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## Was 9/11 an Inside Job?

By Mark H. Gaffney

The following is an excerpt from Mark H. Gaffney's forthcoming book, THE 911 MYSTERY PLANE AND THE VANISHING OF AMERICA, to be released in September 2008.

**15/08/08 "ICH" -- -- --** Regrettably, there is considerable evidence that elements of the Bush administration were complicit in the 9/11 attack, and may even have helped stage it. Let us now examine some of what I regard as the most compelling evidence. However, the following discussion makes no claim to be comprehensive.

We know that within minutes of the “worst terrorist attack” in US history, even before the collapse of WTC-2 at 9:59 am, US officials knew the names of several of the alleged hijackers. CBS reported that a flight attendant on AA Flight 11, Amy Sweeney, had the presence of mind to call her office and reveal the seat numbers of the hijackers who had seized the plane.[1] FBI Director Robert Mueller later said, “This was the first piece of hard evidence.”[2] In his memoirs CIA Director George Tenet emphasizes the importance of the passenger manifests, as does counter-terrorism czar Richard A. Clarke.[3] All of which is very strange because the manifests later released by the airlines do *not* include the names of any of the alleged hijackers. Nor has this discrepancy ever been explained.

According to MSNBC, the plan to invade Afghanistan and “remove Al Qaeda from the face of the earth” was already sitting on G.W. Bush’s desk on the morning of 9/11 awaiting his signature.[4] The plan, in the form of a presidential directive, had been developed by the CIA and according to Richard Clarke called for “arming the Northern Alliance...to go on the offensive against the Taliban [and] pressing the CIA to...go after bin Laden and the Al Qaeda leadership.”[5]

A former Pakistani diplomat, Niaz Naik, tells virtually the same story. During a *BBC* interview, three days after 9/11, Naik claimed that senior American officials had informed him in mid-July 2001 that the US would attack the Taliban “before the snows start falling in Afghanistan, by the middle of October at the latest.”[6] Naik said he received this information in Berlin at a UN-sponsored international contact group on Afghanistan. He also predicted, correctly, that the US attack would be launched from bases in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. But how could US officials know in mid-July that American forces would invade Afghanistan in October unless they had foreknowledge of the attack?

Foreknowledge probably also explains why General Richard Myers, the acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs on 9/11, announced at the first post-9/11 meeting of Bush’s National Security Council, held on video-conference the afternoon of the attack, that “there are forty-two major Taliban bombing targets.”[7] But how did Myers come to have such detailed information about military targets in Afghanistan, so soon after the 9/11 attack? This important detail belies oft-repeated claims that the US military was not prepared to attack Afghanistan, and points to extensive war planning before 9/11. Journalist Steve Coll arrived at a similar conclusion while researching his 2004 book, *Ghost Wars*, an excellent history of the period leading up to the 9/11

attack. Coll interviewed two Clinton administration officials who informed him that "the Pentagon had been studying possible targets in the same spring [i.e., 1998] that the CIA had been drawing up its secret plan to raid Tarnack Farm," located near Kandahar, Afghanistan, where bin Laden had taken up quarters at the invitation of Taliban leader Mullah Omar.[8]

According to Clarke, at the same meeting on the afternoon of 9/11, CIA Director George Tenet informed the president that "Al Qaeda had committed these atrocities." [9] But, again, how did Tenet know this so soon after the attack, especially given that "security failures" had occurred, unless he had foreknowledge?

### **No Hard Evidence**

On September 20, 2001, the Bush administration officially declared that Osama bin Laden was responsible for the 9/11 attack. Three days later, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced on *Meet the Press* that the government would soon release "a white paper" detailing the evidence against bin Laden.[10] Later the same day, Bush faced questions from the press about Powell's remark and backed away from releasing any additional information. Bush explained that the government had a lot of evidence but that most of it was classified and could not be made public. Bush emphasized, however, that the evidence "leads to one person, as well as one global terrorist organization." [11] National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice made a similar statement during an interview on FOX News. Said Rice: "We have very good evidence of links between Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda operatives, and what happened on September 11." [12] Rice refused to release any particulars, however, and, like Bush, claimed that the evidence was "classified."

