Part 1: Warnings in advance

Was the US government alerted to September 11 attack?

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16 January 2002

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It is not necessary to postulate an all-embracing conspiracy, extending from the White House to the airline security personnel who let the armed hijackers board the planes, to believe that there is much more to the story of the September 11 attacks than the American public has been told so far. Certainly the least likely and least credible explanation of that day's events is that the vast US national security apparatus was entirely unaware of the activities of the hijackers until the airliners slammed into the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

According to this official version, voiced most crudely by FBI Director Robert Mueller immediately after the event, no one in the US government had the slightest idea of the identities of the September 11 hijackers, the methods they would employ, or the targets they would choose. A careful review of the information that has come to light, in bits and pieces, since September 11, demonstrates that these claims are not merely tenuous, but clearly, obviously and knowingly false.

The case of Zacarias Moussaoui ["The strange case of Zacarias Moussaoui: FBI refused to investigate man charged in September 11 attacks"] is only the most glaring evidence that the September 11 terrorist attacks represent, not merely a colossal failure on the part of the FBI and CIA, but a refusal to act that has no legitimate explanation. Not only were there general warnings of the likelihood of suicide hijackings, but several of the hijackers, including the man alleged to be the principal organizer, Mohammed Atta, were under active surveillance by US agents. It is not too much to say that the terrorists were only able to accomplish their murderous and destructive mission because US intelligence agencies ignored repeated warnings, refused to carry out elementary defensive actions and manifested a seeming indifference to the prospect of a major terrorist attack on American soil.

Added to that is the refusal of any branch of the US government to conduct any probe into the circumstances of an attack which killed more American civilians on a single day than any other act of violence in US history. There has been no serious effort in the four months since September 11 to investigate, learn lessons and assign responsibility. This by itself is a demonstration that there are highly placed people in Washington with a great deal to hide.

Warnings from foreign governments

The governments of at least four countries—Germany, Egypt, Russia and Israel—gave specific warnings to the US of an impending terrorist attack in the months preceding September 11. These alerts, while fragmentary, not only combined to foretell the scale of the attack and its main target, but indicated that hijacked commercial aircraft would be the weapon of choice.

According to an article in one of the major daily newspapers in Germany, published just after the destruction of the World Trade Center, the German intelligence service BND told both US and Israeli intelligence agencies in June that Middle East terrorists were "planning to hijack commercial aircraft to use as weapons to attack important symbols of American and Israeli culture."

The newspaper cited unnamed German intelligence sources, who said that the information came through Echelon, the US-controlled system of 120 satellites which monitors all worldwide electronic communications. Echelon is operated jointly by the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand, although its existence is not officially admitted. (Source: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 14, 2001)

The government of Egypt sent an urgent warning to the US June 13, based on a video made by Osama bin Laden. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak told the French newspaper *Le Figaro* that the warning was originally delivered just before the G-8 summit in Genoa. It was taken seriously enough that antiaircraft batteries were stationed around Christopher Columbus Airport in the Italian city. According to Mubarak, bin Laden "spoke of assassinating President Bush and other heads of state in Genoa. It was a question of an airplane stuffed with explosives. These precautions then had been taken." (Source: *New York Times*, September 26, 2001, "2 Leaders Tell of Plot to Kill Bush in Genoa," by David Sanger)

According to Russian press reports, Russian intelligence notified the CIA during the summer that 25 terrorist pilots had been specifically training for suicide missions. In an interview September 15 with MSNBC, Russian President Vladimir Putin confirmed that he had ordered Russian intelligence in August to warn the US government "in the strongest possible terms" of imminent attacks on airports and government buildings. (Source: From The Wilderness web site; MSNBC).

