

9/11 FAMILIES UNITED TO BANKRUPT TERRORISM POSITION PAPER 1 (FORESEEABILITY TIME LINE):

Foreseeability of the 9-11-01 Attacks on the U.S. Homeland

Overview

In its work to root out and bankrupt the logistical and funding sources of terrorism, Motley, Rice, on behalf of the 9/11 Families United To Bankrupt Terrorism, has compiled significant evidence and information that illustrates a requisite knowledge, years in advance of September 11, 2001, by industry, government, and financiers of terrorism of a likely plot whereby suicidal hijackers would use civilian aircraft as a weapon of mass destruction against high profile domestic landmarks.

We believe the below analysis regarding pre-September 11th terrorist activities and the failure of government and industry to protect the public from these threats may be of value to the Commission as it attempts to identify the systemic deficiencies in government and industry leading up to the attacks. Specifically, the compilation of the referenced information illustrates:

- A decades-long pattern of increased violence and lethality of terrorist attacks against commercial aircraft;
- A number of earlier plots by Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups to use airplanes as guided missiles against high-profile landmarks;
- An inability by government and industry to prevent such an attack from taking place;
- An understanding and acknowledgement of these terrorist activities by financial supporters of Saudi Arabian based charities.

We hope the Commission will utilize this information in its broader effort to enhance our nation's understanding of the events leading up to the 9/11 attacks.

Historical Trends

It is instructive to examine the history of terrorist acts against civilian aircraft in order to better understand the overarching trends of terrorism and challenges in aviation security. Government, industry, and terrorist financiers have long understood the increasing threat of mass terrorist violence from hijacking civilian aircraft and the likely plot scenarios for inflicting maximum loss of life and strategic impact on economic and political centers. Yet, as the world has so dramatically seen, government did not effectively counteract these threats with adequate safety and security measures to prevent a coordinated and large scale hijacking attack from occurring on airliners. Furthermore, there is ample evidence available from government and news sources which illustrates that the aviation industry consistently ignored persistent security threats against American civilian aircraft.

Terrorist hijackings of airliners are not a new problem. During the first fifty years of commercial aviation, there were 1,098 attacks on civilian airliners and the most

common form of attack has been hijackings—constituting 87 percent of all attacks on airliners (959 of 1,098 incidents). Paul Wilkinson and Brian Jenkins, Aviation Terrorism and Security, (1999). While the actual number of attacks and hijackings on commercial airliners has declined since the 1970s, the lethality of attacks has dramatically increased. For instance, from 1967-1976, when there were the greatest number of attacks and hijackings of commercial airliners, there were 679 fatalities that occurred as a result of these acts. However, from 1987-1996, when the number of attacks against airliners were far fewer, there were 1,051 fatalities. *Id. at 18*.

Important to note, however, is the fact that during the same time period when the lethality of attacks was increasing, 1976-1996, the rate of thwarting hijackings and attacks actually decreased:

In North America the rate of thwarting of hijackings over the most recent two decades has been 43 percent and in Western Europe 24 percent (still a better than two-to-one chance of success for the average hijacker, respectively). Yet, in the most recent decade the thwarting rate in North America has dropped to 23 percent and in Western Europe to merely 8 percent.

Id.

When evaluating whether the September 11th attacks could have been foreseen, it is easy to confuse the result of the hijacking with the cause of the hijacking. The reality is that once an aircraft has been hijacked, there is little, if anything, that can be done. Therefore, the question of what is preventable must stem from the cause and not the result. The hijacking of a commercial airliner will always remain a favorite terrorist target because such events are extraordinarily dangerous, always widely televised and invoke tremendous public fear. Following is a chronological timeline of events from the onset of airline terrorism through the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. The information highlights the growing threat of increasingly lethal attacks on civilian aircraft. Significantly, the compiled data illustrates the foreseeability and advance knowledge and understanding that financiers of terrorist organizations, government officials and industry experts had regarding the possibility of suicide hijackers commandeering a plane and flying the aircraft into high profile economic and political landmarks as occurred on September 11, 2001.

A Timeline of Terrorism

1961

The first hijacking of an American carrier occurred in the United States.
(*White House Commission on Aviation Security and Terrorism, 1996*)

May 7, 1964

A former member of Philippine Olympic Yachting team boarded a Pacific Airlines plane shot the pilot and co-pilot and crashed the plane.

July 1968

An El Al Boeing 707 flying from Rome to Tel Aviv was hijacked by three members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and flown to Algeria. Male Israeli crew and passengers were held hostage until September 1, when Israel and the Algerian government strike a deal to release 16 Arab prisoners in exchange for the freeing of the 12 remaining hostages. The hijackings established an historical precedent: the first terrorist hijacking in which political demands were met. The incident led to a dramatic rise in politically motivated airline hijackings over the ensuing years.

(The Terrorist Threat to Commercial Aviation, 1989)

September 6, 1970

Members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked Pan Am Flight 93, TWA Flight 741 and a Swissair flight, all bound for New York. The same day, members of the PFLP attempted to hijack El Al Flight 219 but were thwarted by air marshals during the flight. On September 9, 1970, a BOAC VC-10 from Bombay to Beirut was hijacked by the PFLP to urge the realization of their demands. The hijackers demanded the release of Palestinian extremists imprisoned in Germany, Switzerland and Israel.

On the Pan Am Flight, two passengers with handguns and grenades ordered the plane to Lebanon and then Egypt. At a stop in Beirut, the plane was loaded with explosives which detonated shortly after landing, leaving little time for passengers and crew to escape. All of the passengers were held hostage until September 12, 1970, when 255 hostages from the four flights were released; however, the terrorists continued to hold 56 passengers. The terrorists also destroyed the three remaining planes. The prisoners were released as a result of negotiations with Britain and several other governments. This series of events has come to be known as “Black September.”

June 27, 1976

Members of the Baader-Meinhof Group and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) seized an Air France airliner and its 258 passengers. They forced the plane to land in Uganda, where on July 3 Israeli commandos successfully rescued the passengers.

(Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, “Significant Terrorist Events, 1961-2001: A Chronology”)

June 1985

TWA Flight 847. The flight from Athens to Rome was hijacked one half hour into the flight by two men with guns and hand grenades. The terrorists claimed to be members of an Islamic jihad and commandeered the Boeing 727 to Beirut. When Beirut refused them permission to land, the terrorists threatened to crash the plane into the control tower or the presidential palace. The plane landed, refueled and released half a dozen women and children and departed for Algiers. More passengers were released over the course of several trips between Beirut and Algiers. Thirty-nine Americans were held hostage on the plane for seventeen days. All were eventually released except Robert Stephen, a US Navy Diver, who was murdered and hurled from the plane to the tarmac. The plane was eventually blown up.

June 23, 1985

A bomb destroyed an Air India Boeing 747 over the Atlantic, killing all 329 people aboard. Both Sikh and Kashmiri terrorists were blamed for the attack. Two cargo handlers were killed at Tokyo Airport, Japan, when another Sikh bomb exploded in an Air Canada aircraft enroute to India.

(Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, "Significant Terrorist Events, 1961-2001: A Chronology)

July 19, 1985

National Security Decision Directive 180 signed by President Ronald Reagan:

International civil aviation is becoming a high visibility target for terrorist activities. Numerous terrorist acts directed against U.S. and other air carriers in recent weeks pose a significant threat to international commerce and our national interests. Recent violent terrorist acts have resulted in the murder, torture and kidnapping of U.S. citizens and the death of hundreds of others. It is imperative to prevent and/or respond to subsequent terrorist acts.

The Department of Transportation, in coordination with the Interagency Working Group on Combating Terrorism and the Technical Support Working Group, will carry out an expanded research and development program covering detection of explosive and incendiary devices, hijack prevention, and other security system enhancements. Projects presently planned will be accelerated and necessary additional projects will be initiated this fiscal year and thereafter.

