes later, its collapse initiates.

([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 2-34](#)) Over radio, Palmer tells firefighter Joseph Leavey, “We’ve got two isolated pockets of fire. We should be able to knock it down with two lines.” ([Dwyer and Flynn 2005, pp. 206](#)) The fact that they reached so high up the tower only comes to light almost a year later, when a tape of radio communications from 9/11 is made public (see [August 4, 2002](#)). The New York Times will report “[N]owhere on the tape is there any indication that firefighters had the slightest indication that the tower had become unstable or that it could fall.” ([Dwyer and Flynn 11/9/2002](#)) Palmer’s communication appears to contradict claims that “extreme fires” contributed to the tower’s collapse. ([Barter 9/13/2001](#); [Lipton 10/20/2004](#)) Ronald Bucca, a Special Forces veteran, had actually conducted his own private research into Islamic militancy following the 1993 WTC bombing. He’d even taken time, in 1996, to attend the beginning of the trial of Ramzi Yousef, a mastermind of the bombing (see [September 5, 1996](#)). ([Lance 2003, pp. 180-183, 333-334](#))

(9:52 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Lynne Cheney Joins Husband in White House Bunker



Lynne Cheney conferring with Dick Cheney in the early afternoon on 9/11. [*Source: David Bohrer/ White House*] According to the 9/11 Commission, the Secret Service logs Lynne Cheney’s arrival at the White House at 9:52 a.m. She joins her husband, Vice President Dick Cheney, in the tunnel leading to the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) bunker below the White House, and then enters the PEOC alongside him. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 40](#)) She had been at her downtown office around the time the second tower was hit, at 9:03, when she was driven by the Secret Service to the White House. ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) Yet, in a brief interview with an activist group in 2007, Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta will claim that Lynne Cheney was already in the PEOC when he arrived there. ([Mineta 6/26/2007](#)) According to Mineta’s recollections, this was at around 9:20-9:27 (see ([Between 9:20 a.m. and 9:27 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Mineta 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 5/23/2003](#)) Lynne Cheney will sit in a corner of the PEOC, and write down notes on the various reports that are received this morning by the vice president. ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#))

9:53 a.m. September 11, 2001: NSA Intercepts Al-Qaeda Phone Call Predicting Fourth Attack

The National Security Agency (NSA) reportedly intercepts a phone call from one of bin Laden's operatives in Afghanistan to a phone number in the Republic of Georgia. The caller says he has "heard good news" and that another target is still to come (presumably, the target Flight 93 is intended to hit). ([CBS News 9/4/2002](#)) The caller is also supposed to say that the attackers are following through on "the doctor's program." This is said to be a reference to al-Qaeda's number two leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who has a doctorate in medicine. ([Wright 9/9/2002](#)) Since the 9/11 crisis began, NSA translators have been told to focus on Middle Eastern intercepts and translate them as they are received instead of oldest first, as is the usual practice. This call is translated in the next hour or two, and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld hears about it just after noon. ([CBS News 9/4/2002](#); [Bamford 2004, pp. 54](#))

9:53 a.m. September 11, 2001: Hijackers Fear Passenger Retaliation

According to Flight 93's cockpit voice recording, the hijackers grow concerned that the passengers might retaliate. One urges that the plane's fire axe be held up to the cockpit door's peephole to scare the passengers. ([Longman 2002, pp. 209-210](#))

9:53 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Headquarters Still Only Talking About Telling NORAD of Flight 93 Hijack

According to the 9/11 Commission, FAA headquarters informs the FAA Command Center that the deputy director for air traffic services is talking to Deputy Administrator Monte Belger about scrambling aircraft after Flight 93. Yet in interviews with the commission, neither Belger nor the deputy director recall this discussion, and Belger subsequently e-mails the commission saying he does not believe the conversation took place. However, tape recordings reveal a staff person from headquarters at this time telling the Command Center, "Peter's talking to Monte now about scrambling." FAA headquarters is also informed that the flight is 20 miles northwest of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 461](#)) When questioned about this, Belger will point out that there are military people on duty at the FAA Command Center and in a situation room at the FAA's Air Traffic Organization, and that they are participating in what is going on. In addition, Belger will later tell the commission that he thought the NMCC was on the hijack net and would therefore have received notification on this channel at the same time as all other agencies. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Incredibly, FAA headquarters has known since 9:34 A.M. about hijackers talking about a bomb on board the flight, and more evidence has since been passed on confirming a hijacking in progress. Still, reportedly, no one tells NORAD anything about the plane.

Before 9:55 a.m. September 11, 2001: AWACS Planes on Training Missions in Florida and Near Washington, DC

While President Bush is still in Sarasota, an AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System plane) is flying a training mission off the coast of Florida. Referring to the AWACS plane, NORAD Commander Larry Arnold later says: “I had set up an arrangement with their wing commander at Tinker [Air Force Base, Oklahoma] some months earlier for us to divert their AWACS off a normal training mission to go into an exercise scenario simulating an attack on the United States. The AWACS crew initially thought we were going into one of those simulations.” Another AWACS is also flying a training mission, near Washington, DC, the morning of 9/11. ([Code One Magazine 1/2002](#)) When its pilot, Anthony Kuczynski, hears of the first WTC crash, he mistakenly believes he is involved in a planned military simulation. He says, “We sometimes do scenarios where we’re protecting the United States from bombers coming in from unknown areas.” ([Forster 4/12/2002](#))

9:54 a.m. September 11, 2001: Tom Burnett Calls for Fourth Time; Details Plan to Take Control of Plane

Tom Burnett calls his wife, Deena, for the fourth and last time. In early reports of this call, he says, “I know we’re all going to die. There’s three of us who are going to do something about it.” ([Mandel 9/16/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#)) However, in a later, more complete, account, he sounds much more upbeat. “It’s up to us. I think we can do it.” He adds, “Don’t worry, we’re going to do something.” He specifically mentions they plan to regain control of the airplane over a rural area. ([Longman 2002, pp. 118](#))

(9:54 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Elizabeth Wainio Calls Stepmother From Flight 93



Elizabeth Wainio. [*Source: Family photo*] Honor Elizabeth Wainio, a 27-year-old passenger on board Flight 93, calls her stepmother Esther Heymann, who is in Cantonsville, Maryland. ([Barker, Kiernan, and Mills 9/30/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#)) According to journalist and author Jere Longman, the call starts “shortly past nine-fifty.” Official accounts say it starts at 9:54, or seconds

before. ([Longman 2002, pp. 167](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 44](#); [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) Wainio begins, “We’re being hijacked. I’m calling to say good-bye.” She says a “really nice person” next to her has handed her the phone and told her to call her family. News reports suggest this person is Lauren Grandcolas, who had been assigned a seat by Wainio in row 11 of the plane. ([Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 167-168](#); [MSNBC 9/3/2002](#); [Pauley 9/11/2006](#)) But according to a summary of passenger phone calls presented at the 2006 Zacarias Moussaoui trial, Wainio and Grandcolas are now separated and sitting in different areas of the plane. Wainio is now in row 33 along with fellow passenger Marion Britton and an unnamed flight attendant. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#)) According to some reports, Wainio is using a cell phone. Newsweek states that she actually tells her stepmother she is using a cell phone loaned to her by another passenger. ([Breslau 9/22/2001](#); [Barker, Kiernan, and Mills 9/30/2001](#)) But the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette claims she uses an Airfone. ([Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#)) According to Longman, there are “long silences” throughout the call. ([MSNBC 7/30/2002](#)) Heymann cannot hear anyone in the background: “She could not hear any conversation or crying or yelling or whimpering. Nothing.” ([Longman 2002, pp. 172](#)) Longman describes that Heymann gets the feeling her stepdaughter is “resigned to what was going to happen to her. And that she actually seemed to be leaving her body, going to a better place. She had had two grandmothers who were deceased, and at one point she told her [step]mother, ‘They’re waiting for me.’” ([MSNBC 7/30/2002](#)) Wainio also talks about her family, and says she is worried about how her brother and sister will handle this terrible news. ([Longman 2002, pp. 168](#)) Accounts conflict over how long her call lasts and when it ends (see ([Between 9:58 a.m. and 10:05 a.m.](#)) [September 11, 2001](#)).

(9:55 a.m.-10:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Langley Fighters Finally Reach Washington; Accounts of Timing Are Contradictory



A fighter and helicopter both fly directly above the Pentagon on 9/11 on the morning of 9/11. Exact time is unknown. [*Source: Agence France-Presse*] The three F-16s scrambled after Flight 77 from Langley, Virginia, at 9:30 a.m. finally reach Washington and the burning Pentagon. The 129 mile distance could theoretically be covered by the fighters in six minutes, but they’ve taken a wide detour over the ocean. The exact time they arrive is very unclear. NORAD originally claimed they arrive as soon as 9:49 a.m., but the 9/11 Commission implies they don’t arrive until shortly after 10:00 a.m., though no exact time is specified. ([CBS News 9/14/2001](#); [New](#)

[York Times 9/15/2001](#); [CNN 9/17/2001](#); [North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Press accounts of when the first fighters reach Washington are highly contradictory. Early news accounts of fighters arriving from Andrews Air Force Base “within minutes,” “a few moments,” or “just moments” after the Pentagon crash appear to have been accounts of these Langley fighters, since they apparently arrive before Andrews fighters do. ([McAllister 9/11/2001](#); [Wastell and Jacobson 9/16/2001](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) Yet other newspaper accounts inaccurately deny fighters from Andrews were deployed ([Weisman 9/16/2001](#)), and some deny Andrews even had fighters at all. ([Stone 9/16/2001](#)) Defense officials initially claimed, “There were no military planes in the skies over Washington until 15 to 20 minutes after the Pentagon was hit”—in other words, 9:53 a.m. to 9:58 a.m. ([Seattle Post-Intelligencer 9/14/2001](#)) ABC News reports that by 10:00 a.m., “Dozens of fighters are buzzing in the sky” over Washington. ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) Whereas the New York Times reports, “In the White House Situation Room and at the Pentagon, the response seemed agonizingly slow. One military official recalls hearing words to the effect of, ‘Where are the planes?’” The Pentagon insists it had air cover over its own building by 10 a.m., 15 minutes after the building was hit. However, witnesses, including a reporter for the New York Times who was headed toward the building, did not see any until “closer to 11.” ([Sanger and van Natta 9/16/2001](#)) It is likely, though not completely certain, that fighters would have reached Washington before Flight 93 did, had the plane not crashed.

(Between 9:55 a.m. and 10:25 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Myers Finally Enters NMCC; Prior Whereabouts Disputed

Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers enters the National Military Command Center (NMCC) within the Pentagon, though exactly when this happens remains unclear. According to his own statements, he was on Capitol Hill, in the offices of Senator Max Cleland (D), from just before 9:00 a.m. until around the time the Pentagon was hit. He’d then headed back to the Pentagon (see [Shortly Before 9:00 a.m. September 11, 2001](#) and [Shortly After 9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Armed Forces Radio And Television Service 10/17/2001](#); [Myers 9/11/2002](#); [Myers 6/29/2006](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission, Myers joins the air threat conference call from the NMCC at “shortly before 10:00.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 38](#)) But the American Forces Press Service reports that he arrives at the NMCC “about 15 minutes” before Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (who arrives around 10:30), meaning at about 10:15 a.m. ([Garamone 9/8/2006](#)) Rumsfeld claims that, as he enters the NMCC, Myers has “just returned from Capitol Hill.” ([9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#)) Max Cleland concurs that Myers was with him on Capitol Hill until around the time of the Pentagon attack. ([CNN 11/20/2001](#); [Baxter and Galloway 6/16/2003](#)) But counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke claims that Myers has been taking part in a video conference since shortly after the second attack on the WTC, and has been visible on the Pentagon screen (see [9:10 a.m. September 11, 2001](#) and [9:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), thereby implying Myers has been at the Pentagon all along. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 3 and 5](#)) Myers tells the 9/11 Commission, “After I reached the National Military Command Center (NMCC), I asked

questions to determine where Secretary Rumsfeld was, how the FAA was handling airborne flights, and the status of fighters prepared to intercept any hijacked aircraft inbound to Washington.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#).)

9:55 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Changes its Destination

The pilot hijacker of Flight 93 (presumably Ziad Jarrah) reprograms the plane’s navigational system for a new destination. He dials in the navigational code for Washington’s Reagan National Airport, which is just four miles from the White House, and an arrival time of 10:28 a.m. The 9/11 Commission says this further indicates that the plane’s intended target is the nation’s capital. ([Longman 2002, pp. 78 and 182](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 457](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 45](#).) According to the St. Petersburg Times, a minute later, at 9:56, “the destination code for [Flight 93] in FAA computers was changed from ‘SFO,’ the code for San Francisco, to ‘DCA,’ the code for Reagan National Airport in Washington. That indicates an air traffic controller probably changed the destination. Typically, that is done only when it is requested by the pilots.” ([Ballingrud 9/12/2001](#)) Twenty-five minutes earlier, someone in Flight 93’s cockpit had radioed in and requested a new flight plan from the FAA, with a final destination of Washington (see [9:30 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

After 9:55 a.m. September 11, 2001: Ellington Fighters Airborne on Local Training Mission

Two F-16s from the 147th Fighter Wing, Ellington Air National Guard Base, Texas, are said to be already airborne on a local training mission when they are instructed to escort Air Force One after it departs Sarasota, Florida, with President Bush on board. ([Arnold 12/2001](#); [Code One Magazine 1/2002](#))

(After 9:55 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Langley Fighters Receive Vague Order to Protect White House

The Langley F-16s headed to Washington are told that all planes in the US have been ordered to land (that command was given at 9:45 a.m.). According to the New York Times, at some point after this, someone from the Secret Service gets on the radio and tells the pilots, “I want you to protect the White House at all costs.” ([Wald and Sack 10/16/2001](#)) F-16 pilot Honey (who is apparently Captain Craig Borgstrom) gives a similar, though less dramatic, account. At some point after the F-16s had set up a defensive perimeter over Washington, the lead pilot (again, Borgstrom) receives a garbled message about Flight 93 that isn’t heard by the other two pilots. “The message seemed to convey that the White House was an important asset to protect.” Honey says he is later told the message is, “Something like, ‘Be aware of where it is, and it could be a target.’” Another pilot, codenamed Lou, says Honey tells him, “I think the Secret Service told me

this.” ([Longman 2002, pp. 76](#)) Both Lou and Honey state they are never given clear and direct orders to shoot down any plane that day. ([Longman 2002, pp. 222](#))

(9:56 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Force One Gets Airborne Without Fighter Escort



Air Force One departs Sarasota. [Source: *Associated Press*] President Bush departs from the Sarasota, Florida, airport on Air Force One. ([Solomon 9/12/2001](#); [Sack 9/16/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [Churcher 9/8/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [Minutes 9/11/2002](#); [Paltrow 3/22/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Amazingly, his plane takes off without any fighters protecting it. “The object seemed to be simply to get the president airborne and out of the way,” says an administration official. ([Langley 12/16/2001](#)) There are still 3,520 planes in the air over the US. ([Adams, Levin, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#)) About half of the planes in the Florida region where Bush’s plane is are still airborne. ([Heller 9/7/2002](#)) Apparently, fighters don’t meet up with Air Force One until about an hour later. Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke claims to have heard around 9:50 a.m. from the bunker containing Vice President Cheney that fighter escort had been authorized. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 8-9](#))

(9:56-10:40 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Air Force One Takes Off, Then Flies in Circles While Bush and Cheney Argue

Air Force One takes off and quickly gains altitude. One passenger later says, “It was like a rocket. For a good ten minutes, the plane was going almost straight up.” ([Minutes 9/11/2002](#)) Once the plane reaches cruising altitude, it flies in circles. Journalists on board sense this because the television reception for a local station generally remains good. “Apparently Bush, Cheney, and the Secret Service argue over the safety of Bush

coming back to Washington.” ([Tapper 9/12/2001](#); [Langley 12/16/2001](#)) For much of the day Bush is plagued by connectivity problems in trying to call Cheney and others. He is forced to use an ordinary cell phone instead of his secure phone. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(After 9:56 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush and Cheney Confer on Actions to Be Taken

After flying off in Air Force One, President Bush talks on the phone to Vice President Cheney. Cheney recommends that Bush authorize the military to shoot down any plane under control of the hijackers. “I said, ‘You bet,’” Bush later recalls. “We had a little discussion, but not much.” ([Weisman 9/16/2001](#); [Adcock, Donovan, and Gordon 9/23/2001](#); [Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [CBS News 9/11/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission claims that Cheney tells Bush three planes are still missing and one has hit the Pentagon. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Bush later says that he doesn’t make any major decisions about how to respond to the 9/11 attacks until after Air Force One takes off ([Paltrow 3/22/2004](#)), which fits with this account of Bush approving shootdown authorization shortly after take off.