The London-based *Sunday Telegraph* —an arch-conservative newspaper usually highly supportive of the Bush administration—reported that the Israeli intelligence service Mossad had delivered a warning to the FBI and CIA in August that as many as 200 followers of Osama bin Laden were slipping into the country to prepare "a major assault on the United States." The advisory spoke of a "large-scale target" in which Americans would be "very vulnerable." The *Los Angeles Times* cited unnamed US officials confirming this Mossad warning had been received. (Source: *Sunday Telegraph*, September 16, 2001, "Israeli security issued urgent warning to CIA of large-scale terror attacks," by David Wastell and Philip Jacobson; *Los Angeles Times*, September 20, 2001, "Officials Told of 'Major Assault' Plans," by Richard A. Serrano and John-Thor Dahlburg)

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The *Independent*, a liberal daily in Great Britain, published an article asserting the US government "was warned repeatedly that a devastating attack on the United States was on its way." The *Independent* cited an interview given by Osama bin Laden to a London-based Arabic-language newspaper, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, in late August. About the same time, tighter security measures were ordered at the World Trade Center, for unexplained reasons. (Source: *Independent*, September 17, 2001, "Bush did not heed several warnings of attack," by Andrew Gumbel)

Despite this series of alerts, no US intelligence agency issued any warning of a possible attack on a target on US territory in the months leading up to September 11. The CIA and FBI had issued warnings about likely attacks on American military bases or embassies in the Middle East, Europe and Asia. On September 7 the US Department of State issued a worldwide alert about an impending attack by bin Laden followers, although it was focused on US-related targets in east Asia, especially Japan, not within the US itself. As the ranking Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senator Richard Shelby, admitted, "This obviously was a failure of great dimension. We had no specific warning of the US being attacked."

Moreover, the FBI's decision to take no action on Zacarias Moussaoui must be considered in the light of this continuous stream of warnings from overseas. The US government was being repeatedly alerted to the danger of devastating attacks using hijacked commercial aircraft, yet the FBI decided to conduct no serious investigation into a man, believed by French intelligence to be linked to Osama bin Laden, who wanted to learn how to steer a 747 jumbo jet, but not to take off or land. Moussaoui was not even turned over to the FBI by the Immigration and Naturalization Service until after September 11.

US investigations and concerns

Despite claims that US intelligence agencies had not considered the possibility of suicide attacks involving commercial airliners before September 11, there were many indications of such concerns on the part of the American government over a period of eight years.

An expert panel commissioned by the Pentagon in 1993 discussed how an airplane could be used to bomb national landmarks. "It was considered radical thinking, a little too scary for the times," said retired Air Force Col. Doug Menarchik, who organized the $150,000 study for the Defense Department's Office of Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict. "After I left, it met a quiet death." The decision not to publish detailed scenarios was made partly out of a fear that it could give terrorists ideas, participants said. A draft was circulated through the Pentagon, the Justice Department and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, but senior agency officials ultimately decided against a public release. (Source: *Washington Post*, October 2, 2001, "Before Attack, U.S. Expected Different Hit, Chemical, Germ Agents Focus of Preparations," by Jo Warrick and Joe Stephens)

Three incidents of attempted attacks on buildings using airplanes took place during 1994. The first, in April of that year, involved a Federal Express flight engineer who was facing dismissal. He boarded a DC-10 as a passenger and invaded the cockpit, planning to crash the plane into a company building in Memphis, but was overpowered by the crew. The second came that September, when a lone pilot crashed a stolen single-engine Cessna into a tree on the White House grounds just short of the president's bedroom. The third was the December hijacking of an Air France flight in Algiers by the Armed Islamic Group. The hijackers had the plane land in Marseilles and ordered it loaded with 27 tons of fuel, three times the amount required to reach Paris. Their aim was to crash it into the Eiffel Tower. French special forces stormed the plane on the ground. (Source: *New York Times*, October 3, 2001, "Earlier Hijackings Offered Signals That Were Missed," by Matthew Wald)

In January 1995, Philippine police arrested and tortured Abdul Hakim Murad in a Manila apartment where bomb-making equipment was found. He told them of plans to plant timed explosive devices on 11 US airliners simultaneously, and to crash-land an airplane into CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. The preparations were so far advanced that Murad detailed the specific flights targeted, most of them trans-Pacific flights which would explode over the ocean. Murad had attended flying schools in the United States, earned a commercial pilot's license, and told investigators he was to fly the plane into CIA headquarters. Another Islamic fundamentalist was to fly a second plane into the Pentagon. (Source: *Washington Post*, September 23, "Borderless Network of Terror, Bin Laden Followers Reach Across Globe," by Doug Struck, Howard Schneider, Karl Vick and Peter Baker)