As we know, the US government never got around to releasing the promised white paper. Why not? Was it because the evidence against bin Laden was too weak to hold up in court? Such was the view of journalist Seymour Hersh, who cited CIA and Justice Department sources to this effect in his regular column in the *New Yorker* magazine.[13]

Foreign intelligence agencies were also busily investigating the case, but fared no better. For instance, Germany's Chief Federal Prosecutor, Kay Nehm, admitted that there was no hard evidence linking bin Laden with the crime.[14] The lack of evidence prompted former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to speak out against President Bush's decision to invoke Article V of the NATO Treaty, mobilizing NATO's involvement in the war on terrorism. In Schmidt's own words: "Proof had to be delivered that the September 11 terror attack came from abroad. [Yet,] that proof still has not been provided." [15]

Osama did not cooperate by acknowledging his role in the attack; on the contrary. In a statement on September 16, 2001 carried by *Al-Jazeera*, bin Laden categorically denied any involvement. Days later, he repeated this denial during an interview with the Pakistani newspaper *Ummaut*. [16] On November 3, 2001 *Al-Jazeera* released a third statement, in which bin Laden not only denied involvement but also accused the Bush administration of waging a "crusader war" against the Muslim world. To the best of my knowledge, none of these denials were reported in the US media. Why not?

On October 1, 2001 British Prime Minister Tony Blair told the House of Commons that the case against bin Laden was proved beyond a shadow of doubt. Said Blair: "I have seen absolutely powerful and incontrovertible evidence of his [Osama Bin Laden's] link to the events of the 11th of September." [17] Several days later (on October 4), Blair's government went public with the evidence to which Blair had alluded: a "Bin Laden Dossier." [18] But the evidence turned out to be short of "incontrovertible," and in fact was shockingly thin. The *Independent* described it as "little more than conjecture," [19] and an editorial in the *Guardian* concluded that the dossier was "almost worthless from a legal point of view." [20] The (*London*) *Times* agreed, observing that "There is no evidence presented [in the dossier] that directly links bin Laden to September

11.”[21]

## **The Bin Laden Video and the personification of evil**

Confronted with US demands to hand over bin Laden unconditionally, the Taliban was initially defiant, and refused. However, in early October 2001 two Pakistani Islamic parties persuaded the Taliban leadership to extradite bin Laden to Peshawar, Pakistan, where he would be held under house arrest and tried by an international tribunal.[22] The deal even included the extradition of bin Laden to the US in the event of a conviction. However, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf vetoed the arrangement, no doubt, under heavy pressure from the Bush administration. But why would the US turn down an opportunity to bring the arch villain of 9/11 to justice for the crime of the century? Was it because, as I have already suggested, the US had insufficient evidence to convict and faced the embarrassing likelihood of an acquittal?

In fact, the only evidence the US government released linking bin Laden to 9/11 was a video-tape which supposedly turned up by chance in Afghanistan. According to the State Department, US military forces found the hour-long video in Jalalabad on December 9, 2001, shortly after the US invasion.[23] It purportedly shows bin Laden and several of his al Qaeda comrades ghoulishly celebrating their successful attack upon America. The US government released the tape on December 13, 2001 along with an English translation and a Department of Defense (DoD) press release. The latter included the following statement by Rumsfeld: "There was no doubt of bin Laden's responsibility for the September 11 attacks before the tape was discovered." [24] The US media made much of this confessional tape, as did political luminaries like New York City Mayor (and presidential hopeful) Rudy Giuliani, who told CNN that the tape confirmed that the US military campaign against bin Laden was "more than justified." Giuliani added: "Obviously, this man [i.e., bin Laden] is the personification of evil. He seems delighted at having killed more people than he anticipated, which leaves you wondering just how deep his evil heart and soul really is." [25]

In the video bin Laden brags about al Qaeda's role in staging the attack. But is the footage bona fide? Anyone who has seen the film knows that the main character bears only the most superficial resemblance to bin Laden, judging from well-known photos. In addition, there are major discrepancies. For example, the video shows bin Laden writing with his right hand when according to the FBI he is a southpaw.[26]