9:57 a.m. September 11, 2001: Passengers Begin Attempt to Regain Control of Flight 93

One of the hijackers in the cockpit asks if anything is going on, apparently meaning outside the cockpit. “Fighting,” the other says. ([Longman 2002, pp. 210](#)) An analysis of the cockpit flight recording suggests that the passenger struggle actually starts in the front of the plane (where Mark Bingham and Tom Burnett are sitting) about a minute before a struggle in the back of the plane (where Todd Beamer is sitting). ([Vulliamy 12/2/2001](#)) Officials later theorize that the Flight 93 passengers reach the cockpit using a food cart as a battering ram and a shield. They claim digital enhancement of the cockpit voice recorder reveals the sound of plates and glassware crashing around 9:57 a.m. ([Breslau, Clift, and Thomas 11/26/2001](#))

Shortly Before 9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001: Todd Beamer Describes Flight 93 Passengers’ Plan to Fight Back; He and Others Join Takeover Attempt

Since 9:45 a.m., Flight 93 passenger Todd Beamer has been talking by Airfone to Lisa Jefferson, a GTE customer service supervisor (see [9:45 a.m.-9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Beamer is a devout Christian, and asks Jefferson to recite the Lord’s Prayer with him. He then recites the 23rd Psalm. He also gives her his home phone number and tells her to contact his wife if he does not survive, and let his family know how much he loves them. ([van Derbeken 9/17/2001](#); [McKinnon 9/22/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 198-200](#)) He tells Jefferson that some of the passengers are going to “jump” the hijacker who claims to

have a bomb, and try to seize control of the plane. He says, “We’re going to do something. I know I’m not going to get out of this.” In the background, Jefferson can hear an “awful commotion” of people shouting, and women screaming, “Oh my God,” “God help us,” and “Help us Jesus.” Beamer lets go of the phone but leaves it connected. Jefferson can hear him speaking to someone else, saying the words that later become famous: “Are you ready guys? Let’s roll” (alternate version: “You ready? Okay. Let’s roll”). ([Breslau 9/22/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 203-204](#)) Beamer reportedly talks to Jefferson for 13 minutes, meaning his last words to her are at 9:58 a.m. ([McKinnon 9/16/2001](#); [McKinnon 9/19/2001](#)) Jefferson then hears more screaming and other commotion. She remains on the phone until after the time Flight 93 crashes (see [9:59 a.m.-10:49 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Smith 9/5/2002](#))

(9:57 a.m. and After) September 11, 2001: Passengers and Hijackers Struggle in the Flight 93 Cockpit

“In the cockpit! In the cockpit!” is heard. The hijackers are reportedly heard telling each other to hold the door. In English, someone outside shouts, “Let’s get them.” The hijackers are also praying “Allah o akbar” (God is great). One of the hijackers suggests shutting off the oxygen supply to the cabin (which apparently would not have had any effect since the plane was already below 10,000 feet). A hijacker says, “Should we finish?” Another one says, “Not yet.” The sounds of the passengers get clearer, and in unaccented English “Give it to me!” is heard. “I’m injured,” someone says in English. Then something like “roll it up” and “lift it up” is heard. Passengers’ relatives believe this sequence proves that the passengers did take control of the plane. ([Breslau, Clift, and Thomas 11/26/2001](#); [Vulliamy 12/2/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 270-271](#); [MSNBC 7/30/2002](#); [Harnden 7/31/2002](#))

9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001: CeeCee Lyles Cries they’re Doing It; Strange Sounds Follow



CeeCee Lyles. [*Source: Family photo*] CeeCee Lyles says to her husband, “Aah, it feels like the plane’s going down.” Her husband Lorne says, “What’s that?” She replies, “I think they’re going to do it. they’re forcing their way into the

cockpit” (an alternate version says, “they’re getting ready to force their way into the cockpit”). A little later she screams, then says, “they’re doing it! they’re doing it! they’re doing it!” Her husband hears more screaming in the background, then he hears a “whooshing sound, a sound like wind,” then more screaming, and then the call breaks off. ([Hillston 10/28/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 180](#))

9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Passengers Run to First Class

Sandy Bradshaw tells her husband, “Everyone’s running to first class. I’ve got to go. Bye.” She had been speaking with him since 9:50 a.m. ([Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [Johnson 11/23/2001](#))

9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001: Ed Felt Said to Describe Explosion and White Smoke from Bathroom Call



Edward Felt. [*Source: Family photo*] A man dials emergency 9-1-1 from a bathroom on the plane, crying, “We’re being hijacked, We’re being hijacked!” ([Mandel 9/16/2001](#)) The operator reports, “He heard some sort of explosion and saw white smoke coming from the plane and we lost contact with him.” ([ABC News 9/11/2001](#); [ABC News 9/11/2001](#); [Spangler 9/12/2001](#)) One minute after the call begins, the line goes dead. ([Pittsburgh Channel 12/6/2001](#)) Investigators believe this was Edward Felt, the only passenger not accounted for on phone calls. He was sitting in first class, so he probably was in the bathroom near the front of the plane. At one point, he appears to have peeked out the bathroom door during the call. ([Longman 2002, pp. 193-194, 196](#)) The mentions of smoke and explosions on the recording of his call are now denied. ([Longman 2002, pp. 264](#)) The person who took Felt’s call is not allowed to speak to the media. ([Wallace 9/12/2002](#))

9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001: Fighters to New York City Possibly Scrambled 56 Minutes Late, According to Giuliani and Early Reports

According to New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's 9/11 Commission testimony in 2004, about one minute before the first WTC tower falls, he is able to reach the White House by phone. Speaking to Chris Henick, deputy political director to President Bush, Giuliani learns the Pentagon has been hit and he asks about fighter cover over New York City. Henick replies, "The jets were dispatched 12 minutes ago and they should be there very shortly, and they should be able to defend you against further attack." ([9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#)) If this is true, it means fighters scramble from the Otis base around 9:46 a.m., not at 8:52 a.m., as most other accounts have claimed. While Giuliani's account may seem wildly off, it is consistent with reports shortly after 9/11. In the first few days, acting Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers, and a NORAD spokesman, Marine Corps Major Mike Snyder, claimed no fighters were scrambled anywhere until after the Pentagon was hit. ([US Congress 9/13/2001](#); [Johnson 9/15/2001](#)) This story only changed on the evening of September 14, 2001, when CBS reported, "contrary to early reports, US Air Force jets did get into the air on Tuesday while the attacks were under way." ([CBS News 9/14/2001](#))

(Before 9:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Gold Transported Through WTC Basement

Large amounts of gold are stored in vaults in the massive basement below the WTC, and some of this is being transported through the basement this morning. Several weeks later, recovery workers will discover hundreds of ingots in a service tunnel below WTC 5, along with a ten-wheel lorry and some cars (which were, presumably, transporting the gold) (see [Mid-October-mid November 2001](#)). The lorry and cars had been crushed by falling steel, but no bodies will be reported found with them, so presumably they were abandoned before the first WTC collapse, at 9:59 a.m. ([Gittrich, Zambito, and Standora 10/31/2001](#); [Wapshott 11/1/2001](#))

(Before 9:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001: EMT Worker Given Message That WTC Towers Are Going to Collapse; High-Level Officials Evacuate Lobby of North Tower



Fireman Mike Kehoe heads upstairs while others flee downstairs. Kehoe luckily survived the building collapses. [Source: *John Labriola*] In the lobby of Building 7 of the WTC, EMS Division Chief John Peruggia is in discussion with Fire Department Captain Richard Rotanz and a representative from the Department of Buildings. As Peruggia later describes, “It was brought to my attention, it was believed that the structural damage that was suffered to the [Twin] Towers was quite significant and they were very confident that the building’s stability was compromised and they felt that the North Tower was in danger of a near imminent collapse.” Peruggia grabs EMT Richard Zarrillo and tells him to pass on the message “that the buildings have been compromised, we need to evacuate, they’re going to collapse.” Zarrillo heads out to the fire command post, situated in front of 3 World Financial, the American Express Building, where he relays this message to several senior firefighters. He says, “OEM says the buildings are going to collapse; we need to get out.” (OEM is the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management, which has its headquarters in WTC 7.) Fire Chief Pete Ganci’s response is, “who the f___ told you that?” Seconds later, they hear the noise of the South Tower as it collapses. ([Turi 10/23/2001](#); [Peruggia 10/25/2001](#); [Zarrillo 10/25/2001](#); [Fortis 11/9/2001](#)) Others also appear to have been aware of the imminent danger. Fire Chief Joseph Pfeifer, who is at the command post in the lobby of the North Tower, says, “Right before the South Tower collapsed, I noticed a lot of people just left the lobby, and I heard we had a crew of all different people, high-level people in government, everybody was gone, almost like they had information that we didn’t have.” He says some of them are moving to a new command post across the street. ([Pfeifer 10/23/2001](#); [Firehouse Magazine 4/2002](#); [Dwyer and Flynn 2005, pp. 214](#)) Mayor Giuliani also says he receives a prior warning of the first collapse, while at his temporary headquarters at 75 Barclay Street (see [\(Before 9:59 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

Shortly Before 9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001: Ground Shakes Prior to South Tower Collapse

Some witnesses near the World Trade Center feel the ground shaking just before the South Tower starts to collapse:

- EMT Joseph Fortis is heading across West Street, when, he says, “the ground started shaking like a train was coming.” He then looks up and sees the South Tower starting to collapse. ([Fortis 11/9/2001](#))
- Lonnie Penn, another EMT, is outside the Marriott Hotel, which is adjacent to the North Tower. He and his partner “felt the ground shake. You could see the towers sway and then

it just came down.” ([Penn 11/9/2001](#))

■Bradley Mann is at the EMS staging area on Vesey Street. He says, “Shortly before the first tower came down I remember feeling the ground shaking. I heard a terrible noise, and then debris just started flying everywhere.” ([Mann 11/7/2001](#))

■Battalion Chief Brian O’Flaherty is walking into the lobby of the Marriott Hotel. He says, “I hear a noise. Right after that noise, you could feel the building start to shudder, tremble, under your feet.” He then hears the “terrible noise” of the South Tower collapsing. ([O’Flaherty 1/9/2002](#)) Witnesses will also notice the ground shaking before the North Tower collapses (see [Shortly Before 10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001: Most Workers in South Tower Who Could Evacuate Have Done So

Almost all the occupants of the South Tower who are able to evacuate the building have done so and have crossed the street to safety. Only eleven occupants who were below the impact floors are still in the building when it collapses. However, 619 building occupants in or above the impact zone have either already died or perish in the collapse, as do many emergency workers. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. xxxix, 44](#)) Most workers in the North Tower also leave the building before it collapses (see [10:27 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

Shortly Before 9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001: Some Witnesses See Ground-Level Explosion Just Before WTC 2 Collapses



Will Jimeno. [*Source: Todd Plitt / USA Today*] Some witnesses reportedly see a massive fireball at ground level, coming from the South Tower just before it starts to collapse. According to a report by the Mineta Transportation Institute (a research institute founded by Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta), “People inside the South Tower felt the floor vibrate as if a small earthquake were occurring.... The vibration lasted for about 30 seconds. The doors were knocked out, and a huge ball of flame created by the exploding diesel fuel from the building’s own supply tank shot from the elevator shaft and out the doors of the South Tower, consuming everything in its path. Minutes later, at 9:59 a.m., the tower collapsed.” ([Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow 9/2003, pp. 16](#)) Around the same time, Port Authority Police Officer Will Jimeno is in a corridor

leading toward the North Tower. “Suddenly the hallway began to shudder,” and he sees “the giant fireball explode in the street,” when the South Tower begins to collapse. ([James 1/2003](#)) Ronald DiFrancesco is the last person to make it out of the South Tower before it collapses. As he is heading toward the exit that leads onto Church Street, he hears a loud roar as the collapse begins. According to the Ottawa Citizen, “Mr. DiFrancesco turned to his right in the direction of Liberty Street, to see a massive fireball—compressed as the South Tower fell—roiling toward [him].” He bolts for the exit, before being knocked unconscious and blown many yards across the street. ([Cauchon 12/18/2001](#); [Duffy 6/4/2005](#); [Duffy 6/5/2005](#); [Clark 9/5/2006](#)) A number of other witnesses report feeling the ground shaking just seconds before the South Tower collapses (see [Shortly Before 9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(Between 9:58 a.m. and 10:05 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Elizabeth Wainio Ends Call, Saying Flight 93 Passengers Are Going to Break into Cockpit

Since around 9:54, Flight 93 passenger Elizabeth Wainio has been speaking by phone with her stepmother Esther Heymann (see [\(9:54 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 44](#) ) Wainio ends her call saying, “They’re getting ready to break into the cockpit. I have to go. I love you. Good-bye.” She then hangs up. ([Longman 2002, pp. 172](#)) The 9/11 Commission concludes that the passengers’ revolt against the hijackers that Wainio is referring to begins at 9:57 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 45](#) ) Yet according to journalist and author Jere Longman, Wainio’s call lasts 11 minutes, and ends at “just past ten” o’clock, which is several minutes after the revolt starts. ([Longman 2002, pp. 171-172](#)) In fact, if Wainio’s call began around 9:54, as is officially claimed, and lasts 11 minutes, it would end around 10:05. This is after official accounts claim Flight 93 crashed, but before the crash time of 10:06 later provided by an analysis of seismic records (see [\(10:03 a.m.-10:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). However, according to the 9/11 Commission and a summary of passenger phone calls presented at the 2006 Zacarias Moussaoui trial, Wainio’s call only lasts four-and-a-half minutes. This would mean it ends just shortly after the passenger revolt begins. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [Kim and Baum 2002](#) ; [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 30](#); [9/11 Commission 8/26/2004, pp. 44 and 46](#) ; [US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))

Shortly Before 9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001: Police Officers Concerned that WTC Will Collapse

Shanthy Nambiar, a reporter for BridgeNews in New York, is standing on Vesey Street, beneath World Trade Center Building 7. She hears someone shout, “You guys shouldn’t be in this area.” As she later recalls, “Police officers ordered people to start fleeing the area, saying the towers were in danger of collapse.” She runs north one block and then sees the South Tower coming down. ([Casey 2001, pp. 156 and 315](#)) Although a New York City Police Department (NYPD) helicopter has reported “large pieces” falling from the

South Tower (see [\(9:49 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), the 9/11 Commission states, “Prior to 9:59, no NYPD helicopter pilot predicted that either tower would collapse.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 304](#)) Why these officers believed in advance that the towers were in danger of collapsing is therefore unclear.

(Between 9:59-10:28 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Firefighters don’t Hear Any Message to Evacuate North Tower



Someone falling from the WTC. Well over 50 jumped or fell from the North Tower, none from the South Tower. *[Source: Associated Press]* At some point between the collapse of the two WTC towers, it is claimed that fire chiefs order the firefighters to come down. It has not been reported exactly who issued this order or when. Witnesses claim that scores of firefighters, unaware of the danger, were resting on lower floors in the minutes before the second tower collapsed. “Some firefighters who managed to get out said they had no idea the other building had already fallen, and said that they thought that few of those who perished knew.” At least 121 firefighters in the remaining tower die. The Fire Department blames a faulty radio repeater. However, Port Authority claims later transcripts of radio communications show the repeaters worked. ([Dwyer and Flynn 11/9/2002](#))

(Before 9:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Giuliani Apparently Told WTC Towers Will Collapse When Fire Chiefs Think Otherwise



Mayor Rudolph Giuliani will become well known for his walking press conferences in the middle of the 9/11 crisis. [Source: *Time Magazine/ Salient Stills*] Between 9:25 a.m. and 9:45 a.m., one senior New York fire chief recommends to the Fire Department Chief of Department that there might be a WTC collapse in a few hours, and, therefore, fire units probably shouldn't ascend much above the sixtieth floor (presumably this assumes the collapse would be gradual so those on lower floors would still have time to evacuate). This advice is not followed or not passed on. Apparently, no other senior fire chiefs mention or foresee the possibility of the WTC towers falling. ([9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#)) However, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani recounts, "I went down to the scene and we set up headquarters at 75 Barclay Street, which was right there, with the police commissioner, the fire commissioner, the head of emergency management, and we were operating out of there when we were told that the World Trade Center was going to collapse. And it did collapse before we could actually get out of the building, so we were trapped in the building for ten, 15 minutes, and finally found an exit and got out, walked north, and took a lot of people with us." ([ABC News 9/11/2001](#)) As can be seen by another account of similar events, this happens before the first WTC tower falls, not the second. ([9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#)) It is not clear who tells Giuliani to evacuate when no fire chiefs were considering the possibility of an imminent collapse. However, an EMT is also given a message around this time, warning that the towers are going to collapse. The origin of this information is apparently the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management, so this may also have been from where Giuliani heard of the imminent collapse (see ([Before 9:59 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001: White House Finally Requests Continuity of Government Plans, Air Force One Escort, and Fighters for Washington

The 9/11 Commission Reports, "An Air Force Lieutenant Colonel working in the White House Military Office [joins] the [NMCC] conference and state[s] that he had just talked to Deputy National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley. The White House request[s]: (1) the implementation of Continuity of Government measures, (2) fighter escorts for Air Force One, and (3) the establishment of a fighter combat air patrol over Washington, D.C." ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke gave the Continuity of Government orders a few minutes before from inside the White House (see

[\(Between 9:45-9:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). This is consistent with Bush's claim that he doesn't make any major decisions about the 9/11 attacks until shortly before 10:00 a.m.

9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001: South Tower of WTC Collapses



The South Tower of the World Trade Center collapses. [Source: *Associated Press*] The South Tower of the World Trade Center tilts to the southeast and then collapses. It was hit by Flight 175 at 9:03 a.m., 56 minutes earlier (see [9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). ([Washington Post 9/12/2001](#); [New York Times 9/12/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/22/2001](#); [Cauchon 12/20/2001](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 44](#) ) The first sign of the collapse is visible on floor 82. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 87](#) ) The angle of the tilt will be disputed after 9/11 (see [September-November 2005](#)), as will the time it takes the towers to fall to the ground (see [September 12, 2001-September 2005](#)). ([Ashley 10/9/2001](#); [Eagar and Musso 12/2001](#); [PBS Nova 5/2002](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 8/30/2006](#))

9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Passenger Told of WTC Tower Collapse Contradicts Passenger Revolt Timing

According to Lyz Glick, as recounted in the book “Among the Heroes,” she is speaking to her husband Jeremy Glick on Flight 93 when he tells her that passengers have been hearing from other phone calls that planes are crashing into the World Trade Center. He asks her, “Are [the hijackers] going to blow this plane up?” Lyz replies that she doesn't know, but tells him that it is true two planes have crashed into the World Trade Center. He asks her if they're going to crash the plane into the World Trade Center. She replies, “No. They're not going there.” He asks why, and she replies that one of the towers has just fallen. “They knocked it down.” The first World Trade Center tower collapses at 9:59 and

is seen by millions on television. The book makes clear that this exchange takes place at “almost ten o’clock” —within a minute of the tower collapse. ([Longman 2002, pp. 147](#)) This account contradicts the 9/11 Commission’s conclusion that the passenger assault on the cockpit begins at 9:58, because the tower collapse was definitely at 9:59. Only later in the same phone call does Jeremy Glick mention that passengers are still taking a vote on whether or not to attack the hijackers. He confers with others and tells Lyz that they’ve decided to do so, and then gets off the phone line. ([Longman 2002, pp. 153-54](#))

9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001: Some Witnesses Hear Explosions as South Tower Collapses

Numerous witnesses, including firefighters and other rescue workers, hear explosions at the start of, and during, the collapse of the south WTC tower. Some of them report hearing a single explosion:

- Jeff Birnbaum: “There was an explosion and the whole top leaned toward us and started coming down.” ([Lucy 2/1/2002](#))
- Battalion Chief John Sudnik: “[W]e heard a loud explosion or what sounded like a loud explosion and looked up and I saw Tower Two start coming down.” ([Sudnik 11/7/2001](#))
- Firefighter Edward Kennedy hears “a tremendous boom, explosion... and the top of the building was coming down at us.” ([Kennedy 1/17/2002](#))
- Firefighter Edward Sheehey hears “an explosion, looked up, and the building started to collapse.” ([Sheehey 12/4/2001](#))
- Battalion Chief Thomas Vallebuona: “I heard ‘boom,’ an exploding sound, a real loud bang. I looked up, and I could see the Trade Center starting to come down.” ([Vallebuona 1/2/2002](#))
- EMT Julio Marrero: “I heard a loud bang. We looked up, and we just saw the building starting to collapse.” ([Marrero 10/25/2001](#))

Other witnesses report hearing multiple explosions:

- Journalist Pete Hamill: “We heard snapping sounds, pops, little explosions, and then the walls bulged out, and we heard a sound like an avalanche.” ([Hamill 9/11/2001](#))
- Police officer Sue Keane, who is an Army veteran, is located in the north WTC tower: “[I]t sounded like bombs going off. That’s when the explosions happened.... It started to get dark, then all of a sudden there was this massive explosion.” ([Hagen and Carouba 2002, pp. 65](#))
- Firefighter Keith Murphy, who is in the lobby of the North Tower: “[T]he first thing that happened, which I still think is strange to me, the lights went out.... I had heard right before the lights went out, I had heard a distant boom boom boom, sounded like three explosions.... At the time, I would have said they sounded like bombs, but it was boom boom boom and then the lights all go out.... I would say about 3, 4 seconds, all of a sudden this tremendous roar.” ([Murphy 12/5/2001](#))
- Firefighter Craig Carlsen hears “explosions coming from building two, the South Tower. It seemed like it took forever, but there were about ten explosions.... We then realized the building started to come down.” ([Carlsen 1/25/2002](#))
- Firefighter Thomas Turilli, who is in the lobby of the North Tower: “[A]ll of a sudden you just heard like it almost actually that day sounded like bombs going off, like boom,

boom, boom, like seven or eight, and then just a huge wind gust just came... It just seemed like a huge explosion.” ([Turilli 1/17/2002](#))

■Firefighter Stephen Viola: “[T]hat’s when the South Tower collapsed, and it sounded like a bunch of explosions. You heard like loud booms.” ([Viola 1/10/2002](#))

■Firefighter Lance Lizzul: “[W]e heard some bangs. That made us look up, and that’s when the first Trade Center came down.” ([Lizzul 12/10/2001](#))

■Paramedic Kevin Darnowski: “I heard three explosions, and then we heard like groaning and grinding, and Tower Two started to come down.” ([Darnowski 11/9/2001](#))

However, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which conducts a three-year study of the WTC collapses, will subsequently claim it found “no corroborating evidence for alternative hypotheses suggesting that the WTC towers were brought down by controlled demolition using explosives” (see [October 26, 2005](#)). ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 146](#))

9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001: Some Witnesses Think South Tower Collapse Resembles a Controlled Demolition



Deputy Fire Commissioner Thomas Fitzpatrick. [*Source: City of*

New York] Numerous witnesses to the collapse of the south WTC tower think it resembles a demolition using explosives. Some initially believe this is what is occurring:

■Reporter John Bussey watches the collapse from the Wall Street Journal’s offices across the street from the WTC. He says, “I... looked up out of the office window to see what seemed like perfectly synchronized explosions coming from each floor, spewing glass and metal outward. One after the other, from top to bottom, with a fraction of a second between, the floors blew to pieces.” ([Bussey 9/12/2001](#))

■Deputy Fire Commissioner Thomas Fitzpatrick: “I remember seeing, it looked like sparkling around one specific layer of the building.... Then the building started to come down. My initial reaction was that this was exactly the way it looks when they show you those implosions on TV.” ([Fitzpatrick 10/1/2001](#))

■Assistant Fire Commissioner Stephen Gregory: “I saw low-level flashes. In my conversation with Lieutenant Evangelista... he questioned me and asked me if I saw low-level flashes in front of the building, and I agreed with him... I saw a flash flash flash and then it looked like the building came down.... You know like when they demolish a building, how when they blow up a building, when it falls down? That’s what I thought I saw.” ([Gregory 10/3/2001](#))

■Firefighter Richard Banaciski: “It seemed like on television they blow up these buildings. It seemed like it was going all the way around like a belt, all these explosions.” ([Banaciski 12/6/2001](#))

■Firefighter Joseph Meola: “As we are looking up at the building, what I saw was, it looked like the building was blowing out on all four sides. We actually heard the pops.... You thought it was just blowing out.” ([Meola 12/11/2001](#))

■Fire Chief Frank Cruthers: “[T]here was what appeared to be at first an explosion. It appeared at the very top, simultaneously from all four sides, materials shot out horizontally. And then there seemed to be a momentary delay before you could see the beginning of the collapse.” ([Cruthers 10/31/2001](#))

■Battalion Chief Brian Dixon: “I was watching the fire... the lowest floor of fire in the South Tower actually looked like someone had planted explosives around it because the whole bottom I could see—I could see two sides of it and the other side—it just looked like that floor blew out.... I thought, geez, this looks like an explosion up there, it blew out.” ([Dixon 10/25/2001](#))

■Firefighter Timothy Burke: “Then the building popped, lower than the fire... I was going oh, my god, there is secondary device because the way the building popped I thought it was an explosion.” ([Burke 1/22/2002](#))

■Firefighter Edward Cachia: “It actually gave at a lower floor, not the floor where the plane hit, because we originally had thought there was like an internal detonation explosives because it went in succession, boom, boom, boom, boom, and then the tower came down.” ([Cachia 12/6/2001](#))

■Firefighter Kenneth Rogers: “[T]here was an explosion in the South Tower... I kept watching. Floor after floor after floor. One floor under another after another and when it hit about the fifth floor, I figured it was a bomb, because it looked like a synchronized deliberate kind of thing.” ([Rogers 12/10/2001](#))

■Reporter Beth Fertig: “The tower went down perfectly straight, as if a demolition crew had imploded it. I wondered if it was being brought down deliberately.” ([Gilbert et al. 2002, pp. 78](#))

■Paramedic Daniel Rivera: “[D]o you ever see professional demolition where they set the charges on certain floors and then you hear ‘Pop, pop, pop, pop, pop’? That’s exactly what—because I thought it was that.” ([Rivera 10/10/2001](#))

■Battalion Chief Dominick DeRubbio: “It was weird how it started to come down. It looked like it was a timed explosion.” ([DeRubbio 10/12/2001](#))

■The Guardian will report that police on the scene said the collapse “looked almost like a ‘planned implosion’ designed to catch bystanders watching from the street.” ([Borger et al. 9/12/2001](#))

However, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which conducts a three-year study of the WTC collapses, will reject suggestions that the WTC towers were brought down with explosives (see [August 30, 2006](#)). CTV will assert, “[F]lashes of light that seemed to indicate bombs detonating were not explosions. They were pockets of airs being forced out of windows as the sagging floors pushed downward.” ([Stittle 9/12/2006](#))

9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001: Cheney Unresponsive as South Tower Collapses



Dick Cheney and senior staff witness the collapse of the WTC South Tower. Directly behind Cheney are Norman Mineta and I. Lewis 'Scooter' Libby. *[Source: David Bohrer / White House]* (click image to enlarge) In the conference room of the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC), Vice President Cheney, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, and their aides watch the South Tower collapsing on television. ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) Cheney will later say that the WTC coming down “was a shock to everybody—it certainly was to me.” ([PBS 9/9/2002](#)) However, if he is indeed shocked, this is not how Cheney appears to others in the room. One witness who is present will later recall that, as the South Tower collapses, there is “a groan in the room that I won’t forget, ever. It seemed like one groan from everyone.” However, Cheney makes no sound, but closes his eyes for a long, slow blink. The witness says, “I remember turning my head and looking at the vice president, and his expression never changed.” ([Gellman and Becker 6/24/2007](#)) According to Mary Matalin, a counselor to the vice president, Cheney says nothing in response to the collapse, but “he emoted in a way that he emotes, which was to stop.” ([CNN 9/11/2002](#); [CNN 9/11/2002](#)) When he is told that a casualty estimate ranges well into the thousands, the vice president reportedly just nods grimly. ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) According to the Washington Post, three people who are present say they see no sign now or later “of the profound psychological transformation that has often been imputed to Cheney.” What they see is “extraordinary self-containment and a rapid shift of focus to the machinery of power. While others assessed casualties and the work of ‘first responders,’ Cheney began planning for a conflict that would call upon lawyers as often as soldiers and spies.” He will promptly begin assembling the legal team that subsequently assists him in expanding presidential power (see [\(After 10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Gellman and Becker 6/24/2007](#))

(9:59 a.m.-10:49 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Supervisor Remains on Phone to Flight 93, Yet Does Not Hear Plane Crashing



A GTE Airfone recovered from the debris of Flight 93 in Pennsylvania. [Source: *Smithsonian National Museum of American History*] After Flight 93 passenger Todd Beamer has finished speaking to GTE customer service supervisor Lisa Jefferson (see [Shortly Before 9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), he puts down the seatback phone he has been talking on but leaves the line connected. Jefferson continues listening until after the time the plane crashes, yet does not hear any sound when the crash occurs. As she later recalls, “I was still on the line and the plane took a dive and by then, it just went silent. I held on until after the plane crashed—probably about 15 minutes longer and I never heard a crash—it just went silent because—I can’t explain it. We didn’t lose a connection because there’s a different sound that you use. It’s a squealing sound when you lose a connection. I never lost connection, but it just went silent.” She says that soon afterwards, “they had announced over the radio that United Airlines Flight 93 had just crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and a guy put his hand on my shoulder and said, ‘Lisa, you can release the line now. That was his plane.’... [E]ventually I gave in and I hung the phone up.” ([Jefferson 2006](#)) According to a summary of the passenger phone calls presented at the 2006 trial of Zacarias Moussaoui, Beamer’s call lasts for “3,925 seconds.” As it began just before 9:44 a.m., this would mean it ends around 10:49 a.m. ([US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006](#))

(9:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Fighter over New York City Never Receives Formal Shootdown Order



An F-16 flies over New York City on September 12, 2001. Smoke is still rising from the World Trade Center. [Source: *Air National Guard*] According to Major Daniel Nash, pilot of one of the two fighters first scrambled on 9/11 at 8:52 a.m., their fighters over New York City are never given a shootdown order by the military that day. He recalls that around the time of the collapse

of the South Tower, “The New York controller did come over the radio and say if we have another hijacked aircraft, we’re going to have to shoot it down.” ([BBC 9/1/2002](#)) However, he says this is an off-the-cuff personal statement, not connected to the chain of command. ([Dennehy 8/21/2002](#))

(9:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Clarke Told Some Hijackers Have al-Qaeda Connections

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke is told in private by Dale Watson, the head of the FBI’s Counterterrorism Division, “We got the passenger manifests from the airlines. We recognize some names, Dick. They’re al-Qaeda.” Clarke replies, “How the f_ck did they get on board then?” He is told, “Hey, don’t shoot the messenger, friend. CIA forgot to tell us about them.” As they are talking about this, they see the first WTC tower collapse on television. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 13-14](#)) Some hijacker names, including Mohamed Atta’s, were identified on a reservations computer over an hour earlier.

(After 9:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001: WTC Building 7 Appears Damaged



Damage to World Trade Center Building 7. [*Source: New York City Police Department*] WTC Building 7 appears to have suffered significant damage at some point after the WTC Towers had collapsed, according to firefighters at the scene. Firefighter Butch Brandies tells other firefighters that nobody is to go into Building 7 because of creaking and noises coming out of there. ([Boyle 8/2002](#)) According to Deputy Chief Peter Hayden, there is a bulge in the southwest corner of the building between floors 10 and 13. ([Hayden 4/2002](#)) Battalion Chief John Norman later recalls, “At the edge of the south face you could see that it was very heavily damaged.” ([Hayden 4/2002](#)) Deputy Chief Nick Visconti also later recalls, “A big chunk of the lower floors had been taken out on the Vesey Street side.” Captain Chris Boyle recalls, “On the south side of 7 there had to be a hole 20 stories tall in the building, with fire on several floors.” ([Boyle 8/2002](#)) The building will collapse hours later.

(After 9:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Clarke Orders Securing of Buildings, Harbors, and Borders

Some time after the first WTC tower collapse, counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke orders all landmark buildings and all federal buildings in the US evacuated. He also orders all harbors and borders closed. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 14-15](#)) The Sears Tower in Chicago begins evacuation around 10:02 a.m. Other prominent buildings are slower to evacuate. ([Ottawa Citizen 9/11/2001](#))

10:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Transponder Gives Brief Signal

The transponder for Flight 93 briefly turns back on. The plane is at 7,000 feet. The transponder stays on until about 10:03 a.m. It is unclear why the transponder signal briefly returns. ([Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#))

10:00 a.m. September 11, 2001: Hijackers Respond to Passenger Revolt

According to the 9/11 Commission, the hijacker pilot, presumably Ziad Jarrah, has been rolling the plane sharply to the left and right in an attempt to prevent passengers from reaching the cockpit. At this time, he stabilizes the plane and asks another hijacker, “Is that it? Shall we finish it off?” Another voice answers, “No. Not yet. When they all come, we finish it off.” The pilot starts pitching the nose of the airplane up and down. A few seconds later a passenger’s voice can be heard saying, “In the cockpit. If we don’t we’ll die!” Another voice says, “Roll it!” which some speculate could be a reference to pushing a foot cart into the cockpit door. By 10:01, the pilot stops the pitching and says, “Allah o akbar! Allah o akbar!” (“God is great”), then asks, “Is that it? I mean, shall we put it down?” Another hijacker responds, “Yes, put it in it, and pull it down.” ([Wald 7/22/2004](#); [San Francisco Chronicle 7/23/2004](#))

(Between 10:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush and Cheney Said to Confer on Shootdown Orders, 9/11 Commission Doubts Their Account



Dick Cheney talking to Condoleezza Rice. *[Source: David Bohrer / White House]* (click image to enlarge) According to a 9/11 Commission staff report, Vice President Cheney is told that a combat air patrol has been established over Washington. Cheney then calls President Bush to discuss the rules of engagement for the pilots. Bush authorizes the shootdown of hijacked aircraft at this time. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) According to a Washington Post article, which places the call after 9:55 a.m., “Cheney recommended that Bush authorize the military to shoot down any such civilian airliners—as momentous a decision as the president was asked to make in those first hours.” Bush then talks to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld to clarify the procedure, and Rumsfeld passes word down the chain of command. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#)) Cheney and Bush recall having this phone call, and National Security Adviser Rice recalls overhearing it. However, as the commission notes, “Among the sources that reflect other important events that morning there is no documentary evidence for this call, although the relevant sources are incomplete. Others nearby who were taking notes, such as the vice president’s chief of staff, [I. Lewis ‘Scooter’] Libby, who sat next to him, and [Lynne] Cheney, did not note a call between the president and vice president immediately after the vice president entered the conference room.” The commission also apparently concludes that no evidence exists to support the claim that Bush and Rumsfeld talked about such procedures at this time. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Commission Chairman Thomas Kean says, “The phone logs don’t exist, because they evidently got so fouled up in communications that the phone logs have nothing. So that’s the evidence we have.” Commission Vice Chairman Lee Hamilton says of the shootdown order, “Well, I’m not sure it was carried out.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [Meek 6/18/2004](#)) Newsweek reports that it “has learned that some on the commission staff were, in fact, highly skeptical of the vice president’s account and made their views clearer in an earlier draft of their staff report. According to one knowledgeable source, some staffers ‘flat out didn’t believe the call ever took place.’” According to a 9/11 Commission staffer, the report “was watered down” after vigorous lobbying from the White House. ([Klaidman and Hirsh 6/20/2004](#)) An account by Canadian Captain Mike Jellinek (who was overseeing NORAD’s Colorado headquarters, where he claims to hear Bush give a shootdown order), as well as the order to empty the skies of aircraft, appears to be discredited. ([Sallah and Mahr 12/9/2001](#))

(10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Returns to the Pentagon; Speaks to Bush and Temporarily Joins White House Teleconference

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld returns from the Pentagon crash site “by shortly before or after 10:00 a.m.” Then he has “one or more calls in my office, one of which was with the president,” according to his testimony before the 9/11 Commission. ([9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#)) The commission later concludes that Rumsfeld’s call with President Bush has little impact: “No one can recall any content beyond a general request to alert forces.” The possibility of shooting down hijacked planes is not mentioned. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Rumsfeld then goes to the Executive Support Center (ESC) located near his office, arriving there at around 10:15 a.m. In the ESC already are Stephen Cambone, Rumsfeld’s closest aide, Larry Di Rita, Rumsfeld’s personal chief of staff, and Torie Clarke, the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs. Rumsfeld had instructed Di Rita and Clarke to go to the ESC and wait for him there when they’d come to his office soon after the second WTC tower was hit at 9:03 a.m. (see [\(After 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Presently, Rumsfeld gives them their first confirmation that a plane hit the Pentagon, saying, “I’m quite sure it was a plane and I’m pretty sure it’s a large plane.” According to Clarke, he pulls out a yellow legal pad and writes down three categories, “by which his thinking would be organized the rest of the day: what we needed to do immediately, what would have to be underway quickly, and what the military response would be.” ([Clarke 2006, pp. 221-222](#); [Cockburn 2007, pp. 5-6](#)) The Executive Support Center has secure video facilities, and while there, Rumsfeld participates in the White House video teleconference. This is the video conference that counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke claims Rumsfeld is a part of much of the morning (see [\(9:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Then at around 10:30 a.m., he moves on to the National Military Command Center NMCC, located next door to the ESC (see [\(10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Scarborough 2/23/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 43-44](#)) Those in the NMCC are apparently unaware of Rumsfeld’s whereabouts during the half-hour from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.: Brigadier General Montague Winfield later recalls, “For 30 minutes we couldn’t find him. And just as we began to worry, he walked into the door of the [NMCC].” ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#))

(10:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Counterterrorist Center Does Not Evacuate with Rest of CIA Headquarters



Counterterrorist Center logo. [Source: CIA] At around 10 a.m., following reports that several aircraft were not responding to communications and could be heading toward Washington, CIA Director George Tenet orders the evacuation of the CIA headquarters building in Langley, Virginia (see [\(9:50 a.m.-10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). However, Cofer Black, the director of the Counterterrorist Center (CTC), is unhappy about this and tells Tenet, “Sir, we’re going to have to exempt CTC from this because we need to have our people working the computers.” The CTC, according to the Los Angeles Times, is “the nerve center for the CIA’s effort to disrupt and deter terrorist groups and their state sponsors.” About 200 employees are currently working in it. Eight of them are in the Global Response Center on the sixth floor of the building, monitoring the latest intelligence on terrorism throughout the world. The rest are in a windowless facility low down in the building. When Tenet points out that the Global Response Center staff will be at risk, Black responds, “They have the key function to play in a crisis like this. This is exactly why we have the Global Response Center.” When Tenet points out, “They could die,” Black replies, “Well, sir, then they’re just going to have to die.” After pausing, Tenet agrees, “You’re absolutely right.” Tenet later says, “Now that we were under attack, the Counterterrorist Center, with its vast data banks and sophisticated communications systems, was more vital than ever. Even as we were discussing going or staying, CTC was sending out a global alert to our stations around the world, ordering them to go to their liaison services and agents to collect every shred of information they could lay their hands on.” ([Drogin 10/12/2001](#); [Woodward 2002, pp. 8-9](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 164-165](#))

Shortly After 9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001: Fire Department Expert on Building Collapses Thinks Bombs Caused South Tower to Come Down