Enhanced Airline Security Training. The Department of Transportation shall ensure that appropriately enhanced security training and threat awareness briefings are provided for all crewmembers of U.S. air carriers who serve on high-risk flights. The FAA shall further require that for such flights a designated security coordinator is responsible for monitoring security systems and advising the pilot in command that all necessary security requirements have been met prior to departure.

November 23, 1985

An Egypt Air airplane bound for Athens to Malta and carrying several U.S. citizens was hijacked by the Abu Nidal Group.

(Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, "Significant Terrorist Events, 1961-2001: A Chronology)

March 30, 1986

A Palestinian splinter group detonated a bomb as TWA Flight 840 approached Athens airport, killing 4 U.S. citizens.

(Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, "Significant Terrorist Events, 1961-2001: A Chronology)

September 14, 1986

North Korean agents detonated an explosive device at Seoul's Kimpo Airport, killing five persons and injuring 29 others.

November 29, 1987

North Korean agents planted a bomb aboard Korean Airlines Flight 858, which subsequently crashed in the Indian Ocean.

(Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, "Significant Terrorist Events, 1961-2001: A Chronology)

December 7, 1987

Forty-four people died when a Pacific Southwest Airlines Flight 1771 crashed after a disgruntled former employee shot the pilots.

December 21, 1988

Libyan terrorists blow up Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 259 people on the plane and 11 people on the ground.

March 1989

RAND Corporation terrorism expert Brian Jenkins published his important study 'The Terrorist Threat to Commercial Aviation.' In the study, Jenkins eerily describes the possibility of a suicide hijacking:

The nightmare of governments is that suicidal terrorists will hijack a commercial airliner and, by killing or replacing its crew, crash into a city or some vital facility. It has been threatened in at least one case: In 1977, an airliner believed to have been hijacked, crashed, killing all on board. And in 1987, a homicidal, suicidal ex-employee boarded a commercial airliner where he shot his former boss and brought about the crash of the airliner, killing all 44 on board. Fear of such incidents is offered as a powerful argument for immobilizing hijacked aircraft on the ground at the

first opportunity and also, some argue, for armoring the flight deck. What are we likely to see in the future? Perhaps fewer but deadlier and more sophisticated terrorist hijackings.

August 4, 1989

The President's Commission on Aviation Security and Terrorism is published. The Commission finds "the Federal Aviation Administration to be a reactive agency—preoccupied with responses to events to the exclusion of adequate contingency planning in anticipation of future threats." In addition, the Commission identified that "most threats to civil aviation have come primarily from Middle-East based terrorist cells and factions."

September 1989

Terrorists bombed French UTA Flight 772, from Brazzaville, Congo to Paris. The plane explodes in mid-air, killing 171.

November 1989

Latin American drug cartel terrorists bombed Columbia Avianca Flight 203 from Bogota to Cali, Columbia, claiming 107 lives.

1991

By the time bin Laden moves to Sudan in 1991, the CIA had learned that he had used his fortune to train hundreds of Arab veterans of the war in Afghanistan for a worldwide jihad.

(Cofer Black, Former Director of the Counter Terrorism Center, CIA, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

November 1991

An unnamed Islamic fundamentalist group plotted to hijack two airplanes outside Spain and fly them into Madrid, where Middle East peace talks were being held. One aircraft was to crash into the Spanish Royal Palace, killing President Bush, Mikhail Gorbachev, and other world leaders. The second plain was intended to crash into a hotel where the Soviet delegation to the conference was staying. Arab intelligence foiled the plot. (The Times Online, 9/14/01)

1992

Osama bin Laden financed and helped set up at least three terrorist training camps in cooperation with the Sudanese regime, and his construction company worked directly with Sudanese military officials to transport and supply terrorists training in such camps. "During the 1992-96 period, he built and equipped 23 training camps for mujahideen. While in Sudan, he also established a supposedly detection proof financial system to support Islamic terrorist activities worldwide."

(SOURCE: "Who Becomes A Terrorist and Why," Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.)

September 1992 – March 1993

The Egyptian terrorist organization Vanguard of the Islamic Conquest (Tala'i al-Fath al-Islami) received financial and military aid through members of Saudi intelligence. Leaders of the Vanguard visited Saudi Arabia by invitation, and met with the top aides of Prince Turki bin Faysal, director of the Saudi Intelligence Department. Saudi intelligence furnished members of the Vanguard with detailed maps of certain areas throughout Egypt, particularly instructions for moving their operations to areas of Egypt less frequently targeted by terrorist groups.

(Al-Safir Beirut, 6-2-93)

December 2, 1992

Bin Laden finances Islamic extremists who attacked a hotel in Yemen housing U.S. military personnel.

(Cofer Black, Former Director of the Counter Terrorism Center, CIA, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

1993

The CIA learns that bin Laden is channeling funds to Egyptian extremists.

(Cofer Black, Former Director of the Counter Terrorism Center, CIA, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

1993

Bin Laden sent members to Somalia to work as advisors with Somali warlord Aided in opposing U.S. forces there in support of Operation Restore Hope. Bin Laden publicly claimed responsibility for this activity, and the CIA has confirmed his involvement in Somalia.

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

1993

CIA units observing Osama bin Laden began to propose action to reduce his organization's capabilities.

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

February 1993

A bomb is detonated in the parking garage of the World Trade Center in New York City. The central figures in the successful plot were Khalid Sheik Mohammed, Ramzi Yousef and Sheikh Omar Abd al-Rahman, all of whom have been linked to Osama bin Laden. In June 2002, Khalid Sheik Mohammed confessed to Yosri Fouda, a reporter for the Al-Jazeera network, that he was the "mastermind of the 9-11-01 terrorist attacks." This confession was repeated to U.S. authorities following Khalid Sheik Mohammed's recent arrest in Pakistan.

May 1993

Al Qaeda financed the travel of more than 300 Afghan war veterans to Sudan after the Pakistani government launched a crackdown against foreign Islamic extremists based in Pakistan.

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

June 1993

The FBI arrested eight individuals for plotting to bomb a number of New York City landmarks, including the United Nations building and the Lincoln and Holland tunnels.

1994

The National Intelligence Council compiles a comprehensive inter-agency intelligence report entitled 'Terror 2000: The Future Face of Terrorism.' Authored by senior U.S. government, private-sector, and international experts on counterterrorism and security, the report describes various terrorist plots, including how hijackers could use airliners to hit high profile national landmarks such as the Pentagon or White House. Complete copies of the report have never been released to the public.

Significantly, the report states:

Targets such as the World Trade Center not only provide the requisite casualties but because of their symbolic nature provide more bang for the buck. In order to maximize their odds for success, terrorist groups will likely consider mounting multiple, simultaneous operations with the aim of overtaxing a government's ability to respond, as well as to demonstrate their professionalism and reach.

(UPI, 9/17/01)

April 7, 1994

A disgruntled Federal Express pilot used his identification badge to smuggle a spear gun, knife and hammer on board another Federal Express flight where he was riding in the jump seat. He charged the cockpit, fractured the skulls of the pilots and planned to crash into the Federal Express hub at the Memphis airport. Some of the crew members were miraculously able to recover control of the plane and safely land the aircraft.

December 1994

The Algerian Armed Islamic Group hijacked an Air France flight in Algiers and threatened to crash it into the Eiffel Tower. French authorities deceived the terrorists into thinking the plane did not have enough fuel to reach Paris and diverted it to Marseilles. A French anti-terrorist force stormed the plane and killed all four terrorists.

(Senate Intelligence Committee Testimony, 9/18/02)

1995

In the CIA's annual National Intelligence Estimates, the agency warned:

As an open and free democracy, the United States is particularly vulnerable to various types of terrorist attacks. Several kinds of targets are especially at risk: National symbols such as the White House and the Capitol, and symbols of US capitalism such as Wall Street; power grids, communications switches, water facilities, and transportation infrastructure—particularly civil aviation, subway systems, cruise lines, and petroleum pipelines; places where large numbers of

people congregate, such as large office buildings, shopping centers sports arenas, and airport and other transportation terminals.

