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Terrorist Entry and Embedding Tactics, 1993 to 2001

The relative ease with which the hijackers obtained visas and entered the United States underscores the importance of travel to their terrorist operations. In this section we explore the evolution of terrorist travel tactics and organization. We begin with terrorist plots in the 1990s and conclude with the 9/11 attack.

3.1 The Redbook

Since the early 1970s numerous terrorist organizations have provided their operatives with a wide variety of spurious documents. After showing their spurious passports and papers at border control, these terrorist operatives have proceeded to hijack airplanes, plant bombs, and carry out assassinations. These terrorist acts, however, can be stopped. . . .

If we all screen travelers and check their passports, as past experience proves, terrorist will lose their ability to travel undetected, and international terrorism will come one step closer to being stopped!

—The Redbook (1992)

By definition, transnational terrorist groups need to travel to commit terrorist acts. Indeed, without freedom of movement terrorists cannot plan, conduct surveillance, hold meetings, train for their mission, or execute an attack. Terrorists rely on forged passports and fake visas to move around the world unimpeded and undetected. This has been known for more than three decades. It is difficult today to judge with certainty what else was known about terrorist travel methods in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the existence of a CIA training video and manual is evidence of an understanding that terrorists relied on certain tactics when they traveled and that they could be stopped by alert individuals who recognized the use of those tactics.

In the early 1980s, the Central Intelligence Agency produced “The Threat Is Real,” a training video to help border officials, customs officers, and consular employees identify terrorists (and other criminals) by analyzing their travel documents. The video drew on an unclassified manual known as the Redbook, also produced by the CIA, which contained information on commonalities among forged passports and travel cachets, or visas, used by terrorists. The 1992 edition of the Redbook claimed that more than “200 people carrying forged passports provided by terrorist groups have been identified **before** they could engage in terrorist acts.”¹

The Redbook focused on five types of travel document fraud committed by terrorists: *forgeries* of some 35 national passports and the travel cachets of at least 45 countries; forged documents terrorists *purchased from commercial vendors*; *stolen blank passports*, which terrorists could fill in with biographical data of their choosing; information on *genuine altered passports* that had been photo-substituted or given an extended validity date (discussed in greater detail in the Passport Examination Manual, a companion to the Redbook); and *genuine, unaltered passports*, most likely procured with the knowledge of the issuing country or through a corrupt government official.²

As the Redbook makes clear, by early 1993, when first attack on the World Trade Center took place, the intelligence community already had decades of experience with the modes of travel of terrorist groups. But the Redbook ceased publication with the 1992 edition: terrorist travel documents would not be studied in earnest again until after the September 11 attacks owing to a lack of new exemplars.³ This lack of analysis however, did not reflect a lack of raw data. Law enforcement investigations during the 1990s provided a rich trove of information on the travel tactics of terrorists as they moved around the globe. From the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center to the disruption of the millennium plot in December 1999, information suggested that al Qaeda continued to employ all five methods of document fraud first noted in the Redbook years earlier, along with some new methods of their own.

3.2 Terrorist Travel Tactics by Plot

During the 1990s, al Qaeda was either directly or indirectly involved in a number of terrorist plots in the United States that partially or totally failed. A study of these plots and how those involved in them moved about clearly indicates that foreign terrorist operatives were being planted in the United States and that foreign terrorist operations were being planned against Americans here at home.

The attempted operations were valuable to those carrying them out despite their lack of success: they gave Islamic terrorists critical operational experience in entering and “embedding” in the United States. Although there is evidence that some land and sea border entries without inspection occurred, these conspirators mainly subverted the legal entry system by entering at airports.⁴ In doing so, they relied on a wide variety of fraudulent documents, on aliases, and on government corruption. Because terrorist operations were not suicide missions in the early to mid-1990s, once in the United States terrorists and their supporters tried to get legal immigration status that would permit them to remain here, primarily by committing serial, or repeated, immigration fraud, by claiming political asylum, and by marrying Americans. Many of these tactics would remain largely unchanged and undetected throughout the 1990s and up to the 9/11 attack.

Thus, abuse of the immigration system and a lack of interior immigration enforcement were unwittingly working together to support terrorist activity. It would remain largely unknown, since no agency of the United States government analyzed terrorist travel patterns until after 9/11. This lack of attention meant that critical opportunities to disrupt terrorist travel and, therefore, deadly terrorist operations were missed.

By analyzing information available at the time, we identified numerous entry and embedding tactics associated with these earlier attacks in the United States.

The World Trade Center Bombing, February 1993. Three terrorists who were involved with the first World Trade Center bombing reportedly traveled on Saudi passports containing an indicator of possible terrorist affiliation. Three of the 9/11

hijackers also had passports containing this same possible indicator of terrorist affiliation.⁵

In addition, Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the attack, and Ahmad Ajaj, who was able to direct aspects of the attack despite being in prison for using an altered passport, traveled under aliases using fraudulent documents. The two of them were found to possess five passports as well as numerous documents supporting their aliases: a Saudi passport showing signs of alteration, an Iraqi passport bought from a Pakistani official, a photo-substituted Swedish passport, a photo-substituted British passport, a Jordanian passport, identification cards, bank records, education records, and medical records.⁶ (See sidebar on Ajaj and Yousef.)

Once terrorists had entered the United States, their next challenge was to find a way to remain here. Their primary method was immigration fraud. For example, Yousef and Ajaj concocted bogus political asylum stories when they arrived in the United States. Mahmoud Abouhalima, involved in both the World Trade Center and landmarks plots, received temporary residence under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers (SAW) program, after falsely claiming that he picked beans in Florida.⁷ Mohammed Salameh, who rented the truck used in the bombing, overstayed his tourist visa. He then applied for permanent residency under the agricultural workers program, but was rejected.⁸ Eyad Mahmoud Ismail, who drove the van containing the bomb, took English-language classes at Wichita State University in Kansas on a student visa; after he dropped out, he remained in the United States out of status.⁹

Ajaj and Yousef: A Case Study in Fraud

This case study illustrates some of the techniques used by two of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing terrorists to enter and remain in the United States. Almost all of these tactics—*italicized here for emphasis*—would continue to be used by al Qaeda during the 1990s and in preparation for the 9/11 attack.

Using the services of a travel agent in Pakistan and traveling under aliases, on August 31, 1992, Ahmad Ajaj and Ramzi Yousef boarded Pakistan International Airlines Flight 703 in Peshawar and flew to Karachi, Pakistan, and then on to Kennedy Airport in New York City.¹⁰ *They sat in first class* during both legs of the trip, believing they would receive less scrutiny there. Between them, they carried a *variety of documents to support their alias identities*, including identification cards, bank records, education records, and medical records.¹¹

Upon Ajaj's arrival at Kennedy, the immigration inspector noted that he was traveling on a photo-substituted Swedish passport. Ajaj was sent to secondary immigration inspection, where he claimed he was a member of the Swedish press.¹² His luggage was searched and officers found *a partially altered Saudi passport and a passport from Jordan*, the documents supporting their alias identities, a plane ticket and a British passport in the name of Mohammed Azan, bomb-making manuals, videos and other material on how to assemble weapons and explosives, letters referencing his attendance at terrorist training

camps; anti-American and anti-Israeli material, *instructions on document forgery*, and *two rubber stamp devices to alter the seal on passports* issued from Saudi Arabia.¹³ The immigration inspector called an agent on the FBI Terrorist Task Force to tell him about Ajaj, but the agent declined to get involved, instead requesting copies of the file. The inspector also called the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, which was “not interested.”¹⁴

Meanwhile, Yousef also was sent to secondary immigration inspection for lacking a passport or a visa that would allow him to enter the United States. He there presented an *Iraqi passport* he allegedly bought from a Pakistani official for \$100.¹⁵ Upon questioning, Yousef said that the *passport was fraudulent* and that he *bribed a Pakistani official* in order to board the flight. Inspectors also found in his possession an Islamic Center identity card with Yousef’s photo and the name Khurram Khan, under which Ajaj had traveled into the United States. They also found a boarding pass in the name of Mohammed Azan.¹⁶ Although their documents were thus oddly intermingled and both men were in secondary inspection, Yousef was not linked to Ajaj. Rather, Yousef was arrested for not having a visa. He made a *claim for political asylum* and was released into the United States pending a hearing.¹⁷

Ajaj told authorities he had a political asylum claim from a prior entry in February 1992, and was detained pending a hearing. The evidence suggests that Ajaj left the United States in April 1992, thereby abandoning his asylum claim. In fact, it appears that he *traveled under an alias* to attend a terrorist training camp on the Afghan-Pakistani border.¹⁸

Ajaj later pleaded guilty to a charge of use of an altered passport and served six months in prison. Not surprisingly, Yousef *never appeared for his hearing*. The World Trade Center was bombed on February 26, 1993. Ajaj was released from prison shortly thereafter, although he had no grounds for remaining in the United States. He was arrested in connection with the attack on March 9, 1993. Yousef was indicted on September 1, 1993, but had left the United States on a *fraudulent Pakistani passport*. He was captured in Pakistan and returned to the United States to stand trial on February 8, 1995.