Ray Downey. [Source: Unknown] When the WTC's South Tower collapses, Father John Delendick—one of New York Fire Department's chaplains—runs down a ramp to the garages below the nearby World Financial Center, to escape the dust cloud. He speaks there with Fire Chief Ray Downey, and asks him if the jet fuel from the plane had blown up, causing the collapse. ([Delendick 12/6/2001](#)) Downey is in fact a renowned expert on building collapses. Robert Ingram, a battalion chief in the New York Fire Department later refers to him as “the premiere collapse expert in the country.” ([US Congress. Senate. Committee on Commerce 10/11/2001](#)) 9/11 Commissioner Timothy Roemer calls Downey a “very, very respected expert on building collapse.” ([9/11 Commission 5/18/2004](#)) And Fire Chief Mike Antonucci, who is a best friend of Downey's, says he “was probably the most knowledgeable person on building collapses there was. That was his [hobby], to study building collapses—what affected the engineering of buildings, how they [would] weaken and how he could respond and stay safe.” ([Marquez 9/7/2006](#)) In response to Delendick's question, Downey replies that, “at that point he thought there were bombs up there because [the collapse] was too even.” ([Delendick 12/6/2001](#)) Earlier on, Downey told other fire chiefs responding at the WTC that he was worried about “explosive devices” in the Twin Towers “that could hurt the firemen” (see [\(9:20 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). He is killed when the North Tower collapses at 10:28 a.m. ([Dwyer and O'Donnell 9/9/2005](#))

(Shortly After 9:59 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Navy Commander Tells NYC Deputy Mayor he has Permission to Send Planes Over New York



Robert Natter. [Source: CBS] Rudy Washington, who is one of Rudy Giuliani's deputy mayors, had earlier on called Admiral Robert Natter, the

commander of the US Atlantic Fleet at Norfolk Naval Station, Virginia, and requested air cover over New York (see [\(Between 8:46 a.m. and 9:03 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). After the WTC's South Tower collapses at 9:59, Washington heads to City Hall, where he again communicates with Natter. Natter informs him that the Pentagon has been hit, and says he has now gotten permission from NORAD to send some fighter jets over the city. ([Crouch 5/20/2004](#)) However, when exactly these jets are launched and when they arrive over New York is unstated. Patrick Burns, who is currently at the Norfolk Naval Station for his two-week Naval Reserve obligation, later recalls, "Air cover was already up with Navy jets out of Naval Air Station Oceana." Naval Air Station Oceana, in Virginia Beach, Virginia, is home to F-14 Tomcat and F/A-18 Hornet fighters. But Burns does not state a time for when these fighters are airborne. ([Riley 9/22/2001](#); [Richards 10/2001](#); [Burns 4/2007](#)) The 9/11 Commission Report will make no mention of any Naval fighters. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004](#))

(10:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: NEADS Notified of Suspected Hijacked Aircraft Out of Canada

NEADS receives a call from a NORAD unit in Canada, reporting another suspected hijacked aircraft, heading south across the border towards Washington, DC. This is one of the numerous mistaken reports of hijackings received during the course of the morning (see [\(9:09 a.m. and After\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to Vanity Fair, "In the barrage of information and misinformation, it becomes increasingly difficult for the controllers to keep count of how many suspected hijackings are pending. So far, it is known that three have hit buildings, but given the uncertainty about the fates of American 11 and American 77—no one knows yet that this is the plane that hit the Pentagon—the sense at NEADS is that there are possibly three hijacked jets still out there, and who knows how many more yet to be reported. At this point, no one on the military side is aware that United 93 has been hijacked." ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#))

(Between 10:00-10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Cell Call Listeners Hear Silence, Strange Sounds



Potential pilots Don Greene and Andrew Garcia.

[Source: Family photos] During this time, there apparently are no calls from Flight 93. Several cell phones that are left on record only silence. For instance, although Todd Beamer does not hang up, nothing more is heard after he puts down the phone,

suggesting things are quiet in the back of the plane. ([Longman 2002, pp. 218](#)) The only exception is Richard Makely, who listens to Jeremy Glick's open phone line after Glick goes to attack the hijackers. A reporter summarizes Makely explaining that, "The silence last[s] two minutes, then there [is] screaming. More silence, followed by more screams. Finally, there [is] a mechanical sound, followed by nothing." ([van Derbeken 9/17/2001](#)) The second silence lasts between 60 and 90 seconds. ([Longman 2002, pp. 219](#)) Near the end of the cockpit voice recording, loud wind sounds can be heard. ([Longman 2002, pp. 270-271](#); [Hirschhorn and Mattingly 4/19/2002](#)) "Sources claim the last thing heard on the cockpit voice recorder is the sound of wind—suggesting the plane had been holed." ([Wallace 9/12/2002](#)) There was at least one passenger, Don Greene, who was a professional pilot. Another passenger, Andrew Garcia, was a former flight controller. ([Breslau 9/22/2001](#); [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 10/28/2001](#); [Harnden 7/31/2002](#))

10:01 a.m. September 11, 2001: Local Pilot Sees Flight 93 Rocking Back and Forth

Bill Wright is piloting a small plane when a flight controller asks him to look around outside his window, according to his later claims. He sees Flight 93 three miles away—close enough that Wright can see the United Airlines colors. Flight control asks him the plane's altitude, and then commands him to get away from the plane and land immediately. Wright sees the plane rock back and forth three or four times before he flies from the area. ([Pittsburgh Channel 9/19/2001](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission, the FAA Command Center tells FAA headquarters that a nearby plane had seen Flight 93 "waving his wings." The commission says, "The aircraft had witnessed the radical gyrations in what we believe was the hijackers' effort to defeat the passenger assault." ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) This presumably is a reference to Wright.

10:01 a.m. September 11, 2001: Toledo Fighters Ordered Scrambled Toward Flight 1989 Instead of Flight 93

NORAD orders F-16 fighters to scramble from Toledo, Ohio. Although the base has no fighters on standby alert status, it manages to put fighters in the air 16 minutes later, a "phenomenal" response time—but still ten minutes after the last hijacked plane has crashed. ([Sallah and Mahr 12/9/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission concludes these fighters, along with fighters from Michigan, are scrambled to go after Delta Flight 1989. (Delta Flight 1989 was not out of contact with air traffic controllers, and was not hijacked.) Meanwhile, according to the 9/11 Commission, no fighters are ever scrambled to intercept Flight 93. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(After 10:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Cheney Assembles Legal Team for Expanding Presidential Power



David Addington. [Source: David Bohrer / White House] David Addington, who is Dick Cheney's general counsel and legal advisor, had been walking towards his Virginia home, after having to leave the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. This building, located next to the White House, was evacuated at around 9:45 a.m. But he receives a message from the White House telling him to turn around, because the vice president needs him. After Addington joins Cheney in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) below the East Wing of the White House, the pair reportedly begin "contemplating the founding question of the legal revolution to come: What extraordinary powers will the president need for his response?" Later in the day, Addington connects by secure video with Timothy Flanigan, the deputy White House counsel, who is in the White House Situation Room. John Yoo, the deputy chief of the Office of Legal Counsel, is also patched in from the Justice Department's command center. White House counsel Alberto Gonzales joins them later. This forms the core legal team that Cheney will oversee after the terrorist attacks. Along with these allies of his, Cheney will provide what the Washington Post calls "the rationale and political muscle to drive far-reaching legal changes through the White House, the Justice Department and the Pentagon," which will free the president to fight the war on terror, "as he saw fit." ([CNN 9/11/2001](#); [CNN 9/12/2001](#); [Gellman and Becker 6/24/2007](#))

(After 10:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Plane Heading for Britain Appears Suspicious, Emits Strange Transponder Signals

CIA Director George Tenet later recalls that, at some unspecified time during this day, a commercial passenger jet on its way to Britain behaves suspiciously, raising fears that al-Qaeda might have launched a two-continent attack. Aircraft are equipped with a device called a transponder, which transmits information to controllers on the ground, such as the plane's flight number, altitude and speed. But this plane is emitting all kinds of "squawks," with its transponder going off and on. Tenet calls Richard Dearlove, his counterpart at the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), to inform him of what is

going on. Eventually, according to Tenet, the problem is resolved, and it turns out to have been caused simply by the transponder being faulty. ([Lane, Phillips, and Snyder 9/17/2001](#); [Tenet 2007, pp. 166](#))

After 9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001: New York Deputy Mayor Develops and Implements Emergency Strategy



Rudy Washington. [*Source: Congress of Racial Equality*] After being caught in the dust plume when the WTC's South Tower collapses at 9:59, Rudy Washington, who is one of Rudy Giuliani's deputy mayors, heads to City Hall, where he coordinates the city's emergency response to the attacks. He is in contact with New York Governor George Pataki, high-ranking New York Police Department officers, and Navy Admiral Robert Natter, the commander of the US Atlantic Fleet (see [\(Shortly After 9:59 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). He orders the closing of bridges. (Though, according to some accounts, the New York Port Authority ordered all bridges to be closed earlier on, at 9:21 (see [9:21 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).) As New York Daily News columnist Stanley Crouch later describes, Washington also finds "heavy machinery to get downtown for the cleanup and got the Navy to guard against a seaborne attack. He evacuated City Hall, which shook like crazy when the second tower fell. He gathered people who could give medical help, gave the order to find lights that could be used at Ground Zero and worked out new phone communications, since power was being lost. Accompanied by city engineers, he went into the streets around the fallen towers, testing the ground to make sure it would hold when the heavy equipment came in." Washington's efforts at developing an emergency strategy are reportedly aided by what he learned at an anti-terrorist training session chaired by counterterrorism "tsar" Richard Clarke and held at the WTC, in preparation for the millennium celebration (see [\(Late 1999\)](#)). Stanley Crouch later credits Rudy Washington with having "ran New York for the first few hours after the attack during a period when Giuliani was thought to have been killed inside the first building that went down." ([Crouch 5/20/2004](#)) During the initial hours following the attacks, between around 9:50 a.m. and midday, Mayor Giuliani is moving around between a series of temporary command posts (see [\(9:50 a.m.-10:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#) and [\(After 10:28 a.m.-12:00 pm.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(After 10:00 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Cell Phones Not Working in New York City

Throughout the day of 9/11 and after, members of the public in New York City experience significant communications problems, particularly with cell phones. “In the aftermath [of the attacks], and for several days afterwards, cellular phone services were either not working or were severely overloaded.” ([SatNews 10/19/2001](#)) As Time magazine reports, “Lines formed, at least 20 people long, at all pay phones, because cell phones were not working.” ([Gibbs 9/14/2001](#)) (Reportedly, though, the 911 system is not disrupted.) Later accounts will suggest that an increased volume of phone calls being made in response to the attacks may have overloaded networks. Within minutes of the first attack, according to the New York Times, there were “tens of millions of [phone] calls—many from worried relatives and friends—that threatened to clog the system.” ([Guernsey 9/20/2001](#)) The call volume of Verizon Communications, which has its main regional switching station across the street from the World Trade Center, reaches twice its normal daily rate of 115 million calls in New York City. “And although it remained operational, the wireless network experienced massive congestion that prevented most calls from getting through. During the peak of the chaos, Verizon experienced nearly 100 percent more traffic than normal on its nationwide wireless network.” ([Verton 2003, pp. 148](#)) Some of the communications problems in the New York area are later attributed to physical damage to the infrastructure. A report by the Mineta Transportation Institute will summarize, “The collapse of the World Trade Center towers knocked out Verizon’s switching center in Lower Manhattan and severely damaged the infrastructure for cellular telephones. Telephone communications for NYPD Command and Control was also destroyed in the attack. As a consequence, cell phone service was subsequently overloaded. NYC Transit lost a key portion of its fiber-optic network in one tunnel.” ([Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow 9/2003, pp. 33](#)) Similar communication problems are also experienced around Washington, DC, and some top government officials are affected (see [After 8:55 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to one government official, the nation was “deaf, dumb, and blind” for much of the day. ([Verton 2003, pp. 151](#))

10:02 a.m. September 11, 2001: Secret Service Warns Cheney Hijackers Are Headed Toward Washington

Vice President Cheney and other leaders now in the White House bunker begin receiving reports from the Secret Service of a presumably hijacked aircraft heading toward Washington. The Secret Service is getting this information about Flight 93 through links to the FAA. However, they are looking at a projected path, not an actual radar return, so they do not realize that the plane crashes minutes later. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

10:02 a.m. September 11, 2001: Cockpit Voice Recording Ends Early?

The cockpit voice recording of Flight 93 was recorded on a 30-minute reel, which means that the tape is continually overwritten and only the final 30 minutes of any flight would be recorded. The government later permits relatives to hear this tape. Apparently, the version of the tape played to the family members begins at 9:31 a.m. and runs for 31

minutes, ending one minute before, according to the government, the plane crashes. ([Longman 2002, pp. 206-207](#); [Hirschorn and Mattingly 4/19/2002](#)) The New York Observer comments, "Some of the relatives are keen to find out why, at the peak of this struggle, the tape suddenly stops recording voices and all that is heard in the last 60 seconds or so is engine noise. Had the tape been tampered with?" ([Sheehy 6/17/2004](#))

10:02 a.m. September 11, 2001: 9/11 Commission Details the Moments Before Flight 93 Crash

According to the 9/11 Commission, a Flight 93 hijacker says, "Pull it down! Pull it down!" The airplane rolls onto its back as one of the hijackers shouts, "Allah o akbar! Allah o akbar!" The commission comments, "The hijackers remained at the controls but must have judged that the passengers were only seconds from overcoming them." Presumably the plane crashes seconds later. ([San Francisco Chronicle 7/23/2004](#)) However, there are questions as to whether the voice recording actually ends at this time. Furthermore, there is a near complete disconnect between these quotes and the quotes given in previous accounts of what the cockpit recording revealed (see [\(9:57 a.m. and After\) September 11, 2001](#)). For instance, in other accounts, passenger voices saying, "Give it to me!", "I'm injured," and "Roll it up" or "Lift it up" are heard just before the recording ends. ([Breslau, Clift, and Thomas 11/26/2001](#); [Vulliamy 12/2/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 270-271](#); [MSNBC 7/30/2002](#); [Harnden 7/31/2002](#))

(Before 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Witnesses See Flight 93 Rocking Wings as It Slowly Descends

In the tiny town of Boswell, about ten miles north and slightly to the west of Flight 93's crash site, Rodney Peterson and Brandon Leventry notice a passenger jet lumbering through the sky at about 2,000 feet. They realize such a big plane flying so low in that area is odd. They see the plane dip its wings sharply to the left, then to the right. The wings level off and the plane keeps flying south, continuing to descend slowly. Five minutes later, they hear news that the plane has crashed. Other witnesses also later describe the plane flying east-southeast, low, and wobbly. ([New York Times 9/14/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 205-206](#)) "Officials initially say that it looks like the plane was headed south when it hit the ground." ([News Channel 5 \(Cleveland\) 9/11/2001](#))

10:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: NMCC Learns of Flight 93 Hijacking, NORAD Still Not Told

According to the 9/11 Commission, the NMCC learns about the Flight 93 hijacking at this time. Since the FAA has not yet been patched in to the NMCC's conference call, the news comes from the White House. The White House learned about it from the Secret Service, and the Secret Service learned about it from the FAA. NORAD apparently is still unaware. Four minutes later, a NORAD representative on the conference call states,

“NORAD has no indication of a hijack heading to Washington, D.C., at this time.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(10:03 a.m.-10:10 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Crashes; Seven-Minute Discrepancy on Exact Timing of Crash

Exactly when Flight 93 crashes remains unclear. According to NORAD, Flight 93 crashes at 10:03 a.m. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#)) The 9/11 Commission gives an exact time of 11 seconds after 10:03 a.m. They claim this “time is supported by evidence from the staff’s radar analysis, the flight data recorder, NTSB [National Transportation Safety Board] analysis, and infrared satellite data.” They do note that “[t]he precise crash time has been the subject of some dispute.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) However, a seismic study authorized by the US Army to determine when the plane crashed concluded that the crash happened at 10:06:05 a.m. ([Kim and Baum 2002](#) ; [Perlman 12/9/2002](#)) The discrepancy is so puzzling that the Philadelphia Daily News publishes an article on the issue, titled “Three-Minute Discrepancy in Tape.” It notes that leading seismologists agree on the 10:06 a.m. time, give or take a couple of seconds. ([Bunch 9/16/2002](#)) The New York Observer notes that, in addition to the seismology study, “The FAA gives a crash time of 10:07 a.m. In addition, the New York Times, drawing on flight controllers in more than one FAA facility, put the time at 10:10 a.m. Up to a seven-minute discrepancy? In terms of an air disaster, seven minutes is close to an eternity. The way our nation has historically treated any airline tragedy is to pair up recordings from the cockpit and air-traffic control and parse the timeline down to the hundredths of a second. However, as [former Inspector General of the Transportation Department] Mary Schiavo points out, ‘We don’t have an NTSB (National Transportation Safety Board) investigation here, and they ordinarily dissect the timeline to the thousandth of a second.’” ([Sheehy 2/11/2004](#)) (Note that this work uses 10:06 a.m. as the most likely time of the crash, detailed below).

10:03 a.m. September 11, 2001: FBI/CIA Anti-Terrorist Task Force Away From Washington on Training Exercise in California

NBC News reports that the FBI has been “operating a massive exercise from their hostage rescue unit. All of their top teams, about 50 personnel, helicopters, equipment, [have been] in Monterey, California for the last two days, scheduled to fly back today commercially. So all of those people are out of place.” ([NBC 4 9/11/2001](#)) USA Today later adds that the day’s attacks are “so unexpected that a joint FBI/CIA anti-terrorist task force that specifically prepared for this type of disaster was on a training exercise in Monterey, Calif. As of late Tuesday, with airports closed around the country, the task force still hadn’t found a way to fly back to Washington.” ([Nichols 9/11/2001](#)) NBC News concludes, “It’s fair to say, according to sources that we’ve talked to here at NBC,

that the FBI rescue operations and other FBI operations are really in chaos right now, because they can't reach their officials in New York, all of their phone lines are down. And now you've got all of their special experts on this stuck in Monterey, California.... So they are seriously out of pocket, and there is a real breakdown of the FBI anti-terror coordination team, which is of course the principal team that would lead any effort." ([NBC 4 9/11/2001](#)) The US politics website evote.com similarly concludes, "[J]ust as the worst terrorist act was being committed on American lives and property, the chief federal agency responsible for preventing such crimes was being AWOL." ([Evote \[.com\] 9/11/2001](#))

(Before 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Fighters Trailing Flight 93?