We assess that civil aviation will figure prominently among possible terrorist targets in the United States. This stems from the increasing domestic threat posed by foreign terrorists, the continuing appeal of civil aviation as a target, and a domestic aviation security system that has been the focus of media attention: We have attempted to penetrate security at US airports in recent years. The media have called attention to, among other things, inadequate security for checked baggage. Our review of the evidence obtained thus far about the plot uncovered in Manila in early 1995, suggests the conspirators were guided in their selection of the method and venue of attack by carefully studying security procedures in place in the region. If terrorists operating in this country are similarly methodical, they will identify serious vulnerabilities in the security system for domestic flights.

(1995 National Intelligence Estimates)

January 1995

Philippine National Police raid turned up materials in a Manila apartment indicating that three individuals - Ramzi Yousef, Abdul Murad, and Khalid Sheikh Mohammad - planned, among other things, to crash an airplane into CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. The Philippine National Police said that the same group was responsible for the bombing of a Philippine airliner on December 12, 1994.

Authorities also uncover the Bojinka plot to simultaneously blow up 12 commercial aircraft over the Pacific Ocean. In addition, a letter written by the terrorists who planned the failed 1993 WTC bombing is found on a computer disk by law enforcement officials in the Philippines. The letter warns that future attacks would be more precise and they would continue to target the WTC if their demands were not met.

(U.S. v. Yousef, Docket No. 98-1041, (2nd Cir., April 4, 2003); FBI Documents; L.A. Times 9/1/02; Insight 5/27/02; See April 10, 1995 entry for plot to fly plane into CIA headquarters)

January 6, 1995

Terrorist Ramzi Yousef is arrested in Pakistan. The next day, as Yousef is flying over New York City on his way to prison, an FBI agent says to Yousef, "You see the Trade Centers down there, they're still standing, aren't they?" Yousef responds, "They wouldn't be if I had enough money and enough explosives."

(MSNBC, 9/23/01)

April, 1995

In the April 3, 1995 edition of *Time*, the magazine's cover story reports on the potential for terrorists to kill thousands in highly destructive acts. Senator Sam Nunn outlines a scenario in which terrorists destroy the U.S. Capitol Building by crashing a radio controlled airplane into it. "It's not far-fetched," he says. His idea was taken from the popular Tom Clancy book *Debt of Honour* published in August 1994.

April 10, 1995

In an FBI confession interview, Abdul Hakim Hasim Murad a fellow Bojinka Plot conspirator and roommate of Ramzi Yousef, described the Manila cell's plan to fly a plane into the CIA headquarters (paraphrased here by the FBI):

What the subject has in his mind is that he will board any American commercial aircraft pretending to be an ordinary passenger. Then he will hijack said aircraft, control its cockpit and dive it at the CIA headquarters. There will be no bomb or any explosive that he will use in its execution. It is simply a suicidal mission that he is very much willing to execute.
(FBI Documents; 9/18/02 Congressional Testimony)

June 21, 1995

Memorandum from President William Jefferson Clinton to his Cabinet on the subject of U.S. Policy on Counterterrorism:

Within the United States, we shall vigorously apply U.S. laws and seek new legislation to prevent terrorist groups from operating in the United States or using it as a base for recruitment, training, fund raising or other related activities. (U)

G. Transportation - related terrorism: The Federal Aviation Administration has exclusive responsibility in instances of air piracy for the coordination of any law enforcement activity affecting the safety of persons aboard aircraft within the special aircraft jurisdiction of the U.S. as defined in public law. The Department of Justice, acting through the FBI, shall establish and maintain procedures, in coordination with the Departments of State, Defense, and Transportation, to ensure the efficient resolution of terrorist hijackings. These procedures shall be based on the principle of lead agency responsibility for command, control and rules of engagement. (U)

November 13, 1995

A car-bomb in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia kills seven people, five of them American military and civilian advisers for National Guard training. Al Qaeda-related groups including the "Tigers of the Gulf," "Islamist Movement for Change," and "Fighting Advocates of God" fax a letter to CNN claiming responsibility for the attacks and explaining that it was carried out in retaliation for the imprisonment of sheiks al-Ouda and al-Hawali.

(United States v. Sami Omar Al-Hussayen, Case No. CR03-48-N, Testimony of Michael Gneckow, March 11-12, 2003)

1996

The CIA establishes a special unit—known as bin Laden Issue Station—with CIA, NSA, FBI and other officers specifically to get more—and more actionable—intelligence on bin Laden and his organization.

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

1996

The CIA distributes a secret report to senior government officials detailing the illicit flow of financial and logistical resources from Islamic charities such as the Muslim World League, International Islamic Relief Organization, Third World Relief Agency, and Al Haramain Islamic Foundation, to terrorist groups, including Egyptian Jihad, al Gama'at al Islamiya, and al Qaeda. The report states, "We continue to have evidence that even high ranking members of the collecting or monitoring agencies in Saudi Arabia...such as the Saudi High Commission are involved in illicit activities, including support for terrorists." In addition, the analysis reveals that the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) is affiliated with the Muslim World League (MWL), which the report describes as a "major international organization largely financed by the Government of Saudi Arabia." In fact, the Chairman of the MWL, who is appointed by Saudi King Fahd, also served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the IIRO. The report illustrates that the U.S. government has long known about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's links to terrorist financing, and that by the mid-1990s, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was actively involved with financing Islamic charities which funneled substantial resources to transnational terrorist groups.

(1996 Central Intelligence Agency report)

January 1996

The Intelligence Community obtained information concerning a planned suicide attack by individuals associated with Sheikh Omar Adb al-Rahman. The plan was to fly to the United States from Afghanistan and smash the plane into White House.

June 1996

Saudi business leaders and royal family members secretly meet with bin Laden operatives at the Royal Monceau Hotel in Paris to secure a \$300 million deal with Osama bin Laden which would ensure that al Qaeda would not attack targets in Saudi Arabia. Attendees included Adnan Kashoggi (Saudi arms dealer), Prince Amir Talal bin Abdul Aziz (brother of King Fahd), Abdullah Taha Bakhsh (Saudi businessman), Khalid bin Mahfouz (Saudi billionaire businessman), and Sarkis Soghanalian (Syrian arms dealer).

(1996 French Intelligence Report)

June 25, 1996

A bomb aboard a fuel truck explodes outside a U.S. air force installation in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Nineteen U.S. military personnel are killed in the Khobar Towers housing facility, and 515 are wounded, including 240 Americans.

July 1996

Bin Laden describes the killing of Americans in the Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia as the beginning of a war between Muslims and the United States.

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

July 1996

During the Atlanta Summer Olympics, foreign intelligence agencies intercept transmissions referring to the attack of Olympic venues with small aircraft. In response, Black Hawk helicopters and U.S. Customs jets patrolled the skies above the southeast U.S. during the Games to prevent the commandeering of small aircraft, particularly crop dusters.

(Aviation Insecurity: The New Challenges of Air Travel, Andrew R. Thomas)

July 20, 1996

A bomb exploded at Tarragona International Airport in Reus, Spain, wounding 353 persons, including British and Irish tourists. The Basque Fatherlandd and Liberty (ETA) organization was suspected.

(Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, "Significant Terrorist Events, 1961-2001: A Chronology)

August 1996

Osama bin Laden issues a public *fatwa* entitled, "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places." The statement, first published in *Al Quds Al Arabi*, authorizes attacks on Western military targets in the Arabian Peninsula. Bin Laden declares: "It is a duty now on every tribe in the Arab Peninsula to fight, Jihad, in the cause of Allah and to cleanse the land from those occupiers. Allah knows that their blood is permitted to be spilled and their wealth is a booty; their wealth is a booty to those who kill them."