Two independent translators and a third expert on oriental studies also took issue with the English translation of the Arabic released by the DoD. During the program "Monitor," which aired on the German TV channel "Das Erste," the three experts stated that "at the most important places where it [i.e., the video] is held to prove the guilt of bin Laden, it [i.e., the translation] is not identical with the Arabic." [27] The experts also disputed the US claim that the tape proved foreknowledge. Gernot Rotter, professor of Islamic and Arabic Studies at the University of Hamburg, stated that "The American translators who listened to the tapes and transcribed them apparently wrote a lot of things in that they wanted to hear but that cannot be heard on the tape no matter how many times you listen to it." While this does not necessarily exonerate bin Laden, it does raise questions. If, as Bush claimed, the US had solid evidence of bin Laden's guilt, then why make false claims?

Evidently, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agrees with the skeptics. The FBI's on-line web listing of "Most Wanted Terrorists" includes a page devoted to Osama bin Laden. According to this official post, which may be viewed by anyone with access to cyberspace, bin Laden is wanted by the FBI for the August 1998 attacks upon US Embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, which killed over 200 people.[28] However, the page makes no reference to the events of September 11, 2001. Nor is there any mention of the video discussed above. In June 2006, when blogger Ed Haas learned about this, he was understandably puzzled

and contacted FBI headquarters by phone seeking an explanation. Haas talked with Rex Tomb, the FBI's Chief of Investigative Publicity, who informed him that "The reason why 9/11 is not mentioned on Osama bin Laden's Most Wanted page is because the FBI has no hard evidence connecting bin Laden to 9/11." [29] Haas was dumbfounded, and said: "But how is this possible?" Tomb replied that "bin Laden has not been formally charged in connection with 9/11." He then explained why not:

"The FBI gathers evidence. Once evidence is gathered, it is turned over to the Department of Justice. The Department of Justice then decides whether it has enough evidence to present to a federal grand jury. In the case of the 1998 United States Embassies being bombed, bin Laden has been formally indicted and charged by a grand jury. He has not been formally indicted and charged in connection with 9/11 *because the FBI has no hard evidence connecting bin Laden to 9/11.*" [my emphasis][30]

This admission by the FBI is astonishing and raises fundamental questions about the war on terrorism, as well as the role of the US media. Was Osama bin Laden convicted for the cold-blooded murder of nearly 3,000 innocent Americans in the US court of public opinion by means of a media circus? Did the US government and the corporate media collude to deceive the American people? If so, then a colossal miscarriage of justice has occurred.

Consider also the strange statement made by President Bush at a press conference on March 13, 2002. When asked about the progress being made to catch bin Laden, Bush replied that "we haven't heard much from him. [i.e., bin Laden] And I wouldn't necessarily say he's at the center of any command structure. And, again, I don't know where he is. I, I'll repeat what I said. *I truly am not that concerned about him.*" [31] [my emphasis] But why this almost lackadaisical attitude about the arch-villain whom Bush had promised to track down to the ends of the earth? What had become of the president's laser-like determination? Bush explained that bin Laden had ceased to be a terrorist threat due to the US occupation of Afghanistan. Yet, by at least one account, the US forces at Tora Bora displayed almost unbelievable incompetence during the pursuit of bin Laden, as a result of which the accused and most of his entourage escaped.[32] Was *this* the plan, all along?

A no less strange remark made a few weeks later (April 6, 2002) by General Richard Myers, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, suggests that bin Laden's getaway had been approved at the highest level. Myers told CNN that "the goal has never been to get bin Laden." [33] I personally found his statement incomprehensible, since at the time Osama was public enemy number one. Did the US allow bin Laden to escape because the Bush administration judged he was more valuable at-large? We can't be certain, because by this time there were also numerous reports that bin Laden was dead.[34]

Did President Bush know when he made the above statement that bin Laden was already deceased? This would explain Bush's casual demeanor. Yet, either way, from the standpoint of propaganda it hardly mattered whether bin Laden was dead or alive. His larger-than-life reputation could be sustained simply by neglecting to confirm his death, and the legend is what counted. His persona could also be "spun" in various ways and made to serve political expedience. Indeed, by this logic bin Laden was even more valuable dead because a living breathing bin Laden might at some point be apprehended, in which case the Bush administration faced the unwelcome prospect of a very public trial at which the terrorist would have an opportunity to tell *his side of the story* to a listening world. And this, of course, had to be avoided.