Although Ajaj was arrested for involvement in the bombing, he did not give up on his political asylum claim. He petitioned for a new attorney and an exclusion hearing—held to determine whether someone is admissible into the United States—in Houston, where he had filed his original political asylum claim. Ajaj’s request was denied on April 24, 1993, on the grounds that a passport holder from a visa waiver country who uses a fraudulent passport—Ajaj had used a bogus Swedish passport to enter the United States—is not entitled to such a hearing. Not satisfied with that outcome, Ajaj asked to file a *new political asylum claim* and was given ten days by an immigration judge to do so. Thus, Ajaj was able to file a political asylum claim after his arrest for involvement in the bombing of the World Trade Center.

Yousef was sentenced to 240 years in prison; Ajaj was sentenced to 90 years.

The Landmarks Plot, June 1993. *Note: Because most of the conspirators in this plot were married to American citizens they were able to obtain legal permanent residency status or citizenship. As a result, the Department of Homeland Security declined to provide us with copies of their immigration files, citing the Privacy Act.*

In the landmarks case, a group of terrorists led by Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman (the “Blind Sheikh”) and including some of his supporters, who also were involved in the World Trade Center bombing, similarly traveled on fraudulent documents and then committed serial immigration fraud in order to stay in the country; others were married to Americans.

For example, Rahman was issued several visas on different passports to travel to the United States, although he was a known radical in Egypt. He was later granted legal permanent residency as a “Special Immigrant, Religious Teacher.” This status was later revoked on grounds of polygamy. Rahman then filed an application for asylum, which was also denied after the attack on the World Trade Center (see text box on the Blind Sheikh). Siddig Ibrahim Siddig Ali, the mastermind of the plot, married an American. Mohammed Saleh, who provided fuel from his Yonkers gas station to make bombs, obtained legal permanent residency by marrying an American. Ibrahim Ilgabrownny passed messages between conspirators and obtained five fraudulent Nicaraguan passports for his cousin, El Sayyid Nosair, and his family.²⁸ Nosair, convicted of conspiracy, married an American in 1982 and became a citizen in 1989. He was also convicted of a gun charge in the killing of Rabbi Meir Kahane in 1990. Amir Abdelgani picked up fuel and helped determine targets; he, too, was married to an American. His cousin, Fadil Abdelgani, mixed explosives; he overstayed his 1987 tourist visa and obtained legal residency by marrying an American. Others who had married Americans included Tarig Elhassan, who also mixed explosives, and Fares Khallafall, who bought fertilizer for the bombs.²⁹ Biblal Alkaysi initially filed an application for temporary protected status, using what turned out to be a fake Lebanese birth certificate. He then filed an application for political asylum but failed to appear for the interview.³⁰ Matarawy Mohammed Said Saleh was supposed to get stolen cars for the plot; he married two American women in an effort to gain legal permanent residency.³¹

The Case of the Blind Sheikh

Appearances can be deceiving. One consular officer remarked, “Now he looked like a sweet old man. I can tell you that he did not look like a terrorist. He was a charming, little old man.”³² But Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman regularly preached jihad at mosques in New York and New Jersey to individuals who participated in the February 26, 1993, bombing of the World Trade Center building.³³ He himself was convicted on charges that he was “a leader” of their criminal organization and was sentenced on January 17, 1996, to life in prison.³⁴ Subsequent investigation revealed that Rahman entered the United States and remained in the country owing to a series of exceptional failures in the border security system, some with eerie parallels to the 9/11 hijackers.³⁵ For example:

- Rahman used multiple passports to structure his visa applications and travel over a four-year period from 1986 to 1990.
- In 1986, Rahman was issued a visa in Khartoum, Sudan, even though there arguably was sufficient information about him in the U.S. embassy in neighboring Egypt as early as 1981 to justify denying that visa.³⁶ Before he ever applied for a visa, Rahman was well known to U.S. officials in Egypt as a “high-profile” opponent of secular Egyptian regimes accused of issuing a fatwa that resulted in the 1981 assassination of Egypt’s president, Anwar Sadat. This knowledge was not conveyed to officials in Khartoum. The officer who approved it later stated that he may have done a poor job of scrutinizing Rahman’s application.³⁷
- In April 1987, Rahman received a visa in Cairo, Egypt, after providing formal documentation that Islamic Brotherhood, Inc., in Brooklyn, New York, was sponsoring him as their spiritual leader during the upcoming holy month of Ramadan, and would be financially responsible for him. The officer “knew who the Sheikh was, but after receiving the needed documents decided to issue the visa because of his understanding that the Sheikh had not been convicted of any crime.”³⁸ In fact, Rahman’s applications “were incomplete and misleading” and questions were possibly “answered falsely,” since he had been convicted of passing bad checks.³⁹ Further, by 1987, the Cairo embassy’s political section had a biographical file on Rahman and his subversive activities “that would make him ineligible for a visa.”⁴⁰ However, this derogatory information was not shared with the Consular Section, which issued visas.
- Even though Rahman had been placed on an internal State Department watchlist on August 7, 1987,⁴¹ his watchlisting was not discovered by consular officials when he applied for another visa in 1988. The visa, which was initially granted, was “canceled” on the same day under the intending immigrant provision when a local staff member pointed out that Rahman was a leading radical in Egypt. If the denial had instead been based on his presence on the watchlist, that fact also would have been recorded in the INS database. Then he could have been denied entry by the INS if he somehow later managed to obtain a U.S. visa.⁴²
- In fact, on May 10, 1990, the Sheikh did receive another visa—his third—in Khartoum, Sudan, after a State Department foreign service national who processed the application falsely indicated that he had checked the watchlist on microfiche. He later stated that he had decided not to check because of Rahman’s age, his physical appearance, and his success in receiving previous U.S. nonimmigrant visas.⁴³ The consular officer who issued this visa did not know that on May 2 and May 3, 1990, Embassy Cairo alerted Embassy Khartoum by cable that Egypt’s “leading radical” had left Egypt for Sudan, possibly to seek exile in the United States, and asked Khartoum to provide

information on his activities.⁴⁴ By this point, U.S. officials knew that Rahman had been arrested repeatedly in Egypt between 1985 and 1989 for attempting to take over mosques, inciting violence, attacking police officers, and demonstrating illegally, and that he had been imprisoned and placed under house arrest until he left Egypt for Sudan in early 1990.⁴⁵

- On November 26, 1990, about six months after it first learned it had issued the visa, the State Department revoked Rahman's visa and sent a notice to the INS for entry in their National Automated Immigrant Lookout System (NAILS), which was done on December 10, 1990.⁴⁶ However, Rahman had already used the visa to enter the United States on July 18 and November 15, 1990.
- Even though he was finally on the NAILS watchlist, Rahman used the visa to enter the United States again on December 16, 1990. He avoided detection at the port of entry by using on his entry form (I-94) a variation of the name in his passport: to identify potential terrorists, the INS watchlist needed an almost exact name match.
- Even though the INS office in New York had begun an investigation of Rahman by January 1991 to determine if he had made material misstatements on his visa application that could subject him to prosecution, deportation, or both, on January 31, 1991, he filed an application for Permanent Residence with the Newark INS office as a Special Immigrant, Religious Teacher. The agency was unaware that it had two files on Rahman, one in New York and one in Newark, or that he had been watchlisted; and on April 8, 1991, the Newark office granted him permanent resident status. His change of status enabled Rahman to successfully use his valid I-551 green card to enter the United States after he was detected and detained at JFK Airport on July 31, 1991.
- On March 6, 1992, the INS rescinded Rahman's permanent resident status on grounds he was a polygamist, had been convicted of bad check charges in Egypt, and had failed to disclose these facts in his application.⁴⁷ However, he avoided being removed from the United States by filing an application for asylum and withholding of deportation to Egypt on August 27, 1992. An immigration judge held a hearing on Rahman's claim on January 20, 1993, shortly before his followers bombed the World Trade Center, killing six people and injuring 1,042. On March 16, 1993, an immigration judge denied Rahman's application.⁴⁸

The important factors in Rahman's success in traveling freely can be found in the cases of many other terrorists who have targeted the United States, including some of the 9/11 hijackers:

- Rahman's visa applications were incomplete.
- Rahman's visa applications contained lies;

- Rahman used multiple passports to structure visa applications and travel.
- Prior visa approvals helped Rahman avoid close scrutiny when he sought again to come to the United States.
- Uncertainty in visa law played a role in the Rahman's getting his visas.
- Failure by a local staff member to do his job—by checking microfiche—allowed Rahman to defeat the watchlist.
- Information on Rahman's subversive activities that should have been shared within the government was not, a failure that repeatedly played a role in his acquiring visas.
- Even after Rahman was placed on two terrorist watchlists, he was not detected and stopped, because those using the lists lacked an effective search engine and the technology they needed.
- Failure by the State Department to promptly watchlist Rahman played a role in his gaining entry to the United States;
- Poor coordination between INS computer systems allowed Rahman to gain lawful permanent residency and thus remain in the United States.
- Rahman committed fraud on his benefits applications.
- Rahman abused the asylum system to remain in the United States.