October 1996

The Intelligence Community obtained information regarding an Iranian plot to hijack a Japanese plane over Israel and crash it into Tel Aviv. An individual would board the plane in the Far East. During the flight, he would commandeer the aircraft, order it to fly over Tel Aviv, and then crash the plane into the city. The plot was never carried out.

(9/18/02 Congressional Testimony)

Autumn 1996-1997

Following the crash and suspected bombing of TWA Flight 800 in July 1996, President Bill Clinton established a White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security chaired by Vice President Albert Gore to assess the civilian aviation security and safety environment and provide recommendations for improvements.

During this study, top experts and government officials were made aware of the persistent and growing threat of large scale terrorist violence through airline hijackings and the use of airliners as missiles.

The 1996 White House Commission observed a video entitled "The Future Face of Terrorism." The transcript of the video depicts the face of terrorism as Ramzi Ahmed Yousef. Yousef was among the terrorists who planned to blow-up 12 U.S. airplanes

simultaneously over the Pacific Ocean in the Bojinka Plot. The video transcript describes the dramatically increasing threat of mass terrorist violence using commercial aircraft:

Terrorists today are potentially much more dangerous. Open societies and computer literacy make a wealth of knowledge and information easily available. They can target a single individual. But typically their goal is maximum destruction and massive casualties--witness the bombing of the World Trade Center...

A terrorist attack against an aircraft or airport inside the United States remains a real threat. Many [terrorists] are young...repressed and very angry. They see terrorism as a way out of their social situation or as a means to support religious and political ideals. Some even believe suicidal missions will gain them ever-lasting life.

This is the face of terrorism threatening the airline industry as America enters the 21st century. Ramzi Ahmed Yousef is well-educated, technically skilled in his deadly craft and highly motivated. And in 1995 he and a small cell of co-conspirators planned to spirit bombs aboard 11 US Flag aircraft and blow them from the sky—all on the same day.

Because they can be so difficult to detect, terrorists like Yousef can strike both within the United States and overseas.

Civil aviation has been and continues to be a major target for terrorist organizations. Terrorists tend to have a profile we can watch for. They may pay for their tickets in cash, arrange for one way travel or show up on the date of travel without having made reservations. Terrorists tend to use false or altered passports. Close scrutiny of passports and accompanying documents may reveal tampering.

(1996-97 White House Commission on Aviation Security)

November 1996

Bin Laden states in an interview, “If we wanted to carry out small operations, it would have been easy to do so after the statements, but the nature of the battle requires qualitative operations that affect the adversary, which obviously requires good preparation.”

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

November 23, 1996

Ethiopian Airlines Flight 961 flight from Ethiopia to Nairobi, Kenya was hijacked by three middle-aged individuals who instructed the pilot to fly to Australia. The pilot was aware there was not enough fuel to make it there, and when the plane's engines started shutting down due to lack of fuel, the hijackers tried to take control of the plane and crash it into a Gawala seaside resort near the Comoros Islands. The plane crashed 500 yards from the resort; 123 people died.

1997

One of the units at FBI headquarters became concerned about the possibility of a terrorist group using an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) for terrorist attacks. The FBI and CIA became aware of reporting that the unnamed group had purchased a UAV. At the time, the agencies' view was that the only reason that the group would need a UAV would be for either reconnaissance or attack. There was more concern about the possibility of an attack outside the United States, for example, by flying a UAV into a U.S. Embassy or a visiting U.S. delegation.

(9/18/02 Congressional Testimony)

1997

In a National Intelligence Estimate in 1997, the CIA stated: "Civil aviation remains a particularly attractive target for terrorist attacks in light of fear and publicity the downing of an airliner would evoke and the revelations last summer of the vulnerability of the US air transport sector."

(1997 National Intelligence Estimate)

1997

Members of Al Qaeda living in Madrid, Spain traveled to the United States and prepared several surveillance videos of the World Trade Center, Sears Tower, Golden Gate Bridge, Disneyland, and Las Vegas. These videos were recovered by Spanish authorities and turned over to the 9/11 Families United to Bankrupt Terrorism. One section of the video depicts the terrorist sitting in Manhattan and looking at the skyline as he states, "These buildings are going to come down."

February 1997

The White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security reported that:

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, and other intelligence sources have been warning that the threat of terrorism is changing in two important ways. First, it is no longer just an overseas threat from foreign terrorists. People and places in the United States have joined the list of targets, and Americans have joined the ranks of terrorists. The bombings of the World Trade Center in New York and the Federal Building in Oklahoma City are clear examples of the shift, as is the conviction of Ramzi Yousef for attempting to bomb twelve American airliners out of the sky over the Pacific Ocean. The second change is that in addition to well-known, established terrorist groups, it is becoming more common to find terrorists working alone or in ad-hoc groups, some of whom are not afraid to die in carrying out their designs.

1998

The Government funded study "Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why" speculates that: "Al Qaida could detonate a Chechen-type building-buster bomb at a federal building. Suicide bombers belonging to al Qaida's Martyrdom Battalion could crash-land an aircraft

packed with high explosives (C-4 and semtex) into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency, or the White House. Ramzi Yousef had planned to do this against the CIA headquarters.

(SOURCE: "Who Becomes A Terrorist and Why," Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.)

1998

The CIA receives a rash of reports threatening attacks in the United States, which lead the agency to work together with the FBI to provide advisories for local law enforcement agencies. One such episode occurred when the CIA provided reporting of a plot to hijack a plane on the east coast of the United States to attempt to free the "Blind Sheik" from prison. The report also said that there had been a successful test to elude security at a major airport.

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

1998

An extremist associated with al Qaeda says bin Laden is seeking a "Hiroshima."

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

February 23, 1998

Osama bin Laden issues a *fatwa*, declaring it a religious duty of all Muslims "to kill the Americans and their allies-civilians and military and plunder their money when and wherever they find it...in any country in which it is possible." The statement is an expansion of an earlier *fatwa* issued in August 1996.

August 1998

The Intelligence Community obtained information that a group of unidentified Arabs planned to fly an explosive-laden plane from a foreign country into the World Trade Center. The information was passed to the FBI and the FAA. The FAA found the plot highly unlikely given the state of that foreign country's aviation program. Moreover, they believed that a flight originating outside the United States would be detected before it reached its intended target inside the United States. The FBI's New York office took no action on the information, filing the communication in the office's bombing repository file. The Intelligence Community has acquired additional information since then indicating there may be links between this group and other terrorist groups, including al Qaeda.

(9/18/02 Congressional Testimony)

August 7, 1998

In its most deadly act of terrorism yet, al Qaeda claimed responsibility for bombing the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In Nairobi, 12 Americans are among the 291 killed, and over 5,000 are wounded, including 6 Americans. In Dar es Salaam, one U.S. citizen is wounded among the 10 killed and 77 injured.¹

¹ In 1999, as a result of the bombings of the US embassies in Africa, the United States' government sent a delegation to the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to warn them significant

Mid-to-Late August 1998

The FBI and CIA disrupt a planned attack on another U.S. Embassy in Africa. In a three-day period, more than 20 al Qaeda operatives were arrested in that country.

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

September 1998

The U.S. Intelligence Community obtained information that Osama bin Laden's next operation could possibly involve flying an aircraft loaded with explosives into a U.S. airport and detonating it; this information was provided to senior U.S. Government officials in late 1998.

(9/18/02 Congressional Testimony)

October 19, 1998

Dick Gannon, a former Clinton administration deputy director for operations in the State Department's Office of Counterterrorism tells *U.S. News & World Report* that "We've got information about whose backing bin Laden, and in a lot of cases it goes back to the royal family. There are certain factions of the Saudi royal family who just don't like us."