If we can believe the *9/11 Commission Report*, the case against bin Laden was greatly bolstered by the capture and subsequent confession in 2003 of the alleged 9/11 mastermind, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM). The problem, of course, is that the official story about the plot against

America is wholly based on secret CIA interrogations that have never been independently confirmed, and must therefore be viewed as suspect. But even if we accept the testimony of KSM in 2003, this does not explain the rush to war in 2001. Nor does it explain President Bush's decision to go to war against Saddam Hussein, a decision reportedly made in July 2002.[35]

Previous cases of terrorism had already demonstrated the wisdom of proceeding with caution, since knee-jerk responses can (and do) misfire. For example, after the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, US investigators at first suspected a Mideast connection. But this was proved false, and similar errors were made after the 1988 downing of Pan American Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. Although initial evidence pointed to Syria or Iran, a thorough forensic investigation ruled these out and eventually implicated Libya. The *9/11 Commission Report* itself describes the latter case as "a cautionary tale about rushing to judgement in attributing responsibility for a terrorist act." [36] So, why the rush to war after the September 11 attack? If the Bush administration had conclusive evidence that al Qaeda was responsible, why not release it? Was the Bush White House tight-lipped because the actual evidence would have exposed the complicity of the US military and intelligence community? A stunning story that broke in the US press in 2005 points to such a conclusion.

### **Able Danger**

As it happened, a legitimate US military counter-terrorist operation known as Able Danger was tracking Mohamed Atta and his cohorts as early as January-February 2000. The operation, based at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, was small but extremely high-tech, as it employed advanced computers to sweep the internet, a methodology known as data-mining. In May 2000, however, when Able Danger's success became known throughout the Defense Department, the officers who ran it were ordered to shut it down and destroy their data.[37] One officer reportedly was threatened with prison if he refused. Later, the Pentagon attempted to block Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on Able Danger, and in 2005, when this failed, the Pentagon refused Able Danger staffers permission to testify before the committee.[38]

One intelligence officer who later testified anyway, Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer, was targeted for harassment. The question is why? Of course, the standard explanation is that the military bureaucracy made gross blunders and later sought to cover up their incompetence. But there is another possibility. Was Able Danger shut down because this honest operation threatened to unmask the covert planning for the September 11 "attack"?

What is clear is that the Pentagon's self-serving attempts to gag and discredit Lt. Col. Shaffer are not to be believed. In February 2006 Shaffer told the House Armed Services Committee that during the summer of 2000 he and other officers involved in Able Danger attempted on three separate occasions to warn the FBI about the terrorist threat posed by Mohamed Atta. But the meetings never happened. Each time they were canceled at the last minute by high-level Pentagon attorneys.[39] Nor has the Pentagon ever provided a satisfactory explanation as to why.[40]

Some time after the dissolution of Able Danger Shaffer was reassigned to Bagram Air Base, in Afghanistan, where in October 2003 he succeeded in bringing the existence of Able Danger to the attention of the 9/11 Commission. This apparently happened due to a chance encounter with Philip Zelikow, Executive Director of the commission, and several commission staffers who were then on tour, gathering firsthand information about the US war on terrorism. Lt. Col. Shaffer told the House committee that after he briefed the commission staff about Able Danger's success in identifying Mohamed Atta and other alleged 9/11 hijackers, Zelikow came up, handed him his card, and asked him to "please contact me upon your return to the states so we can continue this dialogue." [41] However, three months later when Shaffer did just that he was surprised to discover that Zelikow was no longer interested in Able Danger. But why wouldn't he

be?