Atlantic Avenue Subway Plot, July 1997. Gazi Ibrahim Abu Mezer committed serial immigration fraud during his planning to destroy the Atlantic Avenue subway in Brooklyn with explosives in 1997.⁴⁹ Mezer was arrested on his third illegal entry into the United States along the northwest border with Canada. He asked to be deported to Canada, but Canada refused to accept him. He then filed a political asylum claim in the United States and was released on bond. Mezer withdrew the application, claiming he had returned to Canada when in fact he was in Brooklyn. His co-conspirator, Lafi Taisir Mufleh Khalil, was originally issued a C-1 transit visa; but upon his arrival at JFK Airport in New York, the immigration inspector incorrectly treated him as a tourist, which allowed Khalil to stay in the United States for six months. Khalil overstayed his visa and was arrested along with Mezer on July 31, 1997, the morning of the planned attack⁵⁰.

The East Africa Bombings, August 1998. Although the attacks were carried out on foreign soil, the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, featured al Qaeda operatives linked to the United States. Ali Mohamed, an Egyptian national, married an American woman he had met on the airplane on his first visit to the United States in 1985. He entered the United States as a lawful permanent resident in San Francisco in June 1986, and his affiliation with al Qaeda dated to 1991. In 1993, Mohamed traveled to Kenya to conduct surveillance against American, British, French, and Israeli targets, including the U.S. embassy. Another operative, Khalid Abu al Dahab, was granted permanent residency after his third marriage to an American and later became a naturalized citizen. During his 12 years in the United States, he reportedly provided money and fraudulent travel documents to terrorists around the globe; he was thereby implicated in multiple terrorist attacks, including the East Africa bombings. Wadi el Hage studied in the United States in the late 1970s and mid-1980s; in between, he went to Pakistan to aid in the fighting against the Soviets in Afghanistan. He served as a

personal secretary to Usama Bin Ladin and gained permanent residency when he married an American.⁵¹

The East Africa embassy bombings provided further evidence that terrorists used particular tactics when traveling. Had they been analyzed, they would have provided investigators with additional information about the techniques that terrorists would continue to use until the 9/11 attacks.

The Millennium Plot, December 1999. Following a familiar terrorist pattern, Ahmed Ressay and his associates used fraudulent passports and immigration fraud to travel. In Ressay's case, this involved flying from France to Montreal using a photo-substituted French passport under the name of Tahar Medijadi. Under questioning, Ressay admitted that the passport was fraudulent and claimed political asylum. He was released pending a hearing, which he failed to attend; his political asylum claim was denied. He was arrested again, released again and given another hearing date. Again, he did not show. He was arrested four times for thievery, usually from tourists, but was never jailed nor deported. He also supported himself selling stolen documents to a friend who was a document broker for Islamist terrorists.⁵²

Ressay eventually obtained a genuine Canadian passport through a document vendor who stole a blank baptismal certificate from a Catholic church.⁵³ With this document he was able to obtain a Canadian passport under the name of Benni Antoine Noris. This enabled him to travel to Pakistan, and from there to Afghanistan for his training, and then return to Canada.⁵⁴ Impressed, Abu Zubaydah, one of al Qaeda's leading travel facilitators, asked Ressay to get more genuine Canadian passports and send them to him for other terrorists to use.⁵⁵

Another conspirator, Abdelghani Meskini, used a stolen identity to travel to Seattle on December 11, 1999, at the request of Mokhtar Haouari, another conspirator. Haouari provided fraudulent passports and visas to assist Ressay and Meskini's planned getaway from the United States to Algeria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.⁵⁶ One of Meskini's associates, Abdel Hakim Tizegha, also filed a claim for political asylum, though in the United States rather than Canada, on the grounds that he was being harassed by Muslim fundamentalists.⁵⁷ He was released pending a hearing, which was adjourned and rescheduled five times. His claim was finally denied two years after his initial filing.⁵⁸ His attorney appealed the decision, and Tizegha was allowed to remain in the country pending the appeal. Nine months later, his attorney notified the court that he could not locate his client and a warrant of deportation was issued.⁵⁹

The unraveling of the millennium plot to blow up Los Angeles International Airport in December 1999, which began with the arrest of operative Ahmed Ressay, was yet another opportunity to focus on the importance of travel to successful terrorist operations. This plot demonstrated that difficulties with travel documents restricted terrorist movement.⁶⁰ Investigators also confirmed that terrorists had bought genuine blank baptismal certificates and filled them in with personal data.⁶¹

Thus, despite evidence that difficulties with travel documents restricted terrorist movement, no agency of the U.S. government was analyzing terrorist travel patterns or immigration abuses before 9/11.⁶² Because the government simply did not know what it knew, it missed opportunities to disrupt terrorist mobility and, therefore, terrorist operations. Conversely, by 2000, when al Qaeda began inserting participants in the September 11 plot into the United States, their operational knowledge of our immigration, visitor, and border systems was considerable.

Terrorist Travel Tactics in the 1990s

By the time of the 9/11 attacks, available information suggested that terrorists could use up to 21 different entry and embedding tactics:

- Operatives typically traveled on fake passports and often had more than one passport.⁶³
- Terrorists' passports were sometimes photo-substituted.⁶⁴
- Terrorists were trained in passport forgery, including erasing and adding visas.⁶⁵
- Document forgers altered stolen or borrowed passports.⁶⁶
- Searches of homes of terrorists and their associates turned up travel documents and blank visas.⁶⁷
- Travel facilitators, some of whom were identified or known to investigators, provided terrorists with fraudulent passports.⁶⁸
- Genuine blank passports and visas could be purchased for a price and filled in with personal data.⁶⁹
- Terrorist traveled extensively.⁷⁰
- Operatives attempted to keep evidence of travel to and from Pakistan out of their passports.⁷¹
- Smugglers were used to sneak operatives into Afghanistan.⁷²
- Terrorists reported their passports lost, stolen, or damaged in order to acquire new, "clean" new passports and to avoid revealing previous travel indicated in the old passport.⁷³
- Terrorists' passports contained fake travel cachets.⁷⁴
- Document forgers created fraudulent passports and travel cachets, or visas.⁷⁵
- Corrupt government officials facilitated travel at border points.⁷⁶
- Operatives tried to acquire sophisticated graphics software to assist them in forging documents.⁷⁷
- Terrorists and their supporters committed serial immigration fraud.⁷⁸
- Terrorists overstayed their visas.
- Terrorists requested political asylum.
- Terrorists studied in the United States.
- Terrorists traveled under aliases.
- Terrorists entered the United States without an immigration inspection.

3.3 Al Qaeda's Organizational Structure for Travel and Travel Tactics

The ability of terrorists to travel clandestinely—including to the United States—is critical to the full range of terrorist activities, including training, planning, communications, surveillance, logistics, and launching attacks. A body of intelligence indicates that al-Qa'ida and other extremist groups covet the ability to elude lookout systems using documents with false identities and devoid of travel patterns that would arouse suspicion.⁷⁹

Like their terrorist predecessors, members of al Qaeda clearly valued freedom of movement as critical to their ability to plan and carry out attacks prior to September 11. It is equally clear that al Qaeda relied heavily on many of the same basic travel tactics associated with these earlier groups to satisfy its substantial travel requirements. What distinguished al Qaeda's tactics was its heavy reliance on travel facilitators and document forgers, as well as its ability to adapt its techniques to defeat screening mechanisms, such as visa issuance systems.