(10/19/98 U.S. News & World Report)

November 1998

The U.S. Intelligence Community obtained information that the Turkish Kaplancilar, an Islamic extremist group, had planned a suicide attack to coincide with celebrations marking the death of Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey. The conspirators, who were arrested, planned to crash an airplane packed with explosives into Ataturk's tomb during a government ceremony. The Turkish press said the group had cooperated with Osama bin Laden. The FBI's New York office included this incident in one of its Osama bin Laden databases.

(9/18/02 Congressional Testimony)

December 1998

A CIA intelligence assessment concluded that bin Laden "is actively planning against U.S. targets...keenly interested in striking the U.S. on its own soil."

(Joint Congressional Intelligence Report on the 9/11 Attacks, 9/18/02)

December 1998

Bin Laden states in an interview that it is a "religious duty" to acquire weapons of mass destruction, and noted, "How we would use them is up to us."

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

funds from their countries were being used to finance al Qaeda's terrorist attacks. In spite of these warnings, these countries failed to enact any serious regulations of banks, charities, or mosques. Instead, they turned a blind eye to this problem. See Statements given by William Wechsler and Lee Wolosky to instant plaintiffs counsel. The trip is also described by Dan Benjamin in [The Age of Sacred Terror](#) (2002).

1999

The FBI lists Usama bin Laden on its 'Most Wanted Terrorists' list. It offers a reward of up to \$25 million "for information leading directly to the apprehension or conviction of Usama bin Laden...Usama bin Laden is wanted in connection with the August 7, 1998, bombings of the United States Embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya.

These attacks killed over 200 people. In addition, Bin Laden is a suspect in other terrorist attacks throughout the world."

(SOURCE: fbi.gov/mostwant/terrorists/)

1999

An FAA directive identifies Osama bin Laden by name as a threat to civil aviation.

(Details Forthcoming)

1999

The FY 2000 CIA budget request to Congress describes bin Laden as "the most significant individual sponsor of Sunni Islamic extremist and terrorist activity in the world today."

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

1999

A widely circulated interagency study commissioned by the National Intelligence Council entitled 'The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?,' laid out several hypothetical attack scenarios posed by the most dangerous terrorist organizations in the world. Among other possible terrorist plots, the study describes the possibility of al Qaeda suicide bombers crash-landing an aircraft into the Pentagon:

Al Qaeda's expected retaliation for the U.S. cruise missile attack against al Qaeda's training facilities in Afghanistan on August 20, 1998, could take several forms of terrorist attack in the nation's capital. Al-Qaeda could detonate a Chechen-type building-buster bomb at a federal building. Suicide bomber(s) belonging to al-Qaeda's Martyrdom Battalion could crash-land an aircraft packed with high explosives (C-4 and Semtex) into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), or the White House. Ramzi Yousef had planned to do this against the CIA headquarters. In addition, both al-Qaeda and Yousef were linked to a plot to assassinate President Clinton during his visit to the Philippines in early 1995.

Following the August 1998 cruise missile attack, at least one Islamic religious leader called for Clinton's assassination, and another stated that "the time is not far off" for when the White House will be destroyed by a nuclear bomb. Al-Qaeda's retaliation, however, is more likely to take the lower-risk form of bombing one or more U.S. airliners with time-bombs. Yousef was planning simultaneous bombings of 11 U.S. airliners prior to his capture. Whatever form an

attack may take, bin Laden will most likely retaliate in a spectacular way for the cruise missile attack against his Afghan camp in August 1998.
(*Federal Research Division, September 1999*)

1999

CIA Director George Tenet orders a baseline review of the CIA's operational strategy against bin Laden which results in the implementation of 'The Plan' to capture and bring to justice bin Laden and his principal lieutenants. The plan included a strong and focused intelligence collection program to track—and then act against—bin Laden and his associates in terrorist sanctuaries. It was a blend of aggressive human source collection—both unilateral and with foreign partners—and technical collection.

(*CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002*)

January 2, 1999

A UN Plane carrying one U.S. citizen, four Angolans, two Philippine nationals, and one Namibian was shot down, according to UN officials. No deaths occurred. Angolan authorities blamed the attack on National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

(*Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, "Significant Terrorist Events, 1961-2001: A Chronology"*)

January 28, 1999

Congressman Benjamin Gilman, Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, criticizes U.S. foreign policy toward south Asia. Gilman describes "an unrelenting Pakistan-Afghanistan nexus in promoting international terrorism." He asserted that Pakistan supported Afghan terrorist camps and "provided crucial diplomatic support for the Taliban regime, hoping it will be dependent on Pakistan after gaining control throughout Afghanistan."

(*SOURCE: "US Congressman Slams Pakistan-Taliban Nexus: NNI, January 28, 1999*)

February 1999

The Intelligence Community obtained information that Iraq had formed a suicide pilot unit that it planned to use against British and U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf.

(*9/18/02 Congressional Testimony*)

February 2, 1999

CIA Director George Tenet tells an open session of the Senate Intelligence Committee that "there is not the slightest doubt that Usama Bin Ladin, his worldwide allies, and his sympathizers are planning further attacks against us. He will strike where in the world he thinks we are vulnerable. We are concerned that one or more of Bin Ladin's attacks could occur at any time."

(*CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002*)

March 1999

The U.S. Intelligence Community obtained information regarding plans by an al-Qaeda member, to fly a hang glider into the Egyptian Presidential Palace and then detonate the explosives he was carrying. The individual was subsequently arrested and is in custody abroad.

(9/18/02 Congressional Testimony)

May 1999

An investigation in the Southern District of New York into the case of USA v. Ihab Mohamed Ali, reveals that the defendant, an accused al Qaeda operative, received pilot training in Oklahoma in 1994. This discovery illustrates government knowledge of al-Qaeda operatives receiving pilot lessons in the United States more than two years prior to September 11, 2001.

(USA v. Ihab Mohamed Ali, United States District Court, Southern District of New York)

July 1999

U.S. government informant Randy Glass records a conversation he shares with Pakistani arms dealers, held at a restaurant within view of the World Trade Center. R.G. Abbas, one of the Pakistani dealers, points to the WTC and says, “Those towers are coming down.” Abbas later makes other references to an attack on the WTC. Glass passes these warnings on to government officials, but he claims “The complaints were ordered sanitized by the highest levels of government.”

(NBC Dateline, 3/18/03)

October 1999

Following the release of a report detailing how wealthy Saudi businessmen bankroll Al Qaeda through international banks and Islamic charities, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright indicates to the media that she plans to raise the issue with Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz al Saud during his visit to the United States in late 1999.

(Indian Express, “Saudi Businessmen Funding Bin Laden—US Media Report,” October 29, 1997)

October 31, 1999

Egypt Air Flight 900. The pilot, quietly repeating an Islamic prayer, crashed, apparently with intent, the Boeing 767 into the Atlantic Ocean shortly after its departure from New York’s JFK Airport.

December 24, 1999

Indian Airlines Airbus hijacking. Five militants hijacked a flight bound from Kathmandu to New Delhi carrying 189 people. The plane and its passengers were released unharmed on December 31, 1999.

(Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, “Significant Terrorist Events, 1961-2001: A Chronology”)

2000

In its publication, “Criminal Acts against Civil Aviation 2000,” the FAA stated:

Although Bin Laden is not known to have attacked civil aviation, he has both the motivation and the wherewithal to do so. Bin Laden’s anti-Western and anti-American attitudes make him and his followers a significant threat to civil aviation, especially U.S. civil aviation.

The FAA report also points out that:

Increased awareness and vigilance are necessary to deter future incidents—be they from terrorist or non-terrorists. It is important to do the utmost to prevent such acts rather than to lower security measures by interpreting the statistics as indicating a decreasing threat.

Winter 2000

Terrorist cells planning attacks against U.S. and foreign military and civilian targets in the Persian Gulf region are broken up, and hundreds of pounds of explosives and other weapons are seized—including anti-aircraft missiles. These operations also netted proof that some Islamic charitable organizations had been either hijacked or created to provide support to terrorists operating in other countries.