Later that year, the alleged organizer of the first World Trade Center bombing, Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, was captured in Pakistan, turned over to US agents and flown back to the United States for trial. On the flight, Yousef reportedly boasted to FBI agent Brian Parr and the other agents guarding him that he had narrowly missed several opportunities to blow up a dozen airliners on a single day over the Pacific and to carry out a kamikaze-type suicide attack on CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. Yousef was referring to the same plot for which Abdul Hakim Murad had been arrested in the Philippines. Murad was extradited to the United States, where his testimony played a major role in Yousef's trial and conviction. (Source: John Cooley, *Unholy Wars*, New York, NY, 2000, p. 247)

Early in 1996, US officials had identified crop-dusters and suicide flights as potential terrorist weapons, and began taking elaborate steps to prevent an attack from the air during the Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta. Black Hawk helicopters and US Customs Service jets were deployed to intercept suspicious aircraft in the skies over the Olympic venues. Agents monitored crop-duster flights within hundreds of miles of downtown Atlanta. Law enforcement agents also fanned out to regional airports throughout northern Georgia "to make sure nobody hijacked a small aircraft and tried to attack one of the venues," said Woody Johnson, the FBI agent in charge of the Atlanta office at the time. From July 6 through the end of the Games on August 11, the FAA banned all aviation within a one-mile radius of the Olympic Village that housed the athletes. It also ordered aircraft to stay at least three miles away from other sites beginning three hours before each event until three hours after each event ended. (Source: *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 2001, "Suicide Flights and Crop Dusters Considered Threats at '96 Olympics," by Mark Fineman and Judy Pasternak)

As early as 1996 the FBI began investigating the activities of Arab students at US flight schools. Government officials admitted that "law enforcement officials were aware that fewer than a dozen people with links to bin Laden had attended US flight schools." FBI agents visited two flight schools in 1996 to get information about several Arab pilots who received training there. The two schools were among those attended by Abdul Hakim Murad, who had told Philippine and US police about plans to fly a hijacked plane into CIA headquarters. In 1998 FBI agents questioned officials from Airman Flight School in Norman, Oklahoma about a graduate identified in court testimony as a pilot for Osama bin Laden. This was the school later attended by Zacarias Moussaoui. A *Washington Post* article concludes: "Since 1996, the FBI had been developing evidence that international terrorists were using US flight schools to learn to fly jumbo jets. A foiled plot in Manila to blow up U.S. airliners and later court testimony by an associate of bin Laden had touched off FBI inquiries at several schools, officials say." (Source: *Washington Post*, September 23, 2001, "FBI Knew Terrorists Were Using

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Flight Schools," by Steve Fainaru and James V. Grimaldi)

In the run-up to the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, there was active consideration of the danger of "a fully loaded, fuelled airliner crashing into the opening ceremony before a worldwide television audience," according to former Sydney police superintendent Paul McKinnon. Osama bin Laden was considered the number one threat, he said. IOC officials said plane-crash catastrophes have been incorporated into security planning for every Olympics since 1972. "That was our nightmare scenario," one IOC official said. There were extensive IOC discussions with the FBI during 2001 in the course of the security planning for the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. (Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 20, 2001, "Jet crash on stadium was Olympics nightmare," by Jacquelin Magnay)

The 2000 edition of the Federal Aviation Administration's annual report on Criminal Acts Against Aviation, published early in 2001, said that although bin Laden "is not known to have attacked civil aviation, he has both the motivation and the wherewithal to do so," adding, "Bin Laden's anti-Western and anti-American attitudes make him and his followers a significant threat to civil aviation, particularly to US civil aviation." (Source: FAA)

Beginning in early 2001 a trial was held in New York City of four defendants charged with involvement in the 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The trial revealed that two bin Laden operatives had received pilot training in Texas and Oklahoma and another had been asked to take lessons. L'Houssaine Kherchtou, a bin Laden associate turned government witness, told the court how he was asked to take flying lessons in 1993. Another bin Laden aide, Essam al-Ridi, testified that he had bought a military aircraft for bin Laden and flown it to Sudan. Al-Ridi became a government witness in 1998, giving the FBI inside information about a pilot-training scheme three years before the September 11 attack. While the proceedings of the trial extended from February to July 2001, they did not produce any heightened alert in relation to US commercial aviation. (Source: Court transcript available at www.cryptome.org)

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