Much of what is known about al Qaeda's travel tactics was learned after 9/11. Recall that there was no comprehensive analysis of terrorist travel methods after the Redbook ceased publication in 1992.

Lack of Travel Documents Disrupts Operations. Significantly, there is evidence that the lack of appropriate travel documents delayed or interrupted terrorist operational plans. For example, scrutiny in the United Arab Emirates of the travel documents of Ahmad al Darbi, who was involved in a plan to attack oil tankers in the Straits of Hormuz, caused him to divert the ship he was escorting away from port in Yemen to Somalia. Immigration officials in the UAE strongly suspected that Darbi was the same person as someone on their watchlist traveling on an alias; he feared he might also be watchlisted in Yemen.⁸⁰ The plan never came together after that.

In August 2001, two operatives were instructed by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) to return to Saudi Arabia on September 15, 2001, to renew their passports in preparation for an unspecified operation. They were instructed to obtain new photos of themselves clean shaven to be used in applying for visas to the Philippines. After getting their passports they were to travel to the United Arab Emirates, where they would be met and informed of a suicide operation in the Philippines. But because of problems with one of their passports the operation was not carried out.⁸¹

In yet another case, in mid-2002, the senior al Qaeda operative Abd al Rahim al Nashiri scheduled an operational planning trip to Saudi Arabia. He was delayed for more than a month while document facilitators tried to get him a new passport.⁸²

Conversely, the ability of operatives to travel easily to certain countries often determined the location of operational and planning meetings. Malaysia, for example, was viewed by both Usama Bin Ladin and KSM, the mastermind of the 9/11 plot, as an "excellent"

venue for meetings because “Muslims could enter without a visa, including those with Saudi and Gulf passports.”⁸³

Organization and Training. Underscoring the high premium placed on travel, two senior al Qaeda operatives, KSM and Abu Zubaydah, played key roles in facilitating travel for the group’s terrorist operatives. In addition, al Qaeda had a division of passports and host country issues under its security committee. The office was located at the Kandahar airport and was managed by Muhammed Atef, al Qaeda’s chief of military operations and the number two man in the organization. According to a detainee, the committee altered papers, including passports, visas, and identification cards.⁸⁴ Following the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001, the office moved to Pakistan.⁸⁵

Certain al Qaeda members were charged with organizing passport collection schemes to keep the pipeline of fraudulent documents flowing. To this end, al Qaeda required jihadists to turn in their passports before going to the front lines in Afghanistan. If they were killed, their passports were then recycled for use by others.⁸⁶ Its operational mission training course, as well as an urban warfare course and a four-month explosives course, taught operatives how to forge documents.⁸⁷ Certain passport alteration methods, including photo substitution as well as erasing and adding travel cachets, were also taught. Manuals demonstrating how to “clean” visas were reportedly circulated among operatives.⁸⁸

The purpose of all of this training was twofold: to develop an institutional capacity for such techniques and to enable operatives to make necessary adjustments in the field. It was well-known, for example, that if a Saudi traveled to Afghanistan via Pakistan, his passport, showing a Pakistani stamp, would be confiscated upon his return to Saudi Arabia. Operatives thus either erased the Pakistani visas from their passports or traveled through Iran, which did not stamp visas directly into passports.⁸⁹ Mohamed Atta, the presumed pilot on American Airlines Flight 11, was reported to have been trained in passport alteration techniques.⁹⁰

Travel Facilitators. Despite the activities of the passport office and its various training programs, al Qaeda relied heavily on a small cadre of operatives and their assistants to facilitate travel for the network.⁹¹ Chief among them were Abu Zubaydah, a facilitator we will call “the African facilitator,” and Riyadh. Broadly speaking, a terrorist travel facilitator assisted operatives in obtaining fraudulent documents, arranging visas (real or fake), making airline reservations, purchasing airline tickets, arranging lodging and ground transportation, and taking care of any other aspect of travel in which his expertise or contacts were needed.⁹² The following profiles illustrate how the al Qaeda network organized and carried out these activities.

Abu Zubaydah. Al Qaeda’s most seasoned travel facilitator was Abu Zubaydah. A Palestinian national, he was born in the early 1970s in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where his father worked as a teacher.⁹³ He attended a computer school in India, although he considered studying in the United States before and after this training.⁹⁴ He is suspected of having illegally entered Pakistan during the Afghan war against the Soviets. After the

war he remained in Pakistan; in 1992 he moved to Peshawar, where he set up a honey-trading business.⁹⁵

Abu Zubaydah began his work as a travel facilitator in Peshawar, living and working at the Martyr's House, where he aided mujahideen coming to and going from Afghanistan. He provided them with false passports and visas until about 1994, when he went to the al Faruq camp in Afghanistan to train Tajiks. He remained there for seven to eight months, returning to the Martyr's House to continue his work as a travel facilitator.⁹⁶

In 1996, he helped al Qaeda members move from Sudan to Afghanistan. By 1997, Usama Bin Ladin asked him to continue his facilitation work for the organization.⁹⁷ For recruits at the Khaldan training camp he opened the first of three safehouses in Rawalpindi, on the outskirts of Islamabad, Pakistan, in the spring of 1998. There, Zubaydah and his assistants doctored passports and visas.⁹⁸ In 2000, Usama Bin Ladin put him in charge of foreign communication, or external relations, for al Qaeda.⁹⁹

Abu Zubaydah considered himself an expert at moving people.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, he went beyond the technicalities of altering documents to prepare operatives and mujahideen to travel undetected.¹⁰¹ Zubaydah told travelers to cut their hair, to shave their beards and mustaches, and to always be polite. He told them what kinds of clothes to wear, what kinds of airline tickets to purchase, how to alter their appearances, and what to carry in order to avoid attracting suspicion from border authorities. He tried to recruit operatives who spoke the language of the country whose travel documents he provided them. Zubaydah said he spared no expense on operational travel.¹⁰²

Abu Zubaydah described the activities of another facilitator who we will call **The African Facilitator**. Sometime in his late teens, The African Facilitator left his native country and joined the fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan.¹⁰³ In the early to mid-1990s, he used a photo-substituted Saudi passport to travel to the Sudan with Usama Bin Ladin.¹⁰⁴ He and a companion were subsequently arrested in an African country for entering without a visa. His fraudulent passport also was discovered, and he spent time in a Saudi prison.¹⁰⁵

After his release, The African Facilitator traveled to Pakistan.¹⁰⁶ In 1996, he met Abu Zubaydah and the two began collaborating. According to Zubaydah, The African Facilitator would send him copies of passports and tickets and Zubaydah would get exit permits to match, either legally or by bribing officials. He also asked Zubaydah to provide him with passports, although sometimes he would buy them from vendors in Peshawar and Islamabad.¹⁰⁷ He tasked Zubaydah with examining the passports of all new arrivals at his safehouse and with copying and passing to him any new visas and entry and exit stamps in the arrivals' passports.¹⁰⁸

The African Facilitator soon became al Qaeda's man in Pakistan, with responsibility for overseeing its logistical network in the country. Indeed, according to a senior detainee, he was "famous" for his ability to arrange whatever one needed in Pakistan, as well as for his work with the al Qaeda document committee in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁹ For a few months in

1999, four assistants worked for him, buying tickets for Yemeni and Saudi family members who wanted to return home after visits to Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹¹⁰

As noted above, the document committee altered passports for mujahideen in Afghanistan. In 2000, The African Facilitator reportedly had a house in the al Qaeda compound at the Kandahar airport. Although he was not himself skilled in the methods of passport forgery, he supervised Kenyans who performed this work.¹¹¹ From this base, he facilitated the movement of mujahideen who attended one of al Qaeda's terrorist training camps, providing them with the necessary passports, stamps, and visas to travel; greeting them when they arrived; and sending them home after their training was completed.¹¹² He also kept track of the passports used by fighters on the front lines. When one of them was killed, he would cross their name off of his list and make that passport available for reuse.¹¹³

Riyadh, an al Qaeda Facilitator. Riyadh reportedly joined the al Qaeda organization in 1998 after stints fighting in Bosnia and Burma.¹¹⁴ Based in Yemen, he facilitated the travel of mujahideen to the training camps in Afghanistan.¹¹⁵ Riyadh and his assistant worked out of the al Jaziri hotel providing Yemeni passports; Egyptian, Pakistani, or Saudi visas; money; plane tickets; contact numbers; and transportation to the airport for travelers. They reportedly had contacts in the Pakistani and Yemeni governments who helped them by providing necessary travel documents.¹¹⁶ In recognition of his wide range of contacts, in 1999 Usama Bin Ladin gave Riyadh the responsibility of organizing the travel of Muslim youth.¹¹⁷