Then, all hell broke loose when Shaffer dutifully informed his commanding officer about the contact. From that point on Lt. Col. Shaffer was subjected to the sort of military hazing that is usually reserved for green recruits. His security clearance was cancelled. He lost access to his office computer and all of his classified materials about Able Danger, which, he later learned, were destroyed. Subsequently, the Pentagon dismissed his testimony, claiming it was unsupported by hard evidence, an obvious example of Catch-22. Shaffer also learned that he was under investigation, although no formal charges were ever filed against him. He was told “off the record” that he had “pissed off” one or more high-ranking officers. Several of Shaffer’s colleagues from Able Danger corroborated his story, but it didn’t matter. His military career was over, destroyed.[42] Shaffer’s testimony before Congress is riveting and is essential reading for anyone interested in 9/11 truth.

In their 2006 book *Without Precedent*, Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, co-chairs of the 9/11 Commission, deny that Able Danger had ever identified Mohamed Atta before 9/11.[43] But their assertion, much belated, is just not credible. Their own final report on 9/11 makes no mention of Able Danger. It is abundantly clear that even though Lt. Col. Shaffer notified the panel about this important counter-terrorism operation the commissioners made no attempt to investigate it, and since Kean and Hamilton failed to do so how can they now credibly claim to know? Obviously, their denial is based on information they received, much later, from the Pentagon.

Kean and Hamilton write that their staff “received all of the Department of Defense documents on Able Danger and had found no mention of Atta.”[44] But their claim is not persuasive, since we know that 2.5 terabytes of intelligence data about Able Danger had already been destroyed (in 2000), not to mention the information on Shaffer’s hard drive (in 2004). The question for the co-chairs is simple: What assurance could they possibly have that the documents they received from the DoD about Able Danger tell the full story? Obviously, they do not. More to the point, why would Kean and Hamilton believe the Pentagon over the testimony of Lt. Col. Shaffer? By this time the co-chairs already had good reason to suspect that the Pentagon, not Shaffer, had deceived them in the hearings.[45]

### Eavesdropping on bin Laden

The fact that Able Danger was shut down in May 2000, long before Bush entered office, raises disturbing questions. Was covert planning for 9/11 already underway during the Clinton administration? It is curious that in 2002 CIA Director George Tenet told a closed session of a joint House-Senate panel investigating the 9/11 “security failure” that al Qaeda’s planning of the September 11, 2001 attack started as early as 1998.[46] But how could Tenet know this unless the CIA had been tracking bin Laden, all along? As a matter of fact, we know they were! According to several UPI reports, the National Security Administration (NSA) acknowledged in February 2001 that the use of advanced Echelon software enabled the US intelligence community to eavesdrop on thousands of bin Laden’s cell phone calls over a period of years. US officials disclosed that even after bin Laden began to encrypt certain calls in 1995, his “codes were broken.”[47]

The date 1998 is doubly curious. That same year Tenet informed the Senate Intelligence Committee that the CIA’s strategy to defeat al Qaeda included the recruiting of al Qaeda operatives.[48] In his memoirs Tenet goes even further with an assertion that is remarkable for its candor. He writes: “the [9/11] commission failed to recognize the sustained comprehensive efforts conducted by the intelligence community prior to 9/11 to penetrate the al Qaeda organization.”[49] I had to re-read this passage several times just to believe my own eyes. Did the CIA recruit terrorists who were then used as patsies on 9/11?

Bush officials, of course, have steadfastly denied that the US successfully penetrated al Qaeda before 9/11. But their denials are less than persuasive in light of Lt. Col. Shaffer's testimony about Able Danger, and also because there is no doubt: we know that the monitoring of phone calls continued. After al Qaeda bombed two US embassies in East Africa in August 1998, FBI investigators got lucky and stumbled upon an al Qaeda communications hub in Yemen. According to writer Lawrence Wright, this proved to be "one of the most important pieces of evidence the FBI would ever discover, allowing investigators to map the links of the al Qaeda network all across the globe." [50] The hub was a private telephone, anything but high tech. The switchboard operator turned out to be the brother-in-law of Khalid al-Midhar, one of the nineteen alleged hijackers. His job in Yemen was simply to relay messages to-and-from various al Qaeda operatives, including bin Laden. [51]