Shortly after 9/11, NORAD claims that there is a fighter 100 miles away from Flight 93 when it crashes. However, no details, such as who the pilot is, or which base or direction the fighter is coming from, are ever given by NORAD. ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#)) Other accounts vary as to whether or not there are any fighters near Flight 93 when it goes down:

- Two days after the attacks, it is reported that an unnamed New England flight controller ignored a ban on controllers speaking to the media, reportedly claiming "that an F-16 fighter closely pursued Flight 93... the F-16 made 360-degree turns to remain close to the commercial jet." He adds that the fighter pilot "must've seen the whole thing." He reportedly learned this from speaking to controllers who were closer to the crash.

([Associated Press 9/13/2001](#); [McKeon 9/13/2001](#))

- Five days after the attacks, on September 16, CBS television reports that two F-16 fighters were trailing the flight and within 60 miles of the plane when it went down. ([CBS News 9/16/2001](#); [Carlin 8/13/2002](#))

- Also on this date, Major General Paul Weaver, director of the Air National Guard, says that no military planes were sent after Flight 93. ([Seattle Times 9/16/2001](#))

- About seven months later, Anthony Kuczynski tells the University of St. Thomas's weekly newspaper that he had flown toward Pittsburgh alongside two F-16s. He said he was piloting an E-3 Sentry AWACS plane, with advanced radar and surveillance equipment that could be used to direct fighters to their targets. He was just about to intercept Flight 93 when it crashed. He says, "I was given direct orders to shoot down an airliner." (E-3s are unarmed, so, if this account is accurate, the order presumably applied to the fighters Kuczynski was accompanying.) ([Forster 4/12/2002](#); [US Air Force 5/2006](#))

- Almost a year after the attacks, ABC News reports that "the closest fighters are two F-16 pilots on a training mission from Selfridge Air National Guard Base" near Detroit, Michigan. These were reportedly ordered after Flight 93, even though they weren't armed with any weapons. The two pilots, Lt. Col. Tom Froling and Major Douglas Champagne, had just fired the last of their 20mm cannon ammunition during their training mission. They were oblivious to what happened in New York and Washington, but said they heard unusual conversation over their radio frequencies. They claim they were supposed to crash into Flight 93 if they could not persuade it to land. ([Raddatz 8/30/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [Filson 2004, pp. 68](#)) However, these fighters were apparently not diverted

from Michigan until after Flight 93 crashed at 10:06 a.m.

- Another Cleveland flight controller named Stacey Taylor claims around this time not to have seen any fighters on radar around the crash. ([MSNBC 9/11/2002](#))

- Five years after the attacks, Bill Keaton, a Cleveland flight controller who tracked Flight 93 as it flew eastward (see [9:41 a.m.-10:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), is asked whether there were fighters in the vicinity when it crashed. He replies, “[T]hat goes beyond the scope of what I can comment on.” (Flight controllers reportedly can lose their security clearances if they discuss the movements of military aircraft.) ([Renner 9/6/2006](#))

Just Before 10:06 a.m. September 11, 2001: Locals Hear a Missile Before Flight 93 Crashes?

Several local people believe they hear a missile overhead just before Flight 93 goes down. Barry Lichty, a US Navy veteran and mayor of Indian Lake Borough (just to the east of where Flight 93 crashes), is watching television with his wife. He says he hears “a loud roar above the house that sounded like a missile.... Shortly thereafter, we heard an explosion and a tremor. My first reaction, as a former utility employee, was that maybe someone shot a missile into the substation.” He says Flight 93 “did not come over my house. I don’t know what we heard.” ([Kashurba 2002, pp. 158-159](#)) Joe Wilt, who lives a quarter-mile from the crash site, hears a “whistling like a missile, then a loud boom.” He says, “The first thing I thought it was, was a missile.” ([Michaud 9/12/2001](#); [Lane and Pan 9/12/2001](#)) And Ernie Stuhl, the mayor of Shanksville, later says, “I know of two people - I will not mention names - that heard a missile. They both live very close, within a couple of hundred yards.... This one fellow’s served in Vietnam and he says he’s heard them, and he heard one that day.” ([Bunch 11/18/2001](#)) Officials will emphatically deny that Flight 93 was shot down, as some people later suggest (see [September 14, 2001](#)). ([Gazarik and Acton 9/14/2001](#); [Longman 2002, pp. 264](#)) However, a number of witnesses report seeing a small, white jet plane near the crash site, around the time Flight 93 reportedly goes down (see [\(Before and After 10:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(Before 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Witnesses See Flight 93 Flying Erratically and Making Strange Noises

Numerous eyewitnesses see and hear Flight 93 just before its crash:

- Terry Butler, at Stoystown: He sees the plane come out of the clouds, low to the ground. “It was moving like you wouldn’t believe. Next thing I knew it makes a heck of a sharp, right-hand turn.” It banks to the right and appears to be trying to climb to clear one of the ridges, but it continues to turn to the right and then veers behind a ridge. About a second later it crashes. ([Zapinski 9/12/2001](#))

Accounts of the plane making strange noises -

- Laura Temyer of Hooversville: “I didn’t see the plane but I heard the plane’s engine. Then I heard a loud thump that echoed off the hills and then I heard the plane’s engine. I heard two more loud thumps and didn’t hear the plane’s engine anymore after that.” (She insists that people she knows in state law enforcement have privately told her the plane

was shot down, and that decompression sucked objects from the aircraft, explaining why there was a wide debris field.) ([Bunch 11/15/2001](#))

■Charles Sturtz, a half-mile from the crash site: The plane is heading southeast and has its engines running. No smoke can be seen. “It was really roaring, you know. Like it was trying to go someplace, I guess.” ([Wagner and McCall 9/13/2001](#))

■Michael Merringer, two miles from the crash site: “I heard the engine gun two different times and then I heard a loud bang...” ([Spangler 9/12/2001](#))

■Tim Lensbouer, 300 yards away: “I heard it for ten or 15 seconds and it sounded like it was going full bore.” ([Batz et al. 9/12/2001](#))

Accounts of the plane flying upside down -

■Rob Kimmel, several miles from the crash site: He sees it fly overhead, banking hard to the right. It is 200 feet or less off the ground as it crests a hill to the southeast. “I saw the top of the plane, not the bottom.” ([Longman 2002, pp. 210-211](#)) Eric Peterson of Lambertville: He sees a plane flying overhead unusually low. The plane seemed to be turning end-over-end as it dropped out of sight behind a tree line. ([Silver et al. 9/12/2001](#))

■Bob Blair of Stoystown: He sees the plane spiraling and flying upside down, not much higher than the treetops, before crashing. ([Black 9/12/2001](#))

Accounts of a sudden plunge and more strange sounds -

■An unnamed witness says he hears two loud bangs before watching the plane take a downward turn of nearly 90 degrees. ([News Channel 5 \(Cleveland\) 9/11/2001](#))

■Tom Fritz, about a quarter-mile from the crash site: He hears a sound that “wasn’t quite right” and looks up in the sky. “It dropped all of a sudden, like a stone,” going “so fast that you couldn’t even make out what color it was.” ([Zapinski 9/12/2001](#))

■Terry Butler, a few miles north of Lambertville: “It dropped out of the clouds.” The plane rose slightly, trying to gain altitude, then “it just went flip to the right and then straight down.” ([Silver et al. 9/12/2001](#))

■Lee Purbaugh, 300 yards away: “There was an incredibly loud rumbling sound and there it was, right there, right above my head—maybe 50 feet up.... I saw it rock from side to side then, suddenly, it dipped and dived, nose first, with a huge explosion, into the ground. I knew immediately that no one could possibly have survived.” ([Carlin 8/13/2002](#))

Upside down and a sudden plunge -

■Linda Shepley: She hears a loud bang and sees the plane bank to the side. ([ABC News 9/11/2001](#)) She sees the plane wobbling right and left, at a low altitude of roughly 2,500 feet, when suddenly the right wing dips straight down, and the plane plunges into the earth. She says she has an unobstructed view of Flight 93’s final two minutes. ([Bunch 11/15/2001](#))

■Kelly Leverknight in Stony Creek Township of Shanksville: “There was no smoke, it just went straight down. I saw the belly of the plane.” It sounds like it is flying low, and it’s heading east. ([Black 9/12/2001](#); [Zapinski 9/12/2001](#))

■Tim Thornsberg, working in a nearby strip mine: “It came in low over the trees and started wobbling. Then it just rolled over and was flying upside down for a few seconds... and then it kind of stalled and did a nose dive over the trees.” ([Wagner and McCall 9/13/2001](#)) Some claim that these witness accounts support the idea that Flight 93 is hit by a missile. ([Bunch 11/15/2001](#)) While this theory certainly can be disputed, it is

worth noting that some passenger planes hit by missiles continued to fly erratically for several minutes before crashing. For instance, a Korean Airline 747 was hit by two Russian missiles in 1983, yet continued to fly for two more minutes. ([Korean Air 8/31/1983](#)) Kelly Leverknight, whose home is a couple of miles from the Flight 93 crash site, adds that planes going overhead are nothing unusual here because the area is a “military flight corridor.” ([Black 9/12/2001](#))

(Before 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Breaks Up Prior to Crash?

Flight 93 apparently starts to break up before it crashes, because debris is found very far away from the crash site. ([Bunch 11/15/2001](#)) The plane is generally obliterated upon landing, except for one half-ton piece of engine found some distance away. Some reports indicate that the engine piece was found over a mile away. ([Carlin 8/13/2002](#)) The FBI reportedly acknowledges that this piece was found “a considerable distance” from the crash site. ([Bunch 11/15/2001](#)) Later, the FBI will cordon off a three-mile wide area around the crash, as well as another area six to eight miles from the initial crash site. ([NPA 9/13/2001](#)) One story calls what happened to this engine “intriguing, because the heat-seeking, air-to-air Sidewinder missiles aboard an F-16 would likely target one of the Boeing 757’s two large engines.” ([Bunch 11/15/2001](#)) Smaller debris fields are also found two, three, and eight miles away from the main crash site. ([Carlin 8/13/2002](#); [Wallace 9/12/2002](#)) Eight miles away, local media quote residents speaking of a second plane in the area and burning debris falling from the sky. ([Reuters 9/13/2001](#)) Residents outside Shanksville reported “discovering clothing, books, papers, and what appeared to be human remains. Some residents said they collected bags-full of items to be turned over to investigators. Others reported what appeared to be crash debris floating in Indian Lake, nearly six miles from the immediate crash scene. Workers at Indian Lake Marina said that they saw a cloud of confetti-like debris descend on the lake and nearby farms minutes after hearing the explosion...” ([Gibb, O'Toole, and Lash 9/13/2001](#)) Moments after the crash, Carol Delasko initially thinks someone had blown up a boat on Indian Lake: “It just looked like confetti raining down all over the air above the lake.” ([Gazarik and Acton 9/14/2001](#)) Investigators say that far-off wreckage “probably was spread by the cloud created when the plane crashed and dispersed by a ten mph southeasterly wind.” ([Billington 9/16/2001](#)) However, much of the wreckage is found sooner than that wind could have carried it, and not always southeast.

(Just Before 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Lights Go Out Before Flight 93 Crashes, Allegedly Indicating a Missile Being Fired

John Fleegle, a manager at the Indian Lake Marina about 1.5 miles from where Flight 93 crashes, is indoors with some colleagues, watching the televised coverage of the World Trade Center attack. Then, as he later describes, “All of a sudden the lights flickered and we joked that maybe they were coming for us. Then we heard engines screaming close

overhead. The building shook. We ran out, heard the explosion and saw a fireball mushroom,” following the crash. When he later describes this incident while on a training course in Atlanta, Fleegle will be told that what happened means Flight 93 “was shot down.” A man there who says he is a retired Air Force officer will tell Fleegle, “[W]hen your lights flickered, [it was because] they zap the radar frequency on everything before they shoot. Your lights didn’t flicker from the impact—your lights flickered because they zapped the radar system before they shot it.” However, William “Buck” Kernan, a retired four-star Army general, will dispute this claim, saying, “[R]egarding an aircraft engaging an airborne target having an electrical disruption on the ground, no, this would not be a result of lock on or any electromagnetic pulsing.” He will suggest it is “possible that overpressure from explosions could momentarily disrupt microwave connections or cause sensations on ground relays, wiring, etc.” that might result in the lights having flickered. ([Erdley 9/14/2001](#); [Lappe and Marshall 2004, pp. 35-36](#)) But, consistent with Fleegle’s allegation, a number of local residents—including military veterans—say they heard the sound of a missile overhead just before the time of the crash (see [Just Before 10:06 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Another local resident, Val McClatchey, will report her lights and phone going out around the time of the crash. ([Frederick 9/11/2002](#)) According to Barry Lichty, the mayor of Indian Lake Borough, the town’s electricity goes out around this time. He later learns that the plane crash had disrupted service to the borough. ([Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 9/12/2001](#)) Interestingly, one alternative theory later suggested is that Flight 93 could have been brought down using “electromagnetic interference” (see [August 13, 2002](#)). The US Air Force and Pentagon have in fact “conducted extensive research on ‘electronic warfare applications’ with the possible capacity intentionally to disrupt the mechanisms of an airplane in such a way as to provoke, for example, an uncontrollable dive.” ([Carlin 8/13/2002](#))

(10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Flight 93 Crashes into Filled-in Mine in Pennsylvania Countryside



Flight 93 crashed in the Pennsylvania countryside. Rescue vehicles arrive in the distance. [*Source: Keith Srakocic/ Associated Press*]/Flight 93 crashes into an empty field just north of the Somerset County Airport, about 80 miles southeast of Pittsburgh, 124 miles or 15 minutes from Washington, D.C. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [Hillston 10/28/2001](#); [Levin, Adams, and Morrison 8/13/2002](#); [Associated](#)

[Press 8/19/2002](#); [MSNBC 9/3/2002](#)) The point of impact is a reclaimed coal mine, known locally as the Diamond T Mine, that was reportedly abandoned in 1996. ([Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 9/12/2001](#); [Zapinski 9/12/2001](#); [Frederick 9/11/2002](#)) Being “reclaimed” means the earth had been excavated down to the coal seam, the coal removed, and then the earth replaced and planted over. ([Kashurba 2002, pp. 121](#)) A US Army authorized seismic study times the crash at five seconds after 10:06 a.m. ([Kim and Baum 2002](#); [Perlman 12/9/2002](#)) As mentioned previously, the timing of this crash is disputed and it may well occur at 10:03 a.m., 10:07 a.m., or 10:10 a.m.

(Before and After 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Witnesses See Low-Flying, Small White Jet at Flight 93 Crash Site



Looking straight down onto the Flight 93 crash site. North is to the top. Note the impact point north of the road, and the burned trees to the south of it. [Source: FBI] A second plane, described “as a small, white jet with rear engines and no discernible markings,” is seen by at least ten witnesses flying low and in erratic patterns, not much above treetop level, over the crash site within minutes of United Flight 93 crashing. ([Carlin 8/13/2002](#))

■Lee Purbaugh: “I didn’t get a good look but it was white and it circled the area about twice and then it flew off over the horizon.” ([Wallace 9/12/2002](#))

■Susan McElwain: Less than a minute before the Flight 93 crash rocked the countryside, she sees a small white jet with rear engines and no discernible markings swoop low over her minivan near an intersection and disappear over a hilltop, nearly clipping the tops of trees lining the ridge. ([Pillets 9/14/2001](#)) She later adds, “There’s no way I imagined this plane—it was so low it was virtually on top of me. It was white with no markings but it was definitely military, it just had that look. It had two rear engines, a big fin on the back like a spoiler on the back of a car and with two upright fins at the side. I haven’t found one like it on the Internet. It definitely wasn’t one of those executive jets. The FBI came and talked to me and said there was no plane around.... But I saw it and it was there before the crash and it was 40 feet above my head. They did not want my story—nobody here did.” ([Wallace 9/12/2002](#))

■John Fleegle and two work colleagues arrive at the crash site “before any fireman or paramedics or anybody.” According to Fleegle, “When we got there, there was a plane flying up above and he was smart, he flew straight for the sun so you couldn’t look at it and see exactly what type of plane, if it was a fighter or what it was.” However, Fleegle claims the plane “was decent sized. It wasn’t just a little private jet or something like that, from what we could see.” ([Lappe and Marshall 2004, pp. 35-36](#))

■Dennis Decker and/or Rick Chaney, say: “As soon as we looked up [after hearing the Flight 93 crash], we saw a midsize jet flying low and fast. It appeared to make a loop or part of a circle, and then it turned fast and headed out.” Decker and Chaney described the plane as a Learjet type, with engines mounted near the tail and painted white with no identifying markings. “It was a jet plane, and it had to be flying real close when that 757 went down. If I was the FBI, I’d find out who was driving that plane.” ([Pillets 9/14/2001](#))

■Kathy Blades, who is staying about quarter of a mile from the impact site, runs outside after the crash and sees a jet, “with sleek back wings and an angled cockpit,” race overhead. ([Bunch 11/18/2001](#))

■Anna Ruth Fisher says, “After the crash, another jet went near over to look.” Her mother, Anna B. Fisher, adds, “We were looking at the smoke cloud when we saw the jets circling up there.” ([Kashurba 2002, pp. 27](#))

■Jim Brandt sees a small plane with no markings stay about one or two minutes over the crash site before leaving. ([Pittsburgh Channel 9/12/2001](#))

■Bob Page sees a large plane circling the crash site for about two or three minutes, before climbing almost vertically into the sky. He cannot see what kind of plane it is or if there are any markings on it, but says, “It sure wasn’t no puddle jumper.” ([Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 9/12/2001](#))

■Tom Spinelli: “I saw the white plane. It was flying around all over the place like it was looking for something. I saw it before and after the crash.” ([Wallace 9/12/2002](#))

The FBI later claims this was a Fairchild Falcon 20 business jet, directed after the crash to fly from 37,000 feet to 5,000 feet and obtain the coordinates for the crash site to help rescuers. ([Pittsburgh Channel 9/15/2001](#); [Heltzel and Gibb 9/16/2001](#)) The FBI also says there was a C-130 military cargo aircraft flying at 24,000 feet about 17 miles away (see [10:08 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), but that plane wasn’t armed and had no role in the crash. ([Pittsburgh Channel 9/15/2001](#); [Heltzel and Gibb 9/16/2001](#)) Note that this is the same C-130 that flies very close to Flight 77 right as that plane crashes into the Pentagon (see [9:36 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Nearby Cottage Destroyed When Flight 93 Crashes

The local structure most severely damaged when Flight 93 crashes in rural Pennsylvania is a stone cottage, an estimated 1,000 feet from the crash site. Located within thick trees, the cottage belongs to Barry Hoover who is away at work at the time of the crash. Reportedly, “every window and door” has been “blown off and obliterated, its ceilings and floor tiles had been blasted loose and much of the interior was wrecked.” Hoover describes it as “like what you see after a tornado or hurricane goes through—a total ruin.”

