

Further evidence that FBI was informed of 9/11 terror attacks

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10 June 2004

Investigations by families of the victims of the September 11 terror attacks have revealed that the American and British authorities received several warnings that Al Qaeda was planning to hijack US airplanes.

Niaz Khan, a 30-year-old Pakistan-born British citizen, has confirmed to 9/11 relatives that he informed the FBI of hijack training he was to have received from Al Qaeda, more than a year before the attack on the twin towers.

Khan, a former waiter, said that he was approached by an Islamic fundamentalist outside a casino. Weighed down by gambling debts, he was offered help in settling his accounts in return for working with Al Qaeda.

Later, he travelled to a training camp near Lahore, Pakistan. There, using a mock Boeing aircraft, he claimed he was taught how to smuggle guns onto aircraft and how to hijack an aircraft. One week later, he was sent to New York for further instructions but gambled away the money he had been given. Scared of the repercussions, he went to the FBI in Newark and confessed.

The FBI has confirmed Khan's account. Their records show that he was given two lie-detector tests, both of which he passed, but was then told to go back to London "and forget it." He arrived in the UK in the spring of 2000, accompanied by two FBI officers, and was handed over to the British security services.

Khan told the *Observer* newspaper that he was astonished that he was released within 24 hours: "I walked out of the airport and travelled back to Oldham to my wife and family. No one was more astonished than me. I had told the truth. I thought it was important."

Khan said that on watching the September 11 attacks

on television, "I could not believe my own eyes. It was like everything I had said, everything I had been told by Al Qaeda. I was in no doubt. Same plan. Perhaps someone from the training camp was on board one of those planes. Perhaps, if I had not run away, I would have been there."

Following the attack on the World Trade Centre, US authorities recontacted British security services requesting that Khan be interrogated again. He was never recalled.

Khan even contacted the BBC television programme "Crimestoppers" to offer information, and gave further interviews to British police. But according to reports, the only action ever taken arising out of Khan's claims was to add his name to a list of people banned from commercial airlines.

Following Khan's revelations, the FBI has sought to defend its approach. Joseph Billy, Jr., head of the FBI in New York, said, "An investigation was done on this matter when he came to us. Nothing was discounted. We spent several weeks with him around the clock trying to verify the information," but the line of inquiry was eventually dropped because Khan could provide no evidence to back up his story.

Khan was not the only person with personal experience to have warned intelligence services of a possible terror attack before September 11.

It has also been revealed that Australian citizen Jack Roche contacted Australia's intelligence services in July 2000, with information on plans for terrorist targets. Roche, who became a Muslim convert partly as a result of his struggle with alcoholism, said he told the agency how he had met with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and had been involved in discussions with Al Qaeda leaders on a bombing plot in Australia.

Now aged 50, Roche had joined Jemaah Islamiah in

1996 and went to Afghanistan in 2000 to fight with the Taliban. At a camp near Kandahar, he met with bin Laden and held discussions on possible bomb attacks in Australia and assassination targets. Later, in Pakistan, he met twice with Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, who is accused of planning the September 11 attacks. They discussed attacking American airliners in Australia. And in Malaysia, Roche met with Hambali, who is accused of organising the Bali bombing on October 12, 2002.

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Roche said that on his return to Australia he realised that he was in "too deep" and decided to contact the authorities with a view to passing them information. But his offer was ignored at the time. It was only after September 11 that the Australian authorities became interested in Roche, and decided to arrest him on terrorism charges. He is the first to be convicted in Australia under new anti-terror laws—sentenced to nine years for conspiring to blow up the Israeli Embassy in Canberra.

His lawyer, Hylton Quail, said that Roche had the phone numbers and e-mail details for top Al Qaeda operatives, including Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. Action taken in response to Roche's claims at the time could have prevented the loss of thousands of people's lives.

The US, British and Australian authorities have sought to portray the latest revelations as the outcome of "human error" and intelligence "failings." But Khan's and Roche's cases cannot be accounted for simply by certain officers' individual negligence.

Their accounts underscore that the intelligence services received advance notice that a major terror attack involving US airliners was being planned. Yet, although the FBI says it regarded Khan's allegations as credible, and that it passed on the information to other undisclosed agencies, no further action was taken.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has pointed out, "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" (see "Was the US government alerted to September 11 attack?").

It is well established that the Bush administration was searching for a pretext long before September 11 that would enable it to implement its plans to attack Iraq, as part of its strategic drive to establish America's geopolitical hegemony over the Middle East and worldwide. The latest revelations again pose the possibility that a decision was made to stand down the security services, so as to create such a *casus belli*.



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