Sometime in 2000, Riyadh left for Afghanistan.¹¹⁸ After receiving additional training in the camps, he moved to Karachi, Pakistan, and resumed his activities facilitating the travel of Yemeni mujahideen to Afghanistan.¹¹⁹ Riyadh was well-known in Karachi under the name Aziz and did little to protect his security. He also may have facilitated the flow of funds to al Qaeda, allegedly passing \$500,000 in late 2001 from Saudi donors to extremists and their families in Pakistan.¹²⁰

Reliance on Outsiders. As these profiles make clear, in addition to its own travel facilitators, al Qaeda relied on outsiders to help move operatives around the world. Al Qaeda relied on hundreds of these vendors of fraudulent documents, corrupt government officials, travel agencies, and human smugglers.¹²¹

Document vendors provided al Qaeda with a wide range of bogus and genuine documents and were valued for their forgery skills. Through these vendors, al Qaeda operatives had access to an "impressive range of fraudulent travel, identification and other documents," including passports from countries in almost every region of the world, travel cachets, blank visas, foils, stamps, seals, laminates, and other material.¹²² Some of these forgers are dedicated to al Qaeda's cause and tend to be located along main travel routes; others are interested only in profit.¹²³

Corrupt government officials have facilitated terrorist travel by selling genuine travel documents. Ramzi Yousef, convicted of attempting to blow up a tower of the World

Trade Center in 1993, claimed he bought an Iraqi passport from a Pakistani official for \$100.¹²⁴ Two of the 9/11 hijackers, Waleed and Wail al Shehri, reportedly received new Saudi passports from a relative in the passport office.¹²⁵ Al Qaeda also relied on bribery to get passports and the special plastic used inside them to protect biographical information.¹²⁶ Moreover, corrupt officials have been known to take bribes at the border from a terrorist lacking proper documentation.¹²⁷

Travel agencies have sometimes supported terrorist travel. Many travel agencies will work with anyone who is willing to pay. For example, Abu Zubaydah said that in Peshawar, it was generally understood that local Arabs were training in the camps in Afghanistan, but the travel agencies they used never asked any questions. In addition, Zubaydah said that he did business with several travel agencies in Pakistan, depending on which one offered him the best deal.¹²⁸

There is also evidence that terrorists used *human smugglers* to sneak across borders.¹²⁹ Smugglers were typically paid to make all logistical arrangements, including mode of travel and lodging, and to pay off corrupt officials if necessary.¹³⁰ A typical smuggling scheme aided jihadist youth wanting to travel through Iran to Afghanistan to train in al Qaeda's camps. They would first travel to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to meet with a facilitator, who would then contact a second facilitator, who would buy plane tickets. When the jihadists arrived in Iran they contacted the first facilitator again and told him the name of their hotel. He would then tell an associate in Iran to meet them and smuggle them into Afghanistan.¹³¹

Because the penalties for these crimes tend to be inadequate, they have not been vigorously prosecuted. Laws against document fraud, for example, are generally weak and punishment light.¹³² For example, in Spain, police officers assigned to the Foreigners Division have told Department of Homeland Security agents that crimes involving the possession and use of stolen or altered documents are not worth pursuing once the suspect is in the country.¹³³

This lax legal environment, coupled with the need for clients, allows facilitators to operate only semi-clandestinely. In addition, travel facilitators operate in loose business networks; many are based in countries allied with the United States in the global war against Islamist terrorists.¹³⁴ Cracking down on these accomplices of terrorists thus appears to be not only practical from a law enforcement perspective but also a way to impede a wide range of terrorist activities, including planning, communicating, conducting surveillance, and carrying out attacks. If terrorists' travel options are reduced, they may be forced to rely on means of interaction which can be more easily monitored, and to resort to travel documents which are more readily detectable.¹³⁵

Travel Documents. For the first time in more than a decade, in 2003 an effort was made to systematically study terrorist travel tactics. This study, as well as our earlier plot-by-plot analysis of terrorist travel tactics, clearly demonstrates that terrorist operatives employed certain repetitive travel practices that were ripe for disruption. In addition to their use of facilitators, numerous other patterns were identified. For example, operatives

carefully selected the passports they used for operational travel, often using fraudulent ones. They also regularly used fraudulent travel stamps, especially to cover up travel to Afghanistan or Pakistan.¹³⁶ They studied visa and entry requirements for countries they transited or traveled to and structured their travel to avoid appearing suspicious.¹³⁷ Al Qaeda also adopted several techniques designed to mask travel and identity, including traveling under an alias.¹³⁸ Terrorists appeared to exercise particular caution with regard to Western travel. Their main purposes in so doing were to eliminate the possibility of being detained on fraudulent document charges, a goal that became especially important when an operative was traveling to participate in an attack, and to avoid the suspicions raised by indicators of travel to Afghanistan. Terrorists, including al Qaeda, clearly expended considerable effort thinking about travel and engaging in methods intended to facilitate their movement around the globe.

Reliance on Saudi Passports. Al Qaeda favored Saudi passports. KSM estimated that 70 percent of the mujahideen in the al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan before 9/11 were Saudi. Irregularities in the Saudi passport issuance system made Saudi passports more readily available.¹³⁹ As many as 10,000 Saudi passports may have been lost or stolen in recent years.¹⁴⁰ Saudis also enjoyed visa waiver status as visitors to most Middle Eastern countries and, until September 2002, to Canada.¹⁴¹ An added attraction of Saudi passports was that reporting a Saudi passport stolen that later turned up in someone else's possession was not a crime.¹⁴² Moreover, several document forgers specialized in altering Saudi passports.¹⁴³

Furthermore, blank Saudi passports lacked a document control number to track their disposition before they were issued.¹⁴⁴ In practical terms, this meant that a blank passport that was stolen lacked any number to put on a watchlist that might catch a person trying to use it. In late 2001, Saudi Arabia began issuing new passports that incorporated enhanced security features. Problems in the issuance regime persist, however.¹⁴⁵

Types of Passport Alteration. There are four main ways in which al Qaeda altered passports: substituting photos, adding false cachets and visas, removing visas and bleaching stamps, and counterfeiting passports and substituting pages.¹⁴⁶ The organization used advanced computer graphics programs, such as Paintshop Pro, Adobe Photoshop, and Adobe Printshop to copy and alter passports. Skilled members also used software to scan and make copies of travel stamps, visas, and passport security features. Raids in 2002 and 2003 indicate that fraudulent material was shared among terrorists.¹⁴⁷

But not all counterfeiting efforts were high quality. For example, terrorists often cleaned and reused Pakistani sticker visas, sometimes leaving tell-tale evidence of fraud.¹⁴⁸ Other attempts at forgery resulted in obvious fakes. Thus, officials who know what to look for can identify terrorists who present travel documents with these suspicious indicators.

Exploring the Link between Human Smugglers and Terrorists

In July 2001, the CIA warned of a possible link between human smugglers and terrorist groups, including Hamas, Hezbollah, and Egyptian Islamic Jihad.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that since 1999 human smugglers have facilitated the travel of terrorists associated with more than a dozen extremist groups.¹⁵⁰ With their global reach and connections to fraudulent document vendors and corrupt government officials, human smugglers clearly have the “credentials” necessary to aid terrorist travel.

We have already seen that documents are critical to terrorists—they are needed by those wishing to plan and carry out attacks. Documents are similarly critical to human smugglers, who have access to document vendors able to obtain genuine passports and visas from corrupt government officials.¹⁵¹ Corrupt officials are also paid off to allow illegal migrants to pass through travel and security checkpoints.¹⁵²

These connections combine with lax immigration and border security in many countries to make human smuggling an attractive avenue for terrorists in need of travel facilitation.¹⁵³ Following the September 11 attacks, additional information surfaced linking al Qaeda to human smugglers. Following the coalition attack on Tora Bora, human smugglers assisted fighters fleeing Afghanistan and Pakistan. In January 2002, smugglers helped about 400 fighters in Taftan, Pakistan, to escape to Iran.¹⁵⁴ Finally, there are uncorroborated law enforcement reports suggesting that associates of al Qaeda used smugglers in Latin America to travel through the region in 2002 before traveling onward to the United States.¹⁵⁵

To date, only one human smuggler with suspected links to terrorists has been convicted in the United States.¹⁵⁶

¹ CIA document, Redbook, 1992 ed.

² Ibid.