The garage adjacent to it has its door blown off by the shockwave from the crash. According to Somerset County Solicitor Dan Rullo, “The way it was described to me was that it must have been blown up, the springs snapped, and it came back upside down.” The surrounding area is scattered with remains and debris. ([Lash 9/14/2001](#); [Kashurba 2002, pp. 122](#); [Perl 5/12/2002](#))

(10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Local Resident Captures ‘One-of-a-Kind’ Photo of Flight 93 Crash Explosion

A local resident is able to take the only photo showing the Flight 93 crash in the seconds after the plane went down. Val McClatchey lives just over a mile away from the crash site. ([Zaslow 9/12/2006](#)) She is at home watching television when she hears the surge of a plane engine, sees a silver flash outside, and then hears a loud boom that causes her house to shake. Luckily she has her new digital camera ready by her door. She was planning to photograph a friend who had promised to fly over in a helicopter on this day. ([Dailey 6/29/2003](#); [Cleary 8/6/2006](#); [Swauger 9/9/2006](#)) She grabs it and from her front porch manages to take a picture of the smoke cloud rising into the sky, “approximately five seconds after impact,” she says. ([Frederick 9/11/2002](#); [Windsor Park Stories 3/23/2003](#)) Her photo will appear in numerous newspapers and magazines. According to the FBI, it is the only known image taken within seconds of the crash. Considering the sparsely populated area in which Flight 93 went down, Pittsburgh FBI agent Jeff Killeen calls it “one-of-a-kind.” ([Cleary 8/6/2006](#); [Swauger 9/9/2006](#); [Zaslow 9/12/2006](#))

After 10:06 a.m. September 11, 2001: Emergency Dispatch Reports Second Suspicious Plane Heading Toward Johnstown Airport?

Soon after Flight 93 has crashed, Sherry Stalley, who is a reporter with a Johnstown, Pennsylvania, television station, is traveling in a car and hears a dispatch over the scanner (a type of radio receiver used by reporters), reporting that apparently another plane, possibly with a bomb onboard, is heading towards the Johnstown airport (located about 14 miles north of the Flight 93 crash site). According to Stalley, “The scanner was jammed with talk. Emergency crews and firefighters were being sent to the airport. Police were being dispatched to shut down roads. Every available unit within a thirty-mile radius was asked to help.” ([Gilbert et al. 2002, pp. 111](#)) The control tower at the Johnstown airport was evacuated at around 10 a.m., following reports of a suspect aircraft heading towards it (see [\(Between 9:40 and 10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(After 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Fighter Said to Fly Past Flight 93 Crash Site

“Up above, a fighter jet streak[s] by,” just after Flight 93 crashes, according to ABC News. ([ABC News 9/15/2002](#)) It isn’t clear what evidence this ABC News claim is based on. There are other accounts of a fighter or fighters in the area before the crash, mentioned previously.

(After 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Michigan Fighters Diverted Toward Flight 1989

At some point after Flight 93 crashes, NORAD diverts “unarmed Michigan Air National Guard fighter jets that happened to be flying a training mission in northern Michigan since the time of the first attack.” ([Associated Press 8/30/2002](#)) The 9/11 Commission concludes these fighters and fighters from Ohio are scrambled for Delta Flight 1989, a flight that was never hijacked or even out of contact. Meanwhile, reportedly, no fighters are scrambled after Flight 93 at all, which has already crashed. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(After 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Clarke Updated on Fighter Situation, Told Flight 93 Still Headed Toward Washington

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke is told by an aide, “Secret Service reports a hostile aircraft ten minutes out.” Two minutes later, he is given an update: “Hostile aircraft eight minutes out.” In actual fact, when Flight 93 crashes at 10:06 a.m., it’s still about 15 minutes away from Washington. Clarke is also told that there are 3,900 aircraft still in the air over the Continental US (which is roughly accurate); four of those aircraft are believed to be piloted by terrorists (which is inaccurate by this time). Joint Chiefs of Staff Vice Chairman Richard Myers then reports, “We have three F-16s from Langley over the Pentagon. Andrews is launching fighters from the D.C. Air National Guard. We have fighters aloft from the Michigan Air National Guard, moving east toward a potential hostile over Pennsylvania. Six fighters from Tyndall and Ellington are en route to rendezvous with Air Force One over Florida. They will escort it to Barksdale.” ([North American Aerospace Defense Command 9/18/2001](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 8-9](#)) However, fighters do not meet up with Air Force One until about an hour later. Franklin Miller, a senior national security official who worked alongside Clarke on 9/11, and another official there, later fail to recall hearing any aide warning that a plane could be only minutes away. ([Sanger 3/30/2004](#)) The time of this incident is not given, but the Michigan fighters are not diverted until after 10:06 a.m. (see [\(After 10:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). If this takes place after 10:06 a.m., it would parallel similar warnings about Flight 93 after it has already crashed provided to Vice President Cheney elsewhere in the White House.

(After 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Clarke Told of Flight 93 Crash

Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke is told by an aide, “United 93 is down, crashed outside of Pittsburgh. It’s odd. Appears not to have hit anything much on the ground.” The timing of this event is unclear. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 14-15](#))

(After 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Bush, Told of Flight 93 Crash, Wonders If It Was Shot Down

President Bush is told that Flight 93 crashed a few minutes after it happened, but the exact timing of this notice is unclear. Because of Vice President Cheney’s earlier order, he asks, “Did we shoot it down or did it crash?” Several hours later, he is assured that it crashed. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))

(After 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Al-Qaeda Agents Heard Saying we’ve Hit the Targets

According to Newsweek, “shortly after the suicide attacks,” US intelligence picks up communications among bin Laden associates relaying the message: “we’ve hit the targets.” ([Hirsh 9/13/2001](#))

(After 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Witnesses Report Lack of Plane Wreckage at Flight 93 Crash Scene



The Flight 93 crater later in the morning.

Notice the destruction of the airplane is nearly total. [*Source: Associated Press*] Numerous individuals who see the Flight 93 crash site describe a lack of plane wreckage:

■Jon Meyer, a reporter with WJAC-TV, says, “I was able to get right up to the edge of the crater.... All I saw was a crater filled with small, charred plane parts. Nothing that would even tell you that it was the plane.... There were no suitcases, no recognizable plane parts, no body parts. The crater was about 30 to 35 feet deep.” ([Newseum et al. 2002, pp. 148](#))

■According to Mark Stahl, who goes to the crash scene, “There’s a crater gouged in the earth, the plane is pretty much disintegrated. There’s nothing left but scorched trees.” ([Associated Press 9/11/2001](#))

■Frank Monaco of the Pennsylvania State Police says, “If you would go down there, it would look like a trash heap. There’s nothing but tiny pieces of debris. It’s just littered

with small pieces.” ([Silver et al. 9/12/2001](#))

■Scott Spangler, a photographer with a local newspaper, says, “I didn’t think I was in the right place. I was looking for a wing or a tail. There was nothing, just this pit.... I was looking for anything that said tail, wing, plane, metal. There was nothing.” ([Newseum et al. 2002, pp. 149](#))

■According to Ron Delano, a local who rushes to the scene after hearing about the crash, “If they hadn’t told us a plane had wrecked, you wouldn’t have known. It looked like it hit and disintegrated.” ([Pittsburgh Tribune-Review 9/12/2001](#))

■Gabrielle DeRose, a news anchor with KDKA-TV, views the crash site from a hill overlooking it. She says, “It was very disturbing to think all the remains just disintegrated.... There were no large pieces of airplane, no human remains, no baggage.” ([Sylvester and Huffman 2002, pp. 160-161](#))

■Local assistant volunteer fire chief Rick King, who sees the crater at the crash site, says, “Never in my wildest dreams did I think half the plane was down there.” King sends his men into the woods to search for the plane’s fuselage, but they keep coming back and telling him, “Rick. There’s nothing.” ([Longman 2002, pp. 216](#))

■Bob Craig of the FBI’s evidence-gathering team later explains what is supposed to have occurred: “Turn the picture of the second plane hitting the World Trade Center on its side, and, for all intents and purposes, the face of the building is the strip mine in Shanksville [where Flight 93 crashed].” ([Longman 2002, pp. 260](#)) When the plane’s two black boxes are later discovered (see [September 13-14, 2001](#)), they are reportedly found 15 and 25 feet inside the crater. ([Longman 2002, pp. 217](#); [Ricks and Khan 5/12/2002](#))

10:07 a.m. September 11, 2001: Cleveland Flight Control Updates NEADS

According to the 9/11 Commission, NEADS finally receives a call from Cleveland flight control about Flight 93, saying it has a bomb on board. Cleveland says it has lost the plane’s transponder, but passes on its last known latitude and longitude. NEADS is unable to locate it on radar because it has already crashed. By the commission’s account, this is NORAD’s first notification about the Flight 93 hijacking, even though Cleveland realized Flight 93 was hijacked at 9:32 a.m., 35 minutes earlier, and notified FAA headquarters at 9:34 a.m., 33 minutes earlier. A former senior FAA executive, speaking on condition of anonymity, will later try to explain this failure, saying, “Our whole procedures prior to 9/11 were that you turned everything [regarding a hijacking] over to the FBI.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#); [Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) However, military instructions contradict this, saying, “In the event of a hijacking, the NMCC will be notified by the most expeditious means by the FAA.” (The NMCC is the National Military Command Center, located within the Pentagon.) ([US Department of Defense 7/31/1997](#); [US Department of Defense 6/1/2001](#)) And with the earlier hijacking of Flight 11, the FAA did not wait around for half an hour, nor are they known to have referred the matter to the FBI. They’d tried contacting a military air base directly at around 8:34 a.m., and contacted NORAD minutes later. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

[After 10:06 a.m. September 11, 2001: Paper Debris Survives Flight 93 Crash](#)



Paper debris found in New Baltimore, six miles from the crash site. [Source: Steve Mellon / *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*] (click image to enlarge) Despite the apparent lack of plane wreckage and human remains at the Flight 93 crash site (see [\(After 10:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#))(see [10:45 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), a large amount of paper debris is found there, mostly intact. Faye Hahn, an EMT who responds to the initial call for help, finds “pieces of mail” everywhere. ([McCall 2002, pp. 31-32](#)) Roger Bailey of the Somerset Volunteer Fire Department finds mail “scattered everywhere” around the site. He says, “I guess there were 5,000 pounds of mail on board.” ([Kashurba 2002, pp. 38](#)) Some envelopes are burned, but others are undamaged. Flight 93 had reportedly been carrying a cargo of thousands of pounds of US mail. ([Longman 2002, pp. 213-214](#)) Whether this is later examined as crime scene evidence is unclear: According to Bailey, over subsequent days, whenever a lot of this mail has been recovered, the post office will be called and a truck will come to take it away. Several of the first responders at the crash site also see an unscorched bible lying open on the ground, about 15 yards from the crash crater. ([Kashurba 2002, pp. 43, 110 and 129](#); [Masterson 6/13/2006](#)) Local coroner Wallace Miller will later come across a second bible at the warehouse where the Flight 93 victims’ belongings are kept. ([Perl 5/12/2002](#)) Other paper debris rains down on the nearby Indian Lake Marina (see [\(Before 10:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). According to witness Tom Spinelli, this is “mainly mail,” and also includes “bits of in-flight magazine.” ([Wallace 9/12/2002](#)) Other paper items will be recovered from the crash site in the following days. These include a fragment of Ziad Jarrah’s passport and a business card linking al-Qaeda conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui to the 9/11 hijackers. ([MacVicar and Faraj 8/1/2002](#); [Jackman 9/25/2002](#))

[10:07 a.m. September 11, 2001: Report of Aircraft over White House Causes Confusion; NEADS Orders Langley Fighters to Intercept It](#)



NEADS personnel who are on duty the morning of 9/11 [*Source: Vanity Fair*] (click image to enlarge) One of the fighter pilots launched from Langley Air Force Base calls NEADS with an urgent message: "Baltimore is saying something about an aircraft over the White House." In response, and acting on the immediate order of the NEADS mission crew commander Major Kevin Nasypany, Master Sergeant Steve Citino tells the pilot, "Mission is intercept aircraft over White House. Use FAA for guidance." Major James Fox, the leader of the NEADS Weapons Team, adds, "Divert the aircraft away from the White House. Intercept and divert it." As the Langley fighters head for the White House, the NEADS controllers are unable to find the building on their dated equipment, and also have trouble communicating with the fighters. NEADS personnel speculate whether the unidentified aircraft is a helicopter or just smoke from the Pentagon. Apparently, the fast-moving object is soon realized to be one of the Langley fighters, mistakenly reported by a civilian controller unaware of the military's scrambles. Citino says, "That was cool. We intercepted our own guys." ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#))

10:07 a.m. September 11, 2001: Police Helicopter Reports Top of North Tower 'Glowing Red'; Says Collapse is 'Inevitable'



A helicopter flying above the burning World Trade Center. [Source: *History Channel*] Minutes after the collapse of the south WTC tower, police helicopters fly near the North Tower to check on its condition. The pilot of one helicopter radios, “About 15 floors down from the top, it looks like its glowing red,” and adds, “It’s inevitable.” Seconds later, another helicopter pilot reports, “I don’t think this has too much longer to go. I would evacuate all people within the area of that second building.” While these warnings are relayed to police officers, fire and rescue personnel do not hear them, as they operate on a different radio system. ([Dwyer, Flynn, and Fessenden 7/7/2002](#); [Fisher 8/25/2005](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 224](#)) The North Tower will collapse 21 minutes later (see [10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(After 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: CIA Receives Passenger Lists From Hijacked Planes After Initial Problems

At some unspecified time after when Flight 93 crashed, CIA Director George Tenet receives the passenger lists for the hijacked planes. He is currently in the CIA’s printing plant, after having evacuated the agency’s headquarters building (see [9:50 a.m.-10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). An analyst from the CIA’s Counterterrorist Center (CTC) has raced across to the plant with the list, and says, “Some of these guys on one of the planes are the ones we’ve been looking for in the last few weeks.” He specifically points at the names Khalid Almihdhar and Nawaf Alhazmi (two of the alleged Flight 77 hijackers). According to Tenet, this is “the first time we had absolute proof of what I had been virtually certain of from the moment I heard about the attacks: we were in the middle of an al-Qaeda plot.” Tenet will later say that after the CTC had first “requested passenger lists from the planes that had been turned into weapons that morning... the initial response from some parts of the bureaucracy (which parts since mercifully forgotten) was that the manifests could not be shared with CIA. There were privacy issues involved.” They were only obtained after some “gentle reasoning, and a few four-letter words.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 167](#)) The agency that provided these lists to the CTC may have been the Customs Office of Intelligence. According to Robert Bonner, the commissioner-designate

of US Customs, “through an evaluation of data related to the passengers manifest for the four terrorist hijacked aircraft, Customs Office of Intelligence was able to identify the likely terrorist hijackers. Within 45 minutes of the attacks, Customs forwarded the passenger lists with the names of the victims and 19 probable hijackers to the FBI and the intelligence community” (see [\(11:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([9/11 Commission 1/26/2004](#)) Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke will claim he was told as early as 9:59 a.m. that the FBI had received the passenger manifests from the airlines (see [\(9:59 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Clarke 2004, pp. 13-14](#))

(Shortly After 10:06 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Tenet Tells Cheney Attackers are ‘Done for the Day’

At some unspecified time, apparently relatively soon after Flight 93 crashed, Vice President Dick Cheney calls CIA Director George Tenet and asks him if he is anticipating any further attacks. Tenet replies, “No. My judgment is that they’re done for the day.” Tenet will later explain his reasoning behind this judgment: “There was a lull in the action, and to me that was telling... I had no data to go on. But the pattern of spectacular multiple attacks within a very tight attack window was consistent with what we knew of al-Qaeda’s modus operandi based on the East African embassy attacks and others. Events happened within a strict timeline, and then they were done.” Yet at 10 a.m., Tenet had wanted the CIA headquarters evacuated, following reports that several airplanes were not responding to communications and were perhaps heading toward Washington. A large number of the CIA’s workforce had therefore been sent home (see [\(9:50 a.m.-10:00 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Tenet 2007, pp. 164 and 167](#)) And according to recordings of the operations floor at NORAD’s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) later obtained by Vanity Fair magazine, “inside NEADS there was no sense that the attack was over with the crash of United 93; instead, the alarms go on and on. False reports of hijackings, and real responses, continue well into the afternoon” (see [10:15 a.m. and After September 11, 2001](#)). ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) Tenet and his staff will return to the CIA headquarters building at around 1 p.m. after having earlier evacuated to the CIA’s printing plant nearby. By that time, Tenet will say, “The danger was over for the day, in our estimation.” ([Tenet 2007, pp. 168](#))

(10:06 a.m.-10:25 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FBI Informed of Plane Crash; Agents Head to Flight 93 Crash Scene

Wells Morrison is the supervisory special agent in charge of the FBI’s Mon Valley Resident Agency, a satellite of the bureau’s Pittsburgh field office. ([Blair 4/13/2003](#)) He receives a call informing him that a plane has crashed in Somerset County. Another phone call informs him that Westmoreland County 911 received a call saying a plane had been hijacked. (This is the call believed to have been from Flight 93 passenger Edward Felt (see [9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).) He sends an agent out, who quickly seizes the tape of the call from the emergency dispatchers. Morrison also has agents sent to the

Flight 93 crash site and subsequently goes there himself, being one of the first FBI agents to arrive at the scene. ([Lane and Pan 9/12/2001](#); [Kashurba 2002, pp. 109-110](#)) Patrick Madigan of the Pennsylvania State Police, who arrives at the crash site around 10:20 a.m., says the first FBI agent gets there soon after him. Initially, four or five FBI agents will be there. ([Department of the Army and the Air Force National Guard Bureau 2002](#); [Kashurba 2002, pp. 60 and 110](#)) In the subsequent days, about 150 agents will be involved in the recovery effort (see [September 11-27, 2001](#)). ([Longman 2002, pp. 259](#)) As it is a crime scene, the FBI is in charge of the Flight 93 crash site and the subsequent investigation. ([Silver 11/4/2001](#); [Ove 2/17/2002](#))

10:08 a.m. September 11, 2001: Guards Surround the White House

Armed agents deploy around the White House. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#))

10:08 a.m. September 11, 2001: Military Cargo Pilot Asked to Verify Flight 93 Crash



Lt. Col. Steve O'Brien standing in front of a C-130. [Source: CBC] Cleveland flight controller Stacey Taylor has asked a nearby C-130 pilot to look at Flight 93's last position and see if they can find anything. Remarkably, this C-130 pilot, Lt. Col. Steve O'Brien, is the same pilot who was asked by flight control to observe Flight 77 as it crashed in Washington earlier (see [9.36 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). He tells Taylor that he saw smoke from the crash shortly after the hijacked plane went down. ([Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

10:08 a.m. September 11, 2001: FAA Informed That Flight 93 Has Crashed, Confirms Crash Nine Minutes Later