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

February 2000

CIA Director George Tenet tells an open session of the Senate Intelligence Committee that “Everything we have learned recently confirms our conviction that (UBL) wants to strike further blows against America” and that he could strike “without additional warning.”

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

April 2000

The Intelligence Community obtained information regarding an alleged Bin Laden plot to hijack a 747 airliner. The source was a “walk-in” to the FBI’s Newark office who claimed that he had been to a training camp in Pakistan where he learned hijacking techniques and received arms training. He also stated that he was supposed to meet five to six other individuals in the United States who would also participate in the plot. They were instructed to use all necessary force to take over the plane because there would be pilots among the hijacking team. The plan was to fly the plane to Afghanistan, and if they would not make it there, that they were to blow up the plane.

(9/18/02 Congressional Testimony)

May 2000

U.S. Department of Agriculture Loan Officer Johnelle Bryant met with 9/11 organizer Mohammed Atta in a USDA Miami-Dade County field office. Atta attempts to secure a \$650,000 loan for a crop-dusting business he supposedly developing. Atta tells Bryant that he had just arrived in the United States from Afghanistan "to start his dream, which was to go to flight school and get his pilot's license, and work both as a charter pilot and a

crop duster too," Bryant told ABC news in a June 6, 2002 interview. Atta wanted to finance a twin-engine six-passenger aircraft, remove the seats and "build a chemical tank that would fit inside the aircraft and take up every available square inch of the aircraft except for where the pilot would be sitting." When Bryant explained that there was an application process, Atta became "very agitated." He thought the loan would be in cash, and that he would have no trouble obtaining it to purchase an aircraft. He also remarked about the lack of security in the building, pointing specifically to a safe behind Bryant's desk. "He asked me what would prevent him from going behind my desk and cutting my throat and making off with the millions of dollars in that safe," said Bryant. According to anonymous law enforcement officials, packing twin-engine planes with explosive chemicals, making it a flying bomb, had been the terrorists' plan since the mid-1990s.

Before leaving Bryant's office, Atta became fixated with an aerial photo of Washington that was hanging on her office wall. "He just said that it was one of the prettiest, the best he'd ever seen of Washington," she said, remembering that he was impressed with the panoramic view that captured all the monuments and buildings in one photograph, pointing specifically to the Pentagon and the White House. "He pulled out a wad of cash," she said, "and started throwing money on my desk. He wanted that picture really bad." Bryant indicated that the picture was not for sale, and he threw more money down. "His look on his face became very bitter at that point," Bryant remembers. "I believe he said, 'How would America like it if another country destroyed that city and some of the monuments in it,' like the cities in his country had been destroyed?"

(ABC News, 6/6/02)

October 11, 2000

One day before the U.S.S. Cole bombing in Yemen, the Taliban Embassy in Islamabad held a press conference during which the ambassador called on "other Muslim countries to wipe out the atrocities being meted out by the Zionist government" and denounced the United States "for harboring enmity with Islam."

(SOURCE: The Taliban's official website: <http://www.afghan-ie.com>)

October 12, 2000

A terrorist bomb damages the destroyer U.S.S. Cole in the port of Aden, Yemen, killing 17 American sailors and injuring 39. Al Qaeda accepts responsibility for the attack.

October 24, 2000

Shortly after the U.S.S. Cole attack, the Taliban defiantly urged that Israel "should be given a practical and tooth breaking response."

(SOURCE: Shariat Weekly (Kabul), October 24, 2000)

October 24-26, 2000

Pentagon officials carry out a "detailed" emergency drill based upon the crashing of a hijacked airliner into the Pentagon.

(MDW News Service 11/3/00; Mirror 5/24/02)

October 27, 2000

Amidst rumors that the United States would retaliate against al Qaeda for the U.S.S. Cole bombing, the Taliban's foreign minister, Maulvi Abdul Wakil Mutawakkil, said that the Taliban would "retaliate with full force" if the United States were to strike again at bin Ladin."

(SOURCE: Tariq Butt, "Taliban to Retaliate if Attacked by U.S.," The News (Islamabad, October 27, 2000)

January 17, 2001

Six members of Lashkar-e-Tayyba militant group were killed when they attempted to seize Srinagar Airport.

(Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, "Significant Terrorist Events, 1961-2001: A Chronology")

January 31, 2001

The U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century releases the Hart-Rudman report on counterterrorism. The study states, "The combination of unconventional weapons proliferation with the persistence of international terrorism will end the relative invulnerability of the U.S. homeland to catastrophic attack...A direct attack against American citizens on American soil is likely over the next quarter century."

(U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century)

April 2001

The Intelligence Community obtained information from a source with terrorist connections who speculated that Bin Laden would be interested in commercial pilots as potential terrorists. The source warned that the United States should not focus only on embassy bombings, that terrorists sought "spectacular and traumatic" attacks, and that the first World Trade Center bombing would be the type of attack that would be appealing. The source did not mention a timeframe for any attack. The information was not disseminated within the U.S. Intelligence Community.

(9/18/02 Congressional Testimony)

May 2001

An American Airlines crew discovered that their uniforms, documents, and identification badges had stolen from a hotel.

(The Times Online, 9/14/01)

May 2001

The CIA learns that supporters of Osama bin Laden were planning to infiltrate the United States; that seven were on their way to the United States, Canada, and Britain; that his operatives "were disappearing while others were preparing for martyrdom," and that his associates "were planning attacks in the United States with explosives."

(Washington Post 9/19/02)

May 2001

Department of Defense medical personnel are trained for a hypothetical airliner hijacking attack on the Pentagon.

(U.S. Medicine, October 2001)

May 2001

An article appears on a Web site maintained by defendant Sami Omar Al-Hussayen, currently on trial in United States District Court, District of Idaho, Southern Division, written by radical Saudi sheik, Homed Ali (phonetic) which reads, “the holy warrior must kill himself if he knows that this will lead to the killing of a great number of the enemies: “[H]e will not be able to kill them without killing himself first or demolishing a center vital to the enemy or its military force...” “This is not possible except by involving the human element in the operation. In this new era, this can be accomplished with the modern means of bombing or bringing down an airplane on an important location that will cause the enemy great losses.”

(United States v. Sami Omar Al-Hussayen, Case No. CR03-48-N, Testimony of Michael Gneckow, March 11-12, 2003)

Spring-Summer 2001

The CIA assists the Jordanian government in breaking up another terrorist cell in Jordan and seizes large quantities of weapons, including rockets and high explosives.

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

Spring-Summer 2001

The U.S. helps break up a terrorist plan to attack U.S. facilities in Yemen.

(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

Early Summer 2001

Thirty-three communications were collected by the National Security Agency between May and July indicating a “possible, imminent terrorist attack.”

(Joint Congressional Intelligence Report on the 9/11 Attacks, 9/18/02)

Summer 2001

Middle East expert describes in an article on the Taliban and al Qaeda the financial benefits that al Qaeda provides to the Taliban regime: “It is conceivable that as Taliban leaders have become increasingly involved in the drug trade, bin Ladin’s international network may have helped them in distributing these narcotics. Numerous terrorist-affiliated websites are certainly active in soliciting funds for the Taliban. As a symbol of defiance toward the United States and of adherence toward the cause of militant Islam, bin Ladin is also valuable to the Taliban as a source of donations from abroad, particularly from the wealthy Arab countries of the Persian Gulf.

(SOURCE: Julie Sirrs, “The Taliban’s International Ambitions,” The Middle East Quarterly, Summer 2001, Volume VIII.)