³ The CIA claimed that they did not receive new data to analyze. The FBI did not share what they gathered from their law enforcement investigations with the CIA. Commission interview, Feb. 25, 2004.

⁴ Gazi Ibrahim Abu Mezer, who planned to destroy the Atlantic Avenue subway in Brooklyn with explosives in 1997, was arrested on his third attempt to illegally enter the United States along the northwest border with Canada. He was arrested by the New York City police on July 31, 1997. Bombs were found in his apartment. Abdel Hakim Tizegha claimed to have entered the United States in Boston as a stowaway on the *Mustapha Ben Boulaid*, a tanker owned by an Algerian energy company used to transport liquefied natural gas.

⁵ CIA analytic report, “A Reference Guide for Terrorist Passports,” Apr. 14, 2003.

⁶ *United States v Mohammed A. Salameh, et al.*, No. 94-1312(L), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, p. 21.

⁷ His application was later denied. Abohalima was indicted as an accessory after the fact for assisting the WTC1 attackers.

⁸ Center for Immigration Studies, *The Open Door: How Militant Islamic Terrorists Entered and Remained in the United States, 1993 to 2001*, Stephen A. Camarota, p. 25.

⁹ Although there is no evidence that any of these marriages were fraudulent, Abu Zubaydah said that some al Qaeda operatives married American women to obtain U.S. visas. Usama Bin Ladin reportedly did not approve of this tactic, saying it violated the sanctity of marriage. KSM, however, allegedly believed it was

a fantastic mechanism for operatives to acquire valid documents, Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Oct. 7, 2002.

¹⁰ *United States v Mohammed A. Salameh, et al.*, No. 94-1312(L), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, p. 21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 26.

¹⁴ DOJ document, handwritten memo to file from Immigration Inspector at JFK, Sept. 2, 1992.

¹⁵ Trial testimony of Brian Parr re interview with Yousef, Oct. 22, 1997, *United States of America v. Ramzi Ahmed Yousef and Eyad Ismoil* (S.D.N.Y.).

¹⁶ *United States v Mohammed A. Salameh, et al.*, No. 94-1312(L), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, p. 25.

¹⁷ An examination of Yousef's passport by the Forensic Document Lab at INS later reveals that the date of birth has been overwritten and the passport binding has been cut and un-stitched, but no other alterations were detected.

¹⁸ *United States v. Ahmad Mohammad Ajaj aka Khurram Khan*, Brief, p. 178.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Center for Immigration Studies, *The Open Door*, p. 27.

³⁰ Alkaisy plead guilty in connection with the WTC1 plot.

³¹ Saleh was convicted of conspiracy for the bombing plot and subsequently deported to Egypt, his home country, on Nov. 19, 1996.

³² Testimony of Consular Officer No. 2 before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform, Aug. 1, 2002 (regarding an interview the officer conducted of the Sheikh before they began service as a State Department employee).

³³ DOS OIG, Report of Audit, Review of the Visa-Issuance Process Phase I: Circumstances Surrounding the Issuance of Visas to Sheikh Omar Ali Ahmed Abdel Rahman, Mar. 1994, p. 1.

³⁴ DHS document, immigration file A29 753 750.

³⁵ Although it has long been suggested that the Sheikh was issued visas because of his assistance with Afghan Mujahadeen fighters who were then allies of the U.S., the Inspectors General of both the CIA and State Departments found "no evidence . . . that any of these visas were granted to the Sheikh to serve CIA operational purposes." Talking Points prepared for the DCI by CIA OIG Frederick Hitz; Report of Audit, Review of the Visa-Issuance Process Phase I: Circumstances Surrounding the Issuance of Visas to Sheikh Omar Ali Ahmed Abdel Rahman, Mar. 1994, p. 19 ("What we did find, rather, was evidence of: sloppiness; poor performance by some American officers and Foreign Service Nationals (or local employees) involved; inadequate systems of control; and inadequate implementation of immigration laws, regulations, and guidelines.").

³⁶ DOS OIG, Report of Audit, Review of the Visa-Issuance Process Phase I: Circumstances Surrounding the Issuance of Visas to Sheikh Omar Ali Ahmed Abdel Rahman, Mar. 1994, p. 20.

³⁷ CIA document, Revised Chronology of Events Regarding Issuance of Visas to the "Blind Sheikh."

³⁸ DOS OIG, Report of Audit, Review of the Visa-Issuance Process Phase I: Circumstances Surrounding the Issuance of Visas to Sheikh Omar Ali Ahmed Abdel Rahman, Mar. 1994, p. 22.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁴ DOS OIG, Report of Audit, Review of the Visa-Issuance Process Phase I: Circumstances Surrounding the Issuance of Visas to Sheikh Omar Ali Ahmed Abdel Rahman, Mar. 1994, p. 29.

⁴⁵ DOS OIG, Report of Audit, Review of the Visa-Issuance Process Phase I: Circumstances Surrounding the Issuance of Visas to Sheikh Omar Ali Ahmed Abdel Rahman, Mar. 1994, p. 2, 17. According to documents produced by the Sheikh himself in connection with his asylum claim, he was arrested by Egyptian authorities for charges related to his preaching five times from October 1970 to April 1989. In April 1990, after his last incarceration and an extended period of house arrest, he was escorted to the airport where he made his way to the Sudan. Affidavit of Omar Ahmed Ali, A29-753-750, dated Aug. 11, 1992.

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- ⁴⁶ DOS OIG, Report of Audit, Review of the Visa-Issuance Process Phase I: Circumstances Surrounding the Issuance of Visas to Sheikh Omar Ali Ahmed Abdel Rahman, Mar. 1994, p. 35.
- ⁴⁷ DHS document, In the Matter of Omar Ahmed Ali, File No. A29-753-750 (In Exclusion Proceedings), Mar. 16, 1993 (Meisner, J.), p. 3.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- ⁴⁹ He was arrested by the New York City police on July 31, 1997. Bombs were found in his apartment.
- ⁵⁰ DHS document, immigration file A74 101 910.
- ⁵¹ Center for Immigration Studies, *The Open Door*, p. 31.
- ⁵² *Seattle Times*, "It Takes a Thief," June 23, July 7, 2002. Fateh Kamel would pay Ressay for stolen passports, credit cards and other identity documents. Kamel is now serving eight years in prison in France for his "activities related to association with terrorist enterprises." *Time*, Sept. 24, 2001. Ressay testified that he also sold stolen documents to Mokhtar Haouari. U.S. v. Mokhtar Haouari, S4-00 Cr. 15, Testimony of Ahmed Ressay before United States District Court of the Southern District of New York, July 3, 2001.
- ⁵³ Leo Nkouna was a document broker and an illegal alien in Canada from Cameroon who failed to surrender himself for deportation in 1993. Canadian Deportation Order, Adjudication file no. AOT93-0077, Sept. 15, 1993. He said he obtained two genuine Canadian passports for Ressay, in both instances by submitting fake baptismal certificates to Canadian authorities CBC News, *Disclosure*, "Target Terrorism," Mar. 26, 2002. According to a senior al Qaeda detainee, an Algerian friend of Ressay "set up" the Canadian passport for him.
- ⁵⁴ FBI letterhead memorandum, Ressay investigation, May 15, 2001, p. 7. Ressay told border officials that he did not have a visa for Pakistan because he was only transiting on his way to India.
- ⁵⁵ PBS Frontline, "Trail of a Terrorist, The Ahmed Ressay Case and Passport Fraud," Oct. 25, 2001.
- ⁵⁶ FBI case profile provided to Dale Watson, "Abdelghani Meskini," Feb. 8, 2000. Meskini, who spoke English, was to drive Ressay and to give him money, but Ressay never showed since he was arrested at the border. Meskini was arrested on Dec. 30, 1999, and charged with material support and interstate fraud. See Testimony of Dale Watson before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Feb. 9, 2000, pp. 11-12. On passports and visas provided by Haouari, see *United States v. Haouari*, 319 F. 3d 88, 91 (2d Cir. 2000).
- ⁵⁷ There is no record of his entry into the United States; he claimed he entered in Miami in an unknown way.
- ⁵⁸ Tizegha now claimed to have entered the United States in Boston as a stowaway on the *Mustapha Ben Boulaid*, a tanker owned by the Algerian energy company used to transport liquefied natural gas.
- ⁵⁹ DHS document, immigration file A73603119.
- ⁶⁰ FBI Communication Form, Re: Borderbom, July 26, 2001.
- ⁶¹ FBI letterhead memorandum, Ressay investigation, May 15, 2001.
- ⁶² FBI Communication Form, Re: Borderbom, July 26, 2001.
- ⁶³ FBI documents, Jan. 17, 1999; FBI report of investigation, interview of Ali Abdelseoud Mohamed, March 8, 1999; FBI report of investigation, Re: Aman Gul, Mar. 21, 2000; FBI report of investigation, interview of Ahmed Ressay, May 16, 2001; Case file of Ramzi Yousef, convicted in WTC1 bombing in 1993.
- ⁶⁴ FBI report of investigation, Re: UBL/al Qaeda, Jan. 16, 2001; FBI letterhead memorandum, Ressay investigation, May 15, 2001; Trial brief, *United States v. Ahmed Ressay*, CR99-666C, Mar. 2001.
- ⁶⁵ FBI report of investigation, interview of protected source, Mar. 22, 2001.
- ⁶⁶ FBI report of investigation, Re: UBL/al Qaeda, Jan. 16, 2001, pp. 30-31 FBI letterhead memorandum, Ressay investigation, May 15, 2001.
- ⁶⁷ In 1995, Italian authorities in Milan cracked down on the ICI, an Islamic radical group that was facilitating Islamic militants going to fight in Bosnia. Its leaders were members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. When authorities raided the ICI office, two copies of the Redbook were found in Arabic, along with several seals, rubber stamps, blank and counterfeit documents and other tools used to forge documents; FBI report of investigation, "Pakistani visa information pertaining to Kenbom/Tanbom subjects," May 13, 1999; Intelligence report, "Terrorism: Documents Associated with Apprehended Egyptian Islamic Jihad Member," Apr. 13, 1999. In addition. documents seized in the home of an Egyptian Islamic Jihad member included extensive evidence of passport fraud.