According to the 9/11 Commission, the FAA Command Center reports to FAA headquarters at this time that Flight 93 has crashed in the Pennsylvania countryside. "It hit the ground. That's what they're speculating, that's speculation only." The Command

Center confirms that Flight 93 crashed at 10:17 a.m. ([Ellison 10/17/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/11/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

10:10 a.m. September 11, 2001: Langley Fighters Told They Cannot Shoot Down Hijacked Planes

According to the 9/11 Commission, the NEADS Mission Crew Commander is sorting out the orders given to the Langley fighter pilots. The Commander does not know that Flight 93 had been heading toward Washington or that it had crashed. He explicitly instructs the Langley fighters that they cannot shoot down aircraft—they have “negative clearance to shoot” aircraft over Washington. Authorization to shoot down hijacked civilian aircraft only reaches NEADS at 10:31 a.m. (see [10:31 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) Even then, the authorization is not passed on to the pilots. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

(Between 10:10 a.m. and 10:15 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Cheney, Told That Flight 93 Is Still Heading to Washington, Orders It Shot Down



Dick Cheney in the White House bunker, speaking to administration officials including (from left) Joshua Bolten, Karen Hughes, Mary Matalin (standing), Condoleezza Rice and I. Lewis ‘Scooter’ Libby. [Source: David Bohrer / White House] (click image to enlarge) The Secret Service, viewing projected path information about Flight 93, rather than actual radar returns, does not realize that Flight 93 has already crashed. Based on this erroneous information, a military aide tells Vice President Cheney and others in the White House bunker that the plane is 80 miles away from Washington. Cheney is asked for authority to engage the plane, and he quickly provides authorization. The aide returns a few minutes later and says the plane is 60 miles out. Cheney again gives authorization to engage. A few minutes later and presumably after the flight has crashed or been shot down, White House Deputy Chief of Staff Joshua Bolten suggests Cheney contact President Bush to confirm the engage order. Bolten later tells the 9/11 Commission that he had not heard any prior discussion on the topic with Bush, and wanted to make sure Bush knew. Apparently, Cheney calls Bush and obtains confirmation. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) However, there is controversy over whether Bush approved a shootdown before this incident or

whether Cheney gave himself the authority to make the decision on the spot. As Newsweek notes, it is moot point in one sense, since the decision was made on false data and there is no plane to shoot down. ([Klaidman and Hirsh 6/20/2004](#))

(10:10 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Military Put on High Alert

All US military forces are ordered to Defcon Three (or Defcon Delta), “The highest alert for the nuclear arsenal in 30 years.” ([Langley 12/16/2001](#); [CNN 9/4/2002](#); [ABC News 9/11/2002](#); [Clarke 2004, pp. 15](#)) Rumsfeld claims that he makes the recommendation, but it is hard to see how he can do this, at least at this time. He later asserts that he discusses the issue with acting Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers in the NMCC first. However, they do not arrive at the PEOC until about 10:30 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#)) At 10:15 a.m., the massive blast doors to US Strategic Command, headquarters for NORAD in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, are closed for the first time in response to the high alert. ([Scott 6/3/2002](#); [BBC 9/1/2002](#)) In another account, acting Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers gives the Defcon order by himself. President Bush later contradicts both accounts, asserting that he gives the order. ([Paltrow 3/22/2004](#)) According to the 9/11 Commission’s final report, though, the decision to go to Defcon Three takes place about 35 minutes later (see [\(10:43 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

10:13 a.m. September 11, 2001: Washington Buildings Evacuate

More prominent buildings in Washington begin evacuation. The United Nations building in New York City evacuates first; many federal buildings follow later. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [New York Times 9/12/2001](#)) Counterterrorism “tsar” Richard Clarke apparently began arranging these evacuations a short time before this. ([Clarke 2004, pp. 14-15](#))

(10:13 a.m.-10:23 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Projected Flight 93 Arrival into Washington; Could It Have Been Shot Down?

The 9/11 Commission later concludes that if Flight 93 had not crashed, it would probably have reached Washington around this time. The commission notes that there are only three fighters over Washington at this time, all from Langley, Virginia. However, the pilots of these fighters were never briefed about why they were scrambled. As the lead pilot explained, “I reverted to the Russian threat... I’m thinking cruise missile threat from the sea. You know, you look down and see the Pentagon burning and I thought the b_stards snuck one by us.... You couldn’t see any airplanes, and no one told us anything.” The pilots knew their mission was to identify and divert aircraft flying within a certain radius of Washington, but did not know that the threat came from hijacked

planes. In addition, the commission notes that NEADS did not know where Flight 93 was when it crashed, and wonders if they would have determined its location and passed it on to the pilots before the plane reached Washington. They conclude, “NORAD officials have maintained that they would have intercepted and shot down United 93. We are not so sure.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

10:14 a.m. September 11, 2001: Cheney Gives Engage Order to NMCC to Relay to Fighters

According to the 9/11 Commission, beginning at this time, the White House repeatedly conveys to the NMCC that Vice President Cheney confirmed fighters were cleared to engage the inbound aircraft if they could verify that the aircraft was hijacked. However, the authorization fails to reach the pilots. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

10:15 a.m. September 11, 2001: Emergency Responders at Pentagon Evacuated Due to Supposed Approaching Hijacked Aircraft

Fire and rescue workers at the Pentagon in response to the attack are evacuated to a nearby highway overpass, due to the warning of another hijacked aircraft flying towards Washington, DC, currently 20 minutes away. The warning is passed on by Special Agent Chris Combs, the FBI’s representative at the Pentagon crash site. Combs received this information from the FBI’s Washington Field Office, which is in direct contact with the FAA. According to a report put out by the government of Arlington County, Virginia, updates are announced of the approaching aircraft “until the last warning when [it] went below radar coverage in Pennsylvania, an estimated 4 minutes flying time from the Pentagon.” ([US Department of Health and Human Services 7/2002, pp. A30](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 315](#)) Yet if the timing of this account is correct, the approaching plane could not have been Flight 93, which crashed in Pennsylvania considerably earlier (see [\(10:03 a.m.-10:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

10:15 a.m. September 11, 2001: Pentagon Section Collapses



The wall where the Pentagon was hit before and after its collapsed at 10:15. [*Source: Jason Ingersoll, public domain*] (click image to enlarge) The front section of the Pentagon that had been hit by Flight 77 collapses. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [New York Times 9/12/2001](#)) A few minutes prior to its

collapse, firefighters saw warning signs and sounded a general evacuation tone. No firefighters were injured. ([Murphy 11/1/2001](#))

10:15 a.m. September 11, 2001: NEADS Learns Flight 93 Is Down

According to the 9/11 Commission, NEADS calls Washington flight control at this time. Asked about Flight 93, flight control responds, “He’s down.” It is clarified that the plane crashed “somewhere up northeast of Camp David.... That’s the last report. They don’t know exactly where.” ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) The crash site is in fact about 85 miles northwest of Camp David. ([Associated Press 9/11/2001](#))

10:15 a.m. September 11, 2001: NORAD Operations Center Closes Blast Doors Due to Warning of Hijacked Plane



Blast doors at NORAD headquarters in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado. [*Source: Eugene Chavez*] The FBI has issued a warning that a plane originating in San Diego might be hijacked and specifically targeting Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, where NORAD’s operations center is located. In response, the massive steel doors designed to protect the mountain from a nuclear blast are closed for the first time in its history. One report suggests, however, that these doors are closed in response to the US military being put on high alert (see [10:10 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). The NORAD operations center is also informed that a Ryder rental truck driven by “Arab-looking men” and packed with explosives is heading their way. Lt. Col. William Glover, chief of NORAD’s air defense operations, says, “It didn’t make sense, but those phone calls were happening.” ([Simmie 12/9/2001](#); [Scott 6/3/2002](#); [BBC 9/1/2002](#))

10:15 a.m. and After September 11, 2001: NEADS Informed of Further Suspected Hijackings

Less than 30 seconds after hearing that Flight 93 has crashed, NEADS receives a call informing it of yet another suspected hijacking in its area. Although the skies will be clear of all commercial and private aircraft soon after midday, false reports of hijackings will continue well into the afternoon. For hours, fighters above New York and Washington DC

(and later Chicago and Boston) will race around intercepting suspicious aircraft. ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#))

(10:17 a.m.) September 11, 2001: FAA Out of the Loop; Finally Joins NMCC Teleconference

The National Military Command Center (NMCC) has been conducting an interagency teleconference to coordinate the nation's response to the hijackings since 9:29 a.m. Yet the 9/11 Commission Reports that the FAA is unable to join the call until this time, apparently due to technical difficulties. NORAD asked three times before the last hijacked plane crashed for the FAA to provide a hijacking update to the teleconference. None were given, since no FAA representative was there. When an FAA representative finally joins in, that person has no proper experience, no access to decision makers, and no information known to senior FAA officials at the time. Furthermore, the highest-level Defense Department officials rely on this conference and do not talk directly with senior FAA officials. As a result, the leaders of NORAD and the FAA are effectively out of contact with each other during the entire crisis. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

10:20 a.m. September 11, 2001: United Headquarters Learns Flight 93 Has Crashed

United Airlines headquarters receives confirmation that Flight 93 has crashed from the airport manager in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. ([9/11 Commission 1/27/2004](#)) Cleveland flight control had confirmation of the crash at 10:08 a.m. (see [10:08 a.m. September 11, 2001](#))

(After 10:20 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Jet Plane Allegedly Carrying United Airlines Executives Circles Flight 93 Crash Site

Patrick Madigan, the commander of the Somerset Barracks of the Pennsylvania State Police, arrives at the Flight 93 crash scene around 10:20 a.m. ([Department of the Army and the Air Force National Guard Bureau 2002](#)) He says that at some point later in the day (he does not specify a time), a "strange incident" occurs: "We were there at the site and an airplane started circling. It was a jetliner circling the crash site very low. No one knew what to expect because we knew that all of the planes were supposedly grounded." (The FAA had, at about 9:45 a.m., ordered that all aircraft be instructed to land at the nearest airport (see [9:45 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).) After a few minutes of uncertainty, it is announced that the plane is carrying United Airlines executives, who are circling the site to view it before they land in nearby Johnstown. ([Kashurba 2002, pp. 63](#)) Another low-flying jet plane was witnessed over the site earlier on, around the time Flight 93 went down (see [\(Before and After 10:06 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

10:23 a.m. September 11, 2001: Exterior Wall of North Tower May Bow Outwards or Inwards before Collapse

The exterior wall on the south side of the World Trade Center's North Tower apparently bows before the building collapses. The first inquiry into the collapse, by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Society of Civil Engineers, states that the perimeter walls bow outward (see [9:21 a.m.-9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

However, a subsequent report by the National Institute of Standards and Technology states that the south wall of the North Tower bows inward. In places the wall is said to bow inward by approximately 55 inches at floor 97, and NIST interprets this bowing to mean that the floors must be sagging. NIST will find that the sagging and bowing are two of the seven major factors that led to the collapse of each tower, as the bowing walls are no longer able to support their share of the buildings' weight, causing the buildings to tilt and the upper sections to fall. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 32-34, 87](#))

(10:24 a.m.) September 11, 2001: All International Flights into US Ordered Diverted by FAA

Jane Garvey, head of the FAA, orders the diversion of all international flights with US destinations. Most flights are diverted to Canada. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [New York Times 9/12/2001](#); [Donnelly 9/14/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/22/2001](#))

(10:25 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Staff in White House Bunker Learns of Flight 93 Crash; Cheney Already Thinks an 'Act of Heroism' Occurred

Those inside the Presidential Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) below the White House learn that an aircraft is down in Pennsylvania. (This turns out to be Flight 93.) Many of the people in the PEOC wonder whether military fighters shot it down. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 41](#)) National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice later claims that, like her, Vice President Dick Cheney initially thinks, "it must have been shot down by the fighters." ([Hayes 2007, pp. 339](#)) However, Eric Edelman—Cheney's national security adviser, who is also in the PEOC—later recalls, "The vice president was a little bit ahead of us.... He said, sort of softly, and to nobody in particular, 'I think an act of heroism just took place on that plane.'" ([CNN 9/11/2002](#); [CNN 9/14/2002](#)) Yet the Pentagon does not confirm that Flight 93 was not shot down until after midday (see [\(Shortly After 12:00 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#)) And the phone calls from Flight 93 that indicated a passenger revolt took place are only reported later on. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#))

Shortly Before 10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001: Ground Shakes Prior to North Tower Collapse

Some witnesses feel the ground shaking just before the north WTC tower starts collapsing:

- Fire Patrolman Paul Curran is in front of the US Customs House (WTC 6), next to the North Tower. He says, “all of a sudden the ground just started shaking. It felt like a train was running under my feet.... The next thing we know, we look up and the tower is collapsing.” ([Curran 12/18/2001](#))
- EMS Lieutenant Bradley Mann is heading toward the EMS staging area on Vesey Street. He’d felt the ground shaking prior to the first collapse (see [Shortly Before 9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). He says, “The ground shook again, and we heard another terrible noise and the next thing we knew the second tower was coming down.” ([Mann 11/7/2001](#))
- Jay Jonas is actually inside the North Tower, on its fourth floor. Seconds before the collapse he feels “a tremendous vibration and shaking; the floor began waving.” ([Carbone 9/11/2002](#))

10:27 a.m. September 11, 2001: Most Workers in North Tower Who Could Evacuate Have Done So

Almost all the occupants of the North Tower who are able to evacuate the building have done so. Only 107 occupants who were below the impact floors remain in the building, while around 7,400 have escaped. However, 1,355 building occupants in or above the impact zone have either already died or perish in the collapse, as do many emergency workers. Overall, 99 percent of building occupants below the impact floors escape to safety. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. xxxviii, 32](#)) Most workers in the South Tower also left the building before it collapsed (see [9:58 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001: WTC North Tower Collapses



The North Tower collapses in a matter of seconds. [Source: Ray Stubblebine/ Reuters/ Landov] (click image to

enlarge)The North Tower of the World Trade Center tilts to the south and then collapses. Its north side was hit by Flight 11 at 8:46, 102 minutes earlier. ([CNN 9/12/2001](#); [New York Times 9/12/2001](#); [MSNBC 9/22/2001](#); [Kim and Baum 2002](#); [Associated Press 8/19/2002](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 33](#)) After the antenna starts to move (see [\(10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001\)](#)), the next sign that the top section of the building is moving downward is on floor 98, at the top of the impact zone. ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 9/2005, pp. 22, 87](#)) The angle of the tilt will be disputed after 9/11 (see [September-November 2005](#)), as will the time it takes the towers to fall to the ground (see [September 12, 2001-September 2005](#)). ([Ashley 10/9/2001](#); [Eagar and Musso 12/2001](#); [PBS Nova 5/2002](#); [National Institute of Standards and Technology 8/30/2006](#)) The death toll could have been much worse—an estimated 15,000 people made it out of the WTC to safety after 8:46 a.m. ([St. Petersburg Times 9/8/2002](#))

10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001: Some Witnesses Think North Tower Collapses Like a Controlled Demolition

Some witnesses to the collapse of the North Tower think it resembles a demolition using explosives:

- Fire Captain Dennis Tardio: “I hear an explosion and I look up. It is as if the building is being imploded, from the top floor down, one after another, boom, boom, boom.” ([Smith 2002, pp. 18](#))
- Assistant Fire Commissioner James Drury: “[P]eople in the street and myself included thought that the roar was so loud that the explosive—bombs were going off inside the building.” ([Drury 10/16/2001](#))
- Firefighter James Curran: “I heard like every floor went chu-chu-chu. Looked back and from the pressure everything was getting blown out of the floors before it actually collapsed.” ([Curran 12/30/2001](#))
- EMS Captain Karin Deshore: “Somewhere around the middle of the World Trade Center, there was this orange and red flash coming out. Initially it was just one flash. Then this flash just kept popping all the way around the building and that building had started to explode. The popping sound, and with each popping sound it was initially an orange and then a red flash came out of the building and then it would just go all around the building on both sides as far as I could see. These popping sounds and the explosions were getting bigger, going both up and down and then all around the building. I went inside... and I said I think we have another major explosion.” ([Deshore 11/7/2001](#))

The National Institute of Standards and Technology, in its report on the towers’ collapse, will reject suggestions that the Twin Towers were brought down with explosives (see [August 30, 2006](#)). ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 8/30/2006](#))

10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001: Some Witnesses Hear Explosions as North Tower Collapses



Fire Lieutenant Gregg Hansson [*Source: BBC*] Many witnesses hear explosions during the collapse of the north WTC tower. Some report hearing a single explosion:

- Reporter Mike Sheehan hears “another deafening explosion. I looked up and saw the top of the North Tower, the mast, begin to fall.” ([Gilbert et al. 2002, pp. 126](#))
- Fire Lieutenant William Wall: “[W]e heard an explosion. We looked up and the building was coming down right on top of us.” ([Wall 12/10/2001](#))
- Firefighter Roy Chelsen: “All of a sudden we heard this huge explosion, and that’s when the tower started coming down.” ([Chelsen 1/18/2002](#))
- EMT Jason Charles: “I heard a ground level explosion and I’m like holy shit, and then you heard that twisting metal wreckage again.” ([Charles 1/23/2002](#))
- Firefighter Kevin Murray: “When the tower started—there was a big explosion that I heard and someone screamed that it was coming down.” ([Murray 10/9/2001](#))
- Firefighter James Ippolito: “I heard an explosion and turned around and the building was coming down.” ([Ippolito 12/13/2001](#))
- Fire Lieutenant Gregg Hansson: “[A] large explosion took place. In my estimation that was the tower coming down, but at that time I did not know what that was. I thought some type of bomb had gone off.” ([Hansson 10/9/2001](#))
- Firefighter Kevin Gorman: “I heard the explosion, looked up, and saw like three floors explode, saw the antenna coming down.” ([Gorman 1/9/2002](#))

Others report hearing multiple explosions:

- EMT Gregg Brady: “I heard 3 loud explosions. I look up and the North Tower is coming down now.” ([Brady 11/1/2001](#))
 - Firefighter Richard Carletti: “I remember seeing the antenna do a little rock back and forth and I could just hear the floors pancaking. I heard it for about 30 pancakes, just boom, boom, boom, boom.” ([Carletti 1/2/2002](#))
 - Fire Lieutenant Michael Cahill: “That’s when the second collapse started to come down. All kinds of noise. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, very loud.” ([Cahill 10/17/2001](#))
 - Firefighter Sal D’Agostino is actually inside the North Tower, around its fourth floor, when the collapse occurs. He says, “It’s pancaking from the top down, and there were these huge explosions—I mean huge, gigantic explosions.” ([Carbone 9/11/2002](#); [Dwyer and Flynn 2005, pp. 241-242](#))
 - Firefighter Bill Butler, who is with D’Agostino inside the tower, says, “It was like a train going two inches away from your head: bang-bang, bang-bang, bang-bang.” ([Carbone 9/11/2002](#))
 - EMT David Timothy: “[Y]ou started hearing more explosions. I guess this is when the second tower started coming down.” ([Timothy 10/25/2001](#))
- CTV will later assert, “When eyewitnesses claim to have heard explosions prior to the

collapse, those were just the sounds of a massive building contorting and crushing anything inside.” ([Stittle 9/12/2006](#))

10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001: Reporter Sees Ground-Level Explosion When North Tower Collapses



Carol Marin. [*Source: Columbia Journalism Review*] CBS News correspondent Carol Marin witnesses what she describes as a “gigantic fireball” coming from the base of the North Tower as it starts to collapse. ([Johnson 9/11/2001](#); [Feder 9/12/2001](#); [Marin 9/11/2002](#)) Marin headed to the scene of the attacks and arrived on West Street after the South Tower collapsed. She then sees the second tower come down, later describing, “I was only a block or two away from the North Tower when the street trembled under my feet, a fireball of pooled jet fuel exploded out of the building’s base, and it too, unbelievably, started to collapse right in front of me.” ([Marin 9/10/2006](#)) (However, the explosion could not be due to “pooled jet fuel,” as, according to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, “The jet fuel” from the planes “was mostly consumed within the first few minutes after impact.” ([National Institute of Standards and Technology 6/18/2004](#); [Williams 4/5/2005](#))) In one telling, Marin describes, “a roar seemed to come out of the earth,” causing the fireball. ([Gilbert et al. 2002](#)) In another, she says, “there was a roar, an explosion, and we could see coming toward us a ball of flame, stories high.” She runs, and a firefighter throws her against a building to protect her. She recalls, “The flame somehow stopped short of us.” ([CBS News 2002, pp. 54](#)) Other witnesses also describe the ground shaking before the North Tower collapse (see [Shortly Before 10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). And some witnesses similarly report seeing a fireball at ground level coming from the South Tower when it collapsed (see [Shortly Before 9:59 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)).