Summer 2001

A senior bin Laden associate is arrested. Information he provided included plans to kidnap Americans in three countries, and carry out hijackings.
(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

Summer 2001

The CIA provides intelligence to a Latin American country on a group of terrorists considering hijackings and bombings. An FBI team detected explosives residue in their hotel rooms.
(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

Summer 2001

The Intelligence Community Counterterrorism Board issues several threat advisories which contain phrases like “al-Qa’ida is most likely to attempt spectacular attacks resulting in numerous casualties,” and “al-Qa’ida is prepared to mount one or more terrorist attacks at any time.” As a result, the FAA issued two alerts to air carriers in the summer of 2001.
(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

June 2001

The CIA works with a Middle Eastern partner to arrest two bin Laden operatives planning attacks on U.S. facilities in Saudi Arabia.
(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

June 22, 2001

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued an “information circular” to commercial airlines citing concern about possible hijackings.
(Reuters 5/16/02)

July 2001

A terrorist who had been directed to begin an operation to attack the U.S. Embassy or cultural center in a European capital is detained in the Middle East.
(CIA Director George Tenet, Joint Congressional Inquiry Committee, October 17, 2002)

July 2001

The CIA warns senior government officials that “based on a review of all-source reporting over the last five months, we believe that UBL [bin Laden] will launch a significant terrorist attack against U.S. and/or Israeli interests in the coming weeks. The attack will be spectacular and designed to inflict mass casualties against U.S. facilities or interests. Attack preparations have been made. Attack will occur with little or no warning.” The CIA also reported that an individual who had recently been in Afghanistan indicated, “Everyone is talking about an impending attack.”
(Washington Post, 9/19/02; Joint Congressional Intelligence Report on the 9/11 Attacks, 9/18/02)

July 10, 2001

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 memorandum specifically suggests that Osama bin Laden's followers might be trying to infiltrate the civil aviation system as pilots, security guards or other personnel, and recommends a national program to track suspicious flight school students. The memo is sent to the counterterrorism unit division at FBI headquarters in Washington and to two field offices, including the counterterrorism section in New York. The memo is ignored at all three offices.

July 17, 2001

In a July 2001 final rule the Federal Aviation Administration is put on notice regarding the ongoing threat of potential hijackings. The rule states:

With respect specifically to the threat to civil aviation in the United States, it must be seen in the context of the broader threat. The events in Asia in early 1995, showed that the terrorists persisted in planning to attack aviation even then there were other targets identifiable with the United States in the area and even when they knew that the security measures protecting aviation had been strengthened. Publicity about problems with US domestic civil aviation security measures increases the potential for attacks here. Civil aviation targets may be chosen by terrorists even if alternative, and (in their view) softer targets are available, especially since an attack on aviation seizes the public's imagination to a degree equaled by few other types of attack.

(SOURCE: Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration, 14 CFR Part 108, [Docket No. FAA-2001-8725; Formerly Docket No. 28978; Amendment No. 108-18])

July 21, 2001

A regional Iraqi newspaper reports that Osama bin Laden "will try to bomb the Pentagon after he destroys the White House, is insisting very convincingly that he will strike America on the arm that is already hurting, and will curse the memory of Frank Sinatra every time he hears his songs [New York, New York]."

(7/21/01 'America: An Obsession Called Osama bin Ladin,' Al-Nassiriya)

Late July 2001

The FAA issued information circular warning airlines that terrorist groups are planning and training for hijackings and urging carriers to use caution.

(Reuters 5/16/02)

August 2001

The Intelligence Community obtained information regarding a plot to either bomb the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi from an airplane or crash an airplane into it. The Intelligence Community learned that two people who were reportedly acting on instructions from Osama Bin Laden met in October 2000 to discuss this plot.

Based on information it had in its possession at the time, the CIA sent a message to the FAA asking the FAA to advise corporate security directors of U.S. air carriers of the following information:

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 "...Atlanta and New York, among other locations were mentioned as possible targets.
(9/18/02 Congressional Testimony)

August 2001

Weeks before the terrorist attacks, the United States and the United Nations receive warnings from a secret Taliban emissary that Osama bin Laden was planning a huge attack on American soil.

(The Independent 6/7/02)

August 2001

The British government gave President George W. Bush a categorical warning about al Qaeda airline hijackings. According to Bush administration officials, the alert was included in the August 6, 2001 Presidential terrorism briefing.

(The Sunday Herald 5/19/02)

August 2001

Israeli Intelligence officials warned their counterparts in the United States that large-scale terrorist attacks on highly visible targets on the American homeland were imminent.

(The Telegraph 9/16/01)

August 2001

The CIA informed the FBI and the INS that two men suspected of al-Qaeda affiliations were likely to come to the United States. The two, Khalid al-Midhar and Nawaq al-Hamzi, were both hijackers on American Airlines Flight 77.

(Le Monde, 9/22/01)

August 6, 2001

President George W. Bush reviewed a one-and-a-half page "analytic report" during his daily intelligence briefing discussing Osama bin Laden's historical methods of operation. National Security Adviser Condoleeza Rice says the report cited a general possibility of "traditional" hijackings by al Qaeda, perhaps to demand the release of Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman, the radical Muslim who plotted the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

(Reuters 5/16/02)

August 15, 2001

Based on concerns raised by flight school staff at a Minnesota pilot training center, Zacarias Moussaoui, a French citizen, is arrested and detained on an immigration violation after illustrating alarming behavior and requesting pilot training to fly a plane

and not take off or land. The FBI confiscates his possessions, including a computer laptop, but is not able to obtain a search warrant to examine computer contents. When arrested, Moussaoui had in his possession two knives, fighting gloves, and shin guards. On August 22, French authorities provide FBI officials with information connecting Moussaoui to radical Islamic groups and indicate that he has been on a terrorist “watch list” in France. From August 23-27, FBI agents in Minnesota attempt to obtain a search warrant under FISA to examine the contents of Moussaoui’s laptop but are refused. On the afternoon of September 11th, officials search Moussaoui’s computer and find information revealing that Moussaoui may have been planning an attack using a crop duster plane and contact information tying Moussaoui to Ramzi Binalshibh, lead hijacker Mohammad Atta’s former roommate.

August 16, 2001

The FAA issued an information circular warning carriers to be on alert for potential attack by people using weapons disguised as cellphones, key chains or pens.

Late Summer 2001

A Moroccan intelligence secret agent named Hassan Dabou informed his chiefs in King Mohammed VI’s royal intelligence service that Osama bin Laden’s men were preparing “large-scale operations in New York in the summer of autumn of 2001.” The warning was said to have been passed from the Moroccan capital of Rabat to Washington.

(Source: John Cooley, “Other Unheeded Warnings Before 9/11?” The Christian Science Monitor)

Late Summer 2001

Jordan’s General Intelligence Division intercepted:

A crucial al Qaeda communication that probably took place after the July 5 warning by a Phoenix, Arizona FBI agent that Arab terrorists could be sending men to flight schools, and either before or shortly after August 6, when President Bush received a CIA briefing about possible hijackings. The intercepts content was deemed so important that Jordanian King Abdallah’s men relayed it to Washington, probably through the CIA station at the US Embassy in Amman. To be sure that the message got through, it was also passed to a German intelligence agent who was visiting Amman at the time. The message showed clearly that a major attack was planned inside the continental US. It said aircraft would be used. But neither hijacking nor, apparently, precise timing nor targets were named. The code name of the operation was mentioned: in Arabic, Al Ourush al Kabir, “The Big Wedding.”

(Source: John Cooley, “Other Unheeded Warnings Before 9/11?” The Christian Science Monitor)

Early September 2001

German police encounter a Hamburg airport worker acquainted with both Mohammad Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi. The worker, believed to be a cousin of Atta, has since been arrested.

(The Times Online, 9/14/01)

Early September 2001

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak told the New York Times in June 2002 that Egyptian Intelligence warned American officials about a week before September 11 that Osama bin Laden's network was in the advance stages of executing a significant operation against an American target. President Mubarak indicates that the information was derived from a secret Egyptian agent with close ties to the bin Laden organization and that the Egyptian intelligence chiefs tried unsuccessfully to halt the al Qaeda operation.