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- ⁶⁸ FBI report of investigation, UBL database, Jan. 19, 1999; FBI report of investigation, interview of Ali Abdelseoud Mohamed, Mar. 8, 1999; FBI communication, investigative summary re: the Islamic Army, Mar. 27, 2000; FBI report of investigation, Re: UBL/al Qaeda, Jan. 16, 2001, pp. 8, 14-15, 17, 18, 30-31.
- ⁶⁹ FBI report of investigation, Re: UBL/al Qaeda, Jan. 16, 2001, p. 27; FBI letterhead memorandum, Ressay investigation, May 15, 2001.
- ⁷⁰ FBI report of investigation, analysis of source reporting, June 16, 2000; FBI report of investigation, UBL database, Jan. 19, 1999, pp. 4, 11, 29
- ⁷¹ FBI report of investigation, interview of Ali Abdelseoud Mohamed, Mar. 12, 1999.
- ⁷² FBI report of investigation, interview of unidentified source, Oct. 2, 2000.
- ⁷³ FBI report of investigation, Initial 90 day letterhead memorandum, July 24, 2000.
- ⁷⁴ FBI report of investigation, request for evidence comparison, Jan. 26, 2000.
- ⁷⁵ FBI document, Jan. 17, 1999; FBI report of investigation, interview of Ali Abdelseoud Mohamed, Mar. 8, 1999; FBI letterhead memorandum, Ressay investigation, May 15, 2001.
- ⁷⁶ FBI report of investigation, interview of Abdul Rauf Chaudhry, Oct. 2, 1998; FBI report of investigation, interview of Ali Abouelsaud Mohamed, Oct. 3, 1999; FBI report of investigation "Pakistani visa information pertaining to Kenbom/Tanbom subjects," May 13, 1999; FBI report of investigation, "Possible visa fraud," April 20, 2001; FBI letterhead memorandum, Ressay investigation, May 15, 2001.
- ⁷⁷ FBI report of investigation, UBL database, Jan. 19, 1999.
- ⁷⁸ FBI Communication, investigation summary re: the Islamic Army, Mar. 27, 2000. Trial brief, *United States v. Ahmed Ressay*, CR99-666C, Mar. 2001.
- ⁷⁹ CIA analytic report, "Clandestine Travel Facilitators: Key Enablers of Terrorism," Dec. 31, 2002.
- ⁸⁰ Intelligence Report, interrogation of a detainee, Nov. 22, 2002.
- ⁸¹ Intelligence Report, interrogation of a detainee, Sept. 11, 2002.
- ⁸² CIA analytic report, Analysis of Passports, p. 1; Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Nov. 20, 2002.
- ⁸³ Intelligence Report, interrogation of Ramzi Binalshibh, Oct. 11, 2002. Malaysia was also desirable because of its proximity to Afghanistan and Pakistan and its majority-Muslim population.
- ⁸⁴ Intelligence report, interrogation of KSM, Sept. 9, 2003; CIA analytic report, "Al Qaeda Travel Issues," Jan. 2004, p.1. On the role of KSM, see, e.g., Intelligence report, interrogation of Binalshibh, Oct. 11, 2002. On the role of Abu Zubaydah, see, e.g., Intelligence report, biographical information on Abu Zubaydah, Feb. 25, 2002.
- ⁸⁵ Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Sept. 9, 2003; and Intelligence Report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Apr. 12, 2003. The committee moved to Zormat, Paktia province in late 2001 and then to Karachi after the fall of Kandahar in late 2001.
- ⁸⁶ On passport collection schemes, see Intelligence report, interrogation of KSM, Sept. 9, 2003. On recycled passports, see Intelligence report, Collection of Passports, June 7, 2002.
- ⁸⁷ CIA analytic report, Analysis of Passports, p. 1, 3. Intelligence report, interrogation of detainee, Nov. 12, 2003; and Intelligence Report, Information on travel, training and indoctrination in training camps in Afghanistan, Nov. 19, 2001. A detainee said that he attended several security and specialized courses including counterfeiting and seal removal; Intelligence report, interrogation of detainees, Apr. 11, 2002.
- ⁸⁸ CIA analytic report, Analysis of Passports, p. 19.
- ⁸⁹ Intelligence report, information from Saudi detainees on mujahedin travel to Afghanistan via Iran, Mar. 13, 2002.
- ⁹⁰ CIA analytic report, Analysis of Passports, p. 3. Mohamed Atta reportedly learned these techniques in Afghanistan, and used them to clean Ramzi Binalshibh's passport of its Pakistani visa and travel cachets.
- ⁹¹ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, June 20, 2002. Hassan Ghul was an important al Qaeda travel facilitator who worked with Abu Zubaydah assisting Arab fighters traveling to Afghanistan. In 1999, Ghul and Zubaydah opened a safe house under the cover of an import/export business in Islamabad. In addition, at Zubaydah's request, Ghul also successfully raised money in Saudi Arabia for the Khaldan camp; in exchange Zubaydah paid for Ghul's trips there so he could renew his residency.
- ⁹² Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Mar. 31, 2003. For example, a detainee identified a person who made false documents. The detainee said he would supply this person with passport photos and the facilitator would turn them into false documents, including drivers' licenses, but not passports. The person could make false documents on computers, but he also had a contact who could get official documents

from a government office, by either creating an actual file in a false name or by putting a supplied photo onto the biographical information from a legitimate file. Ibid.

⁹³ Intelligence report, information on Abu Zubaydah, Aug. 24, 2000; Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Feb. 25, 2002.

⁹⁴ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, June 7, 2002. Abu Zubaydah claims he applied for a U.S. student visa in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, sometime between 1987 and 1989, but claims he was denied. The State Department, however, was unable to locate a record of this. After one year in India, he claims he arranged to visit a computer programming school in Missouri with the help of a Palestinian friend in Saudi Arabia. As a Palestinian, he did not have a passport, but rather a refugee travel document so he said he borrowed the Kuwaiti passport of a friend to make the trip. Although he did not formally meet with anyone at the school and never enrolled, he said he walked around the campus and picked up some brochures.

⁹⁵ Intelligence report, information on Abu Zubaydah, Aug. 24, 2000.

⁹⁶ Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Feb. 25, 2002.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, July 10, 2002. In January 1999, Ahmed Ressaym reportedly stayed at the Khaldan safehouse, where Abu Zubaydah bought his plane ticket to Canada and doctored the visa in Ressaym's Canadian passport.

⁹⁹ Intelligence report, profile of Abu Zubaydah, June 14, 2000.

¹⁰⁰ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, May 23, 2002. Zubaydah claims that members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, various Algerian groups and others came to him to learn his techniques.

¹⁰¹ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, May 23, 2002. Zubaydah also strictly limited the movement of travelers, almost never allowing them to leave the safehouse for any reason. Instead, individuals who blended into the local community were used to get clothes, food and whatever else was needed.

¹⁰² Intelligence reports, interrogations of Abu Zubaydah, May 23, 2002, Oct. 29, 2002, and Nov. 7, 2002.