(10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001): Falling Antenna Suggests North Tower’s Collapse Begins in its Core Area

The team studying the WTC collapses for the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will later observe that the antenna on WTC 1 began to fall before the exterior of the building: “Review of videotape recordings of the collapse taken from various angles indicates that the

transmission tower on top of the structure began to move downward and laterally slightly before movement was evident at the exterior wall. This suggests that collapse began with one or more failures in the central core area of the building.” ([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 2-27](#)) In a program featuring some members of the FEMA/ASCE team, the BBC will comment: “The mast was directly supported by the tower’s inner core. The way it fell suggests it was failure of the inner core that began the collapse, whereas in the South Tower it had been the outer walls.” ([BBC 3/7/2002](#))

After 10:28 a.m. September 11, 2001: Fire Fighters Trying to Extinguish Fires in WTC 7

According to Captain Michael Currid, the sergeant at arms for the Uniformed Fire Officers Association, some time after the collapse of the North Tower, he sees four or five fire companies trying to extinguish fires in Building 7 of the WTC. Someone from the city’s Office of Emergency Management tells him that WTC 7 is in serious danger of collapse. Currid says, “The consensus was that it was basically a lost cause and we should not lose anyone else trying to save it.” Along with some others, he goes inside WTC 7 and yells up the stairwells to the fire fighters, “Drop everything and get out!” ([Murphy 2002, pp. 175-176](#)) However, other accounts contradict this, claiming that no attempt is made to fight the fires in WTC 7 (see [\(11:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). One report later claims, “Given the limited water supply and the first strategic priority, which was to search for survivors in the rubble, FDNY did not fight the fires [in WTC 7].” ([Fire Engineering 9/2002](#)) And a 2002 government report says, “the firefighters made the decision fairly early on not to attempt to fight the fires, due in part to the damage to WTC 7 from the collapsing towers.” ([Federal Emergency Management Agency 5/1/2002, pp. 5-21](#)) Building 7 eventually collapses late in the afternoon of 9/11 (see [\(5:20 p.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

(After 10:28 a.m.-12:00 pm.) September 11, 2001: Giuliani Establishes Temporary Headquarters



Bernard Kerik. [*Source: Publicity photo*]After leaving 75 Barclay Street (see [\(9:50 a.m.-10:10 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), Mayor Giuliani and the group accompanying him search for somewhere to establish a new temporary headquarters. Soon after the North Tower’s collapse, they break into a vacant firehouse at the corner of

Houston Street and Sixth Avenue. Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, who is part of the group, wants the location kept secret. He gives out the order, “Okay, we’re going to establish a command center [here]. We’re not going to let anybody know. I don’t want it over the radio. We don’t know what’s happening. We don’t want them [presumably meaning the attackers] to know where we’re all going to be.” Giuliani is able to find a phone, and speaks with New York Governor George Pataki, the White House, and the Defense Department. At around 10:57, he speaks to the television channel New York 1 and offers a message of reassurance to the people of New York City. ([Fink and Mathias 2002, pp. 108](#); [Giuliani 2002, pp. 15-16](#); [9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#); [Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 13](#)) Deciding that they need to be somewhere larger and more secure, Kerik suggests they move to the Police Academy on East 20th Street. ([Kerik 2001, pp. 342](#)) Thus, Giuliani’s group—which now numbers more than twenty people plus a press contingent—gets into cars and drives to the academy, arriving around midday. ([Giuliani 2002, pp. 18-19](#); [Barrett and Collins 2006, pp. 13](#)) This will remain as the city’s command center for several days, until it is replaced later in the week by a larger space at Pier 92 on the Hudson River. ([Cohen 2/3/2003](#); [9/11 Commission 5/19/2004](#))

(10:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Missing Rumsfeld Finally Enters NMCC

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, missing for at least 30 minutes, finally enters the NMCC, where the military’s response to the 9/11 attacks is being coordinated. ([CNN 9/4/2002](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Rumsfeld later claims that he only started to gain a situational awareness of what was happening after arriving at the NMCC. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Rumsfeld was in his office only 200 feet away from the NMCC until the Pentagon crash at 9:37 a.m. (see [9:37 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). His activities during this period are unclear. He went outside to the Flight 77 crash site and then stayed somewhere else in the Pentagon until his arrival at the NMCC. Brigadier General Montague Winfield later says, “For 30 minutes we couldn’t find him. And just as we began to worry, he walked into the door of the [NMCC].” ([ABC News 9/11/2002](#)) Winfield himself apparently only shows up at the NMCC around 10:30 a.m. as well.

(10:30 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Medevac Helicopter Provides Scare for Bunkered Cheney, Others

Vice President Cheney and others in the White House bunker are given a report of another airplane heading toward Washington. Cheney’s Chief of Staff, I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby, later states, “We learn that a plane is five miles out and has dropped below 500 feet and can’t be found; it’s missing.” Believing they only have a minute or two before the plane crashes into Washington, Cheney orders fighters to engage the plane, saying, “Take it out.” However, reports that this is another hijacking are mistaken. It is learned later that day that a Medevac helicopter five miles away was mistaken for a hijacked plane. ([Thomas 12/31/2001](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

10:31 a.m. September 11, 2001: Military and Law Enforcement Flights Resume

The FAA allows “military and law enforcement flights to resume (and some flights that the FAA can’t reveal that were already airborne).” All civilian, military, and law enforcement flights were ordered at 9:26 a.m. to land as soon as reasonably possible. ([Donnelly 9/14/2001](#)) Civilian flights remain banned until September 13. Note that the C-130 cargo plane that witnessed the Flight 77 crash (see [9:36 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) and which came upon the Flight 93 crash site (see [10:08 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) right after it had crashed was apparently not subject to the grounding order issued about an hour earlier.

10:31 a.m. September 11, 2001: NEADS Does Not Pass Along NORAD Shootdown Order

According to the 9/11 Commission, NORAD Commander Major General Larry Arnold instructs his staff to broadcast the following message over a NORAD chat log: “10:31 Vice President [Cheney] has cleared us to intercept tracks of interest and shoot them down (see [10:14 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)) if they do not respond, per CONR CC [General Arnold].” NEADS first learns of the shootdown order from this message. However, NEADS does not pass the order to the fighter pilots in New York City and Washington. NEADS leaders later say they do not pass it on because they are unsure how the pilots should proceed with this guidance. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) The pilots flying over New York City claim they are never given a formal shootdown order that day.

(10:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.) September 11, 2001: Rumsfeld Works on Rules of Engagement for Fighter Pilots, Too Late to be of Any Use

After he finally arrives at the National Military Command Center in the Pentagon (see [10:30 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), Donald Rumsfeld’s primary concern, according to the 9/11 Commission, is “ensuring that the [military fighter] pilots [have] a clear understanding of their rules of engagement.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 44](#)) Rumsfeld later recalls, “It was clear they needed rules of engagement telling them what they should and should not do. They needed clarity. And there were no rules of engagement on the books for this first-time situation where civilian aircraft were seized and were being used as missiles.” By this time, the president has supposedly already given authorization for the military to shoot down hijacked aircraft (see [Between 10:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)), and Dick Cheney informs Rumsfeld of this over the air threat conference at 10:39 (see [10:39 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Rumsfeld says that, “Throughout the course of the day,” along with acting Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers, he “returned to further refine those rules.” ([9/11 Commission 3/23/2004](#)) As journalist Andrew Cockburn will later remark though, Rumsfeld’s work on

the rules of engagement “was an irrelevant exercise for he did not complete and issue them until 1:00 p.m., hours after the last hijacker had died.” ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 465](#); [Cockburn 2007, pp. 7](#))

Between 10:32 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. September 11, 2001: Russian President Calls the White House

Russian President Vladimir Putin phones the White House, wanting to speak with the US president. With Bush not there, Condoleezza Rice takes the call. Putin tells her that the Russians are voluntarily standing down a military exercise they are conducting, as a gesture of solidarity with the United States. ([Balz and Woodward 1/27/2002](#)) The Russian exercise began on September 10 in the Russian arctic and North Pacific oceans, and was scheduled to last until September 14. ([NORAD 9/9/2001](#); [Gertz 9/11/2001](#)) It involved Russian bombers staging a mock attack against NATO planes that are supposedly planning an assault on Russia. ([BBC 2001, pp. 161](#)) Subsequently, Putin manages to talk to Bush while he is aboard Air Force One (see [\(After 11:15 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)).

10:32 a.m. September 11, 2001: Air Force One Threatened? Some Doubt Entire Story

Vice President Cheney reportedly calls President Bush and tells him of a threat to Air Force One and that it will take 40-90 minutes to get a protective fighter escort in place. Many doubt the existence of this threat. For instance, Representative Martin Meehan (D) says, “I don’t buy the notion Air Force One was a target. That’s just PR, that’s just spin.” ([Sammon 10/8/2002](#)) A later account calls the threat “completely untrue,” and says Cheney probably made the story up. A well-informed, anonymous Washington official says, “It did two things for [Cheney]. It reinforced his argument that the president should stay out of town, and it gave George W. an excellent reason for doing so.” ([Langley 12/16/2001](#))

(Before 10:36 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Andrews Fighters Ordered to Shoot Down Threatening Planes Over Washington



General David Wherley. [Source: *US Air Force*] A Secret Service agent again contacts Andrews Air Force Base and commands, “Get in the air now!” It’s not clear if this is treated as an official scramble order, or how quickly fighters respond to it. According to fighter pilot Lt. Col. Marc Sasseville, almost simultaneously, a call from someone else in the White House declares the Washington area “a free-fire zone. That meant we were given authority to use force, if the situation required it, in defense of the nation’s capital, its property, and people.” ([Scott 9/9/2002](#)) Apparently, this second call is made to General David Wherley, flight commander of the Air National Guard at Andrews, who has made several phone calls this morning, seeking airborne authorization for his fighters. Wherley had contacted the Secret Service after hearing reports that it wanted fighters airborne. One Secret Service agent, using two telephones at once, relays instructions to Wherley from another Secret Service agent in the White House who has been given the instructions from Vice President Cheney. Wherley’s fighters are to protect the White House and shoot down any planes that threaten Washington. Wherley gives lead pilot Lt. Col. Marc Sasseville the authority to decide whether to execute a shootdown. According to a different account, during this call Wherley is speaking with a woman in the Secret Service’s command and control center at the White House. Wherley says, “She was standing next to the vice president (Dick Cheney) and she said, ‘They want you to put a CAP up.’ Basically what they told me, and this is another one of those things that’s clear in my mind... ‘We want you to intercept any airplane that attempts to fly closer than 20 miles around any airport around the Washington area.... Attempt to turn them away, do whatever you can to turn them away and if they won’t turn away use whatever force is necessary... to keep them from hitting a building downtown.’” President Bush and Vice President Cheney later claim they were not aware that any fighters had scrambled from Andrews at the request of the Secret Service. ([Filson 2004, pp. 79](#); [9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) Sasseville and the Capt. Heather Penney Garcia will take off at 10:42 a.m. (see [\(10:42 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#))

(10:37 a.m.-11:09 a.m.) September 11, 2001: Plane Incorrectly Reported to Have Crashed at Camp David

It is incorrectly reported that an airliner has crashed on or near Camp David. ([Geier 9/12/2001](#); [US Department of Transportation 3/2002](#)) Camp David is the presidential retreat, located about 70 miles north of Washington, DC, in the Catocin Mountains of

Maryland. ([Federation of American Scientists 10/2/2000](#); [Feller 7/30/2007](#)) On Air Force One, at 10:37, White House chief of staff Andrew Card relays to the president the incorrect report of the crash. ([Sammon 2002, pp. 108](#)) At around 11:09, CBS News reports that “a plane apparently has crashed at or near Camp David.” ([Miller 8/26/2002](#)) An early article by Forbes states, “There are reports of a fourth airliner [having] been brought down near Camp David... by US military fighters.” ([Dukceovich 9/11/2001](#)) And an early report by the Northwestern Chronicle similarly states, “Air Force officials say an airliner has been forced down by F-16 fighter jets near Camp David.” ([Hoes 9/11/2001](#)) Theresa Hahn, the catering manager for a restaurant in the Camp David area, hears the erroneous report. She subsequently describes, “Lots of fire trucks were on the road and no one can get up there.” But J. Mel Poole, the Catoctin Mountain Park superintendent, states there has been “no crash at Camp David.” ([Geier 9/12/2001](#)) At some point, the FAA calls the military to confirm the crash, and is reassured that no crash occurred at Camp David. ([Freni 2003, pp. 42](#)) The actual Flight 93 crash site is about 85 miles northwest of Camp David. ([PBS 9/11/2001](#)) The Secret Service reportedly tells the White House that Flight 93 may have been on a course for Camp David. ([Pittsburgh Channel 9/11/2001](#)) And, following a military briefing, Virginia Rep. James Moran (D) tells reporters that Flight 93 was apparently heading for Camp David. ([Associated Press 9/11/2001](#); [Wall Street Journal 9/12/2001](#)) (However, the 9/11 Commission will later state that its intended target was either the White House or the Capitol building. ([9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 14](#))) The source of the incorrect report of the Camp David crash is unclear. However, when the FAA’s Washington Center first informed NEADS that Flight 93 had crashed, at 10:15, it simply reported that it had gone down “somewhere up northeast of Camp David” (see [10:15 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)), so this may have created some of the confusion. ([Bronner 8/1/2006](#)) There are also numerous false reports of terrorist attacks having taken place in Washington, DC around this time (see ([Between 9:50-10:40 a.m.\) September 11, 2001](#)). Some commentators make the connection that the 9/11 attacks come 23 years after the signing of the Camp David accords—a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt—on September 17, 1978. ([Dukceovich 9/11/2001](#); [Ridgeway 9/11/2001](#); [Geier 9/12/2001](#)) WCBS reports, “[T]here is speculation that perhaps, perhaps, this may be in retaliation for those accords.” ([Miller 8/26/2002](#))

(10:38 a.m.): Fighters Training in North Carolina Relaunch from Andrews

The 9/11 Commission claims that the first fighters from Andrews Air Force Base scramble at this time and are flying patrol over Washington by 10:45 a.m. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#)) The three F-16s flying on a training mission in North Carolina, 200 miles away have finally been recalled to their home base at Andrews. As soon as lead pilot Major Billy Hutchison lands and checks in via radio, he is told to take off again immediately. His fighter apparently has no weapons whatsoever. The two other fighters only have training rounds for their guns, and very little fuel. “Hutchison was probably airborne shortly after the alert F-16s from Langley arrive over Washington, although [the] pilots admit their timeline-recall ‘is fuzzy.’” The officer who sent Hutchison off “told him to ‘do exactly what ATC asks you to do.’ Primarily, he was to go ID [identify] that

unknown [aircraft] that everybody was so excited about [Flight 93]. He blasted off and flew a standard departure route, which took him over the Pentagon.” Flight 93 crashed half an hour before this; it is unclear how the Andrews base could still not know it crashed by this time. The pilots later say that, had all else failed, they would have rammed into Flight 93, had they reached it in time. ([Scott 9/9/2002](#))

10:39 a.m. September 11, 2001: Cheney Brings Rumsfeld Up to Date, But Errs on Pilot Knowledge About Shootdown Order

Vice President Cheney tries to bring Defense Secretary Rumsfeld up to date over the NMCC’s conference call, as Rumsfeld has just arrived there minutes before. Cheney explains that he has given authorization for hijacked planes to be shot down and that this has been told to the fighter pilots. Rumsfeld asks, “So we’ve got a couple of aircraft up there that have those instructions at the present time?” Cheney replies, “That is correct. And it’s my understanding they’ve already taken a couple of aircraft out.” Then Rumsfeld says, “We can’t confirm that. We’re told that one aircraft is down but we do not have a pilot report that they did it.” Cheney is incorrect that this command has reached the pilots. ([9/11 Commission 6/17/2004](#))

10:42 a.m. September 11, 2001: Fighters Launched From Syracuse Air Base

Two F-16 fighters take off from Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, near Syracuse, NY. The fighters belong to the 174th Fighter Wing, a unit of the New York Air National Guard. A commander from Syracuse had called NORAD offering to help earlier in the morning (see [After 9:03 a.m. September 11, 2001](#)). Three more fighters from the 174th FW will take off from Hancock Field at around 1.30 p.m., and a further two at 3:55 p.m. ([Wasilewski 9/12/2001](#)) The Hancock pilots are ordered to “Identify all aircraft... Intercept them. Tell them to land. ‘Engage’ them if they [don’t].” ([Wasilewski 9/25/2001](#)) Also at some time this morning, following the attacks, 174th FW officials form a command center to monitor the situation across the US. ([Ramirez and Wasilewski 9/11/2001](#); [Wasilewski 9/12/2001](#)) 100 of the 174th FW’s staff have spent the last month deployed to Saudi Arabia and are due back this afternoon. However, they are diverted to Canada and arrive back at the base later in the week (see [Mid-August-September 11, 2001](#)).