(6/4/02, The New York Times)

September 5 and 6, 2001

Franco-American meetings were held in Paris to discuss threats against American interests in Europe, notably the United States embassy in France. DST and DGSE officers and soldiers met with American service representatives to notify them of a French Islamic activist of Moroccan descent, Zacarias Moussaoui, held in America since August 17.

(Le Monde, 9/22/01)

September 7, 2001

Mohammad Atta visited Shuckum's bar in Hollywood, FL. When bartender Patricia Idrissi disagreed with Atta about his bar tab, he said to her, "I'm a pilot for American Airlines. I can pay my (expletive) bill." Atta then removed a wad of \$100 and 50-pound notes and paid his bill.

(The Times Online, 9/14/01)

September 11, 2001

On the day of the attacks, the 1st Air Force Air Combat Command was in the fourth day of an annual exercise called Vigilant Guardian. Maj. Gen. Larry Arnold, the Commander of Tynsdale Air Force Base, Florida, where the exercise is conducted, wonders "was the hijacking part of the exercise? Is this some kind of a screw-up?"

(9/11/02 ABC News; January 2002, Code One)

September 13, 2001

Roman police reopened their investigation into the May 2001 theft of American Airlines crew members' uniforms, documents, and identification badges stolen from a hotel.

American police investigated a bag believed to have belonged to one of the hijackers, which airport staff had failed to transfer from the connecting flight. The bag contained a Qur'an and a calculator.

(The Times Online, 9/14/01)

September 20, 2001

Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta testified on September 20, 2001 that:

“They had box openers, which are this long with a sharp hook—razor sharp. But under the 4-H (ph) requirement at the time, it would not have been picked up as an illegal carry-on.”

November 1, 2001

Statement issued by William T. Barbour, President of Argenbright Security, a security screening company operating out of two of the terminals from which hijacked planes departed on September 11th:

...there is no evidence to date that these employees did a single thing incorrectly. In fact, [the screeners] were following Federal Aviation Administration regulations that, at the time, allowed knives of up to four inches, box cutters and corkscrews and other items to be carried onto an airplane.

Mr. Barbour’s statement was issued in a letter to the editor of the Los Angeles Times and published on November 1, 2001.

We now know that this information was deceptive. Please find attached excerpts of the Checkpoint Operations Guide (“COG”) which is the operating manual for airport security screening personnel. The COG clearly indicates that the “box cutters” and “pepper spray” used by the terrorist hijackers were illegal weapons and impermissible in sterile airport areas.

April 19, 2002

Ramzi Binalshibh and Khalid Sheik Mohammed met with Yosri Fouda, a reporter from the Al Jazeera network, for over 48 hours. A series of interviews were conducted wherein Khalid and Ramzi confessed to the September 11th attacks. Khalid Sheik Mohammed stated that he was the head of the military arm of Al Qaeda and he was the “mastermind behind the attack.” Ramzi Binalshibh was the head of operations and coordinated communications between Afghanistan and Mohammed Atta. (Yosri Fouda’s conversation with The 9/11 Families United to Bankrupt Terrorism. A translation of Ramzi’s interview with Fouda is attached. Audio and videotapes of Khalid Sheik Mohammed were confiscated by the terrorists and not returned to Yosri Fouda.)

June 2, 2002

Newsweek reported that the FBI have prepared a detailed chart showing how agents could have uncovered the terrorist plot if the CIA had told them what it knew about the hijackers Almihdhar and Alhazmi sooner. One FBI official says, “There’s no question we could have tied all 19 hijackers together.”

(Newsweek, 6/2/02)

September 18, 2002

Eleanor Hill, Staff Director of the Joint Congressional Inquiry into the September 11, 2001 attacks, testified before Congress regarding the government’s general awareness and knowledge of the attacks prior to 9/11:

Central to the September 11 attacks was the terrorists' use of airplanes as weapons. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, there was much discussion about the extent to which our Government was, or could have been, aware of the threat of terrorist attacks of this type and the extent to which adequate precautions were taken to address that threat. We therefore asked the question: Did the Intelligence Community have any information in its possession prior to September 11, 2001 indicating that terrorists were contemplating using airplanes as weapons?

Based on our review to date of the requested information, we believe that the Intelligence Community was aware of the potential for this type of terrorist attack, but did not produce any specific assessments of the likelihood that terrorists would use airplanes as weapons. Our review has uncovered several examples of intelligence reporting on the possible use of airplanes as weapons in terrorist operations.

October 17, 2002

CIA Director George Tenet tells an open session of the Senate Intelligence Committee that:

We have heard the allegation that our analysts erred by not explicitly warning that hijacked aircraft might be used as weapons. Your staff has been given access to over half a million pages of documents and interviewed hundreds of intelligence officials in their efforts to investigate this complex issue. The documents we provided show some 12 reports, spread over seven years, which pertain to possible use of aircraft as weapons in terrorist attacks. We disseminated those reports to the appropriate agencies—such as the FAA, Department of Transportation, and FBI—as they came in. Moreover, we also provided sanitized versions of intelligence reports that were about threats to civil aviation so they could be distributed more widely through the airline industry. But if one goes back and collects the reports over the same period that pertained to possible truck bombs, car bombs, assassinations, kidnappings, or attacks using chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear devices, those lists would have been far longer. A quick scan of such reporting since 1996, for example, showed about 20 times as many reports concerning car bombs and about five times as many reports concerning weapons of mass destruction.

February 2003

Four plaintiffs in Burnett, et al. v. al Baraka, et al., all of whom are victims of the 9/11 attacks, testified in the Hamburg, Germany trial of Mounir el Motassadeq. On February 19, 2003, Motassadeq was sentenced to the maximum 15 years in prison for helping the Hamburg-based al Qaeda terror cell that included lead hijacker Mohammed Atta and two other suicide pilots. The plaintiffs' moving testimony regarding the September attacks highlighted the commitment of 9/11 families to holding terrorist groups and their financiers accountable for the attacks.

May 16, 2003

Adel al Jubeir, a senior foreign policy adviser to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Abdullah, tells an Associated Press reporter that:

We began to look at accounts every time somebody presents us with information that may indicate that a particular person or institution is engaged in the support of unlawful activity. We froze Osama bin Laden's accounts in the early 1990s. We have looked at the actions of major Saudi donors since the early and mid 1990s. It's one thing to say we think so-and-so is supporting terrorism. Well, where's the proof? We have been probably the first country in the world that has gone to other countries and asked them to open up their financial system to us. We knocked on the doors of European countries in the early 1990s. We even came to the United States in the mid '90s to ask for evidence when we see a transfer that leaves Saudi Arabia and goes to a European country. And we go to the European country, and we say, We think this person supports terrorists. We saw a transfer. Where did it go from your bank? The response we got was, Sorry, bank privacy laws. It takes two to tango. We have a mechanism within the G-8, the Financial Action taskforce on Terror Financing, eight recommendations. We have implemented seven of them. The eighth one that we're looking at has to do with legal sanctions.

Conclusion

Numerous warnings and clues were given prior to September 11th from which terrorist financiers, our intelligence community and the aviation industry could have foreseen the hijacking attacks. In the history of commercial aviation, there are only two methods by which an airline has been attacked--by bomb or hijacking. These methods date back to the 1960's and are the most frequent means by which terrorists strike. The solution for preventing such attacks does not change regardless of the target or the resulting catastrophe. For that reason the proper inquiry is whether it was foreseeable for al Qaeda to hijack aircraft. No rational person could dispute the answer. Islamic extremists, like al-Qaeda, have on numerous occasions indicated that it was prepared, not only to hijack a commercial airliner, but to use it as a weapon. Moreover, al-Qaeda frequently identified the World Trade Center Towers, the Pentagon and the Capitol as its most sought-after targets.