¹⁰³ Intelligence reports, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Sept. 25 and Dec. 4, 2002.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Apr. 24, 2003.

¹⁰⁶ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Dec. 4, 2002; Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Apr. 24, 2003.

¹⁰⁷ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Dec. 4, 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Sept. 25, 2002.

¹⁰⁹ Intelligence reports, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Sept. 25, 2002, Dec. 4, 2002, Apr. 2, 2003, and Apr. 21, 2003. According to Abu Zubaydah, The African Facilitator procured construction and other necessary supplies in Pakistan and delivered them to Afghanistan, and although he operated openly in Afghanistan, he was more cautious in Pakistan..

¹¹⁰ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, June 9, 2003.

¹¹¹ Intelligence reports, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Sept. 25, 2002, Dec. 4, 2002, and Apr. 2, 2003. "Ordinary" mujahid who needed help with their documents were required to report to The African Facilitator who would prioritize the work for the Kenyan forgers. Senior al Qaeda members could take a passport directly to the Kenyans.

¹¹² Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Dec. 4, 2002.

¹¹³ Intelligence report, "Collection of 400 Passports of Dead Mujahidin," June 7, 2002.

¹¹⁴ Intelligence report, information on Riyadh, Jan. 26, 2002; Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Aug. 26, 2002.

¹¹⁵ Intelligence report, interrogation of Riyadh, Jan. 28, 2004; Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Sept. 15, 2003.

¹¹⁶ Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Sept. 15, 2003.

¹¹⁷ Intelligence report, information on Riyadh, Jan. 26, 2002..

¹¹⁸ Intelligence report, interrogation of Riyadh, Jan. 28, 2004; Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Sept. 15, 2003. .

¹¹⁹ Intelligence report, interrogation of Riyadh, Jan. 28, 2004; Intelligence report, Analysis of detainee interviews, Sept. 12, 2002. Many detainees mention Riyadh as a facilitator in Karachi, Pakistan. From Karachi, many were directed to another facilitator in Quetta, Pakistan, who arranged transportation over the

border into Afghanistan. The large number of detainees who took the Karachi-Quetta-Kandahar route suggests that the facilitators were coordinating their activities.

¹²⁰ Intelligence report, Interrogation of Riyadh, Jan. 28, 2004. For more on Riyadh's post 9/11 role as money facilitator see Intelligence report, interrogation of Riyadh, Apr. 6, 2004.

¹²¹ CIA analytic reports, "Clandestine Travel Facilitators: Key Enablers of Terrorism," Dec. 31, 2002 and Analysis of Passports, Jan. 2004.

¹²² CIA analytic report, "Clandestine Travel Facilitators," p. 3. According to Abu Zubaydah, in Turkey an Iraqi or a Kurd was a reliable forger. For \$5,500 he would provide documents to travel to Europe. A Saudi-based forger from Chad bought real passports from foreign drug addicts and re-sold them. Zubaydah also claims that real Pakistani passports could be bought by anyone with money. See also Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Nov. 1, 2002, and Intelligence report, "Acquisition of Libyan passports by an Abu Zubaydah operative in the Netherlands," Dec. 6, 2000.

¹²³ CIA analytic report, Analysis of Passports, pp. 11-12

¹²⁴ Testimony of Brian Parr re interview with Yousef, Oct. 22, 1997, *United States of America v. Ramzi Ahmed Yousef and Eyad Ismoil* (S.D.N.Y.).

¹²⁵ CIA analytic report, Analysis of Passports, p. 12.

¹²⁶ Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Sept. 9, 2003.

¹²⁷ FBI documents, Oct. 3, 1999; Intelligence reports, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Dec. 4, 2002 and Apr. 10, 2003.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* A travel agency arranged an Australian visa for Khalid Sheikh Mohamed (KSM), al Qaeda's chief operational planner and the mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks. The agency submitted his visa application on Aug. 13, 2001, the same day they submitted an application for another al Qaeda operative. The same address and employer were listed on both applications. KSM received his visa, although there is no evidence he ever used it FBI case file, June 21, 2002

¹²⁹ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Oct. 10, 2002. Abu Zubaydah discusses smuggling routes from Afghanistan into Pakistan and Iran, and assessed that Yemen was the easiest place to conduct smuggling operations. Intelligence report, "International organized crime: overview of Pakistani 'Mafia' activities in Azerbaijan," June 18, 2002.

¹³⁰ CIA analytic report, "Clandestine Travel Facilitators," p. 3.

¹³¹ Intelligence report, "Information from Saudi detainees on Mujahedin travel to Afghanistan via Iran," Mar. 13, 2002.

¹³² CIA analytic report, "Clandestine Travel Facilitators," p. 1.

¹³³ DHS email from Dan C. to Commission staff, "CODEL Brief," Apr. 16, 2004.

¹³⁴ CIA analytic report, "Clandestine Travel Facilitators," p. 6.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Sept. 9, 2003. KSM used an alias Saudi passport, adding entry and exit stamps to "age it." See Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Nov. 20, 2002, in which a detainee maintains that the immigration stamps in his passport are false and were put in his passport by Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri's support network in Karachi to cover up the detainee's time in Afghanistan. See also, FBI document, Feb. 9, 2003, reporting a detainee's claim that he went to Kandahar to pick up his passport after it had been modified with forged stamps showing him visiting Malaysia, Thailand, Egypt and Pakistan.

¹³⁷ CIA analytic report, Analysis of Passports, p. 1.

¹³⁸ Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Sept. 9, 2003. KSM said that Usama Bin Ladin approved the use of all alias passports. In Intelligence report, Nov. 23, 2002 it is reported that a detainee said all Saudi jihadists in Pakistan used fake Saudi passports to prevent their true identity from being discovered by Pakistani authorities at the airports. See also, CIA analytic report, Analysis of Passports, p. 25, stating that terrorists also have used false supporting documents, including credit cards and video rental cards to support the alias under which they are traveling.

¹³⁹ Intelligence reports, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, May 27, 2002 and Nov. 1, 2002. According to Abu Zubaydah, it cost \$400-\$1,000 for a Saudi passport.

¹⁴⁰ CIA analytic report, "Fraudulently Acquired Saudi Passports," p. 1.

¹⁴¹ Intelligence report, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, May 27, 2002. According to Abu Zubaydah, KSM preferred to use Saudi Arabia as a transit point because it was easy for Saudi passport holders to acquire tourist and student visas to the United States.

¹⁴² Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Sept. 9, 2003.

¹⁴³ Intelligence reports, interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, Aug. 26, 2002 and Nov. 1, 2002. According to Abu Zubaydah, he had access to a number of forgers who, for a relatively small amount of money, would alter the passports of many countries.

¹⁴⁴ CIA analytic report, "Fraudulently Acquired Saudi Passports," p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ CIA analytic report, "Fraudulently Acquired Saudi Passports," p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ CIA analytic report, Analysis of Passports, p. 13; Intelligence report, interrogation of a detainee, Sept. 9, 2003. KSM photo-substituted an alias Saudi passport with his own picture in proper Saudi attire.

¹⁴⁷ CIA analytic report, Analysis of Passports, p. 15.

¹⁴⁸ CIA analytic report, Analysis of Passports, p. 19.

¹⁴⁹ CIA analytic report, "Expanding Links Between Human Smugglers and Extremists: Threats to the United States," July 6, 2001, p. ii.

¹⁵⁰ CIA analytic report, "Expanding Links," p. 1.

¹⁵¹ One smuggler, Salim Boughader-Mucharrafille, smuggled Lebanese nationals sympathetic to Hamas and Hizbollah into the United States and relied on corrupt Mexican officials in Beirut, Mexico City and Tijuana to facilitate their travel. Specifically, Boughader obtained Mexican tourist visas from an official at the Mexican embassy in Beirut to facilitate the travel of humans to Mexico. DOJ, INS Background or briefing paper on Operation Tabouli, Nov. 14, 2002; CIA analytic report, "Expanding Links," p. ii.

¹⁵² CIA analytic report, "Expanding Links," p. ii.

¹⁵³ Human smugglers are also logistical experts, arranging for lodging and travel. CIA analytic report, "Expanding Links," p. ii.

¹⁵⁴ CIA analytic report, "Clandestine Travel Facilitators: Key Enablers of Terrorism," Dec. 2002, p3.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Boughader was charged with human smuggling and sentenced to 11 months in prison. After serving his sentence he was deported to Mexico where he was arrested along with several other members of his smuggling ring. They face criminal charges and if convicted could serve lengthy jail times.