From phone records US investigators confirmed a flurry of calls through the hub before the embassy bombings, and this pattern was repeated before the attack on the USS Cole in October 2000. [52] Indeed, it is unclear why US intelligence agencies failed to prevent the attack on the Cole because, by this time, they were listening. The al Qaeda hub was allowed to operate right up until September 11, 2001, and even after. Incredibly, US and Yemeni authorities did not finally move in and close it down until 2002. [53]

Based on this evidence, gleaned from open sources in the US media, we must conclude that the US intelligence community was tracking al Qaeda's nearly every move before 9/11, and had been for years, probably including the entry of the alleged hijackers into the US, their "flight training" and subsequent movements. The phone intercepts certainly continued.

In June 2002 both the *Miami Herald* and the *Dallas Star-Telegram* reported that in the summer of 2001 the NSA even monitored phone conversations between alleged 9/11 lead hijacker Mohamed Atta and alleged 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM). [54] The papers reported that the NSA "did not recognize the significance of what they had." Evidently, we are supposed to believe that the NSA did not pass along this important intelligence to the CIA. But this is absurd. After all, the NSA is a part of the US Department of Defense and exists for the purpose of providing intelligence to the CIA and the US military. The story in the *Miami Herald* even acknowledges this, citing an NSA official who stated under condition of anonymity that it was "simply not true" that the NSA failed to share the information with other intelligence agencies. [55] Of course they shared it. Incidentally, a google search failed to locate the full text of either of these articles, which apparently have long since been scrubbed from the internet. To the best of my knowledge they survive in cyberspace only as thumbnails.

What are we to make of all of this? Did elements of the US intelligence community know about al Qaeda's multiple hijacking operation, all along? Did they, then, covertly piggy-back their own planning on top of it, thereby insuring the attack's "success" while also manipulating it for their own ignoble ends? If true, this would easily explain why the Pentagon shut down Able Danger in May 2000. It would explain the Pentagon's gag order imposed upon the Able Danger staffers, which blunted a Congressional inquiry. It would also explain the carefully orchestrated smear campaign aimed at Lt Col. Shaffer, who did his patriotic duty and was made to pay a terrible price. It would explain why the DoD fed phony or incomplete information about Able Danger to co-chairs Kean and Hamilton, and other members of the commission, to persuade them that the data-mining effort was "insignificant." It would also explain why, time and again, during the period before 9/11, the CIA withheld critical information from the FBI, information, which, had it become known, would have enabled the FBI to foil the 9/11 attack. The FBI was always just one or two critical pieces of information short of putting together the plot. Nor has the CIA disconnect ever been adequately explained. [56] The standard excuses, bureaucratic bungling and interagency rivalry, are simply not persuasive.

This interpretation would also explain why George Tenet lied during the 9/11 Commission

hearings when he denied his meetings with President Bush in August 2001. Indeed, it might even explain why President-elect G.W. Bush retained Tenet, a Clinton appointee, as his CIA chief. The move was one of Bush's first decisions as president and was most unusual, especially given the neocons' scarcely concealed scorn for the Clinton administration. However, it makes perfect sense, assuming that when Bush took office elements of the CIA and US military were already deeply involved in the covert planning for the 9/11 attack. Continuity at the CIA would have been essential. As far as I know, writer Ian Henshall was the first to make this connection.[57] And let us not forget: during the period before 9/11 the CIA Director visited the White House on a daily basis. Tenet personally briefed Bush on intelligence issues, an unusual chore for a CIA Director.[58] But, again, this becomes understandable, assuming that a major covert operation was in the works, one that entailed extreme compartmentalization. Only a very few individuals at the top would have been fully briefed.

### **bin Laden in Dubai?**

A no less shocking story that appeared in the prestigious French paper *Le Figaro* on October 11, 2001 points to the same conclusion. The story claimed that bin Laden was actually *under the protection* of US security agencies prior to the 9/11 attack. According to *Le Figaro*, bin Laden checked in to the American Hospital in Dubai on July 4, 2001, just two months before 9/11, where he received medical treatment over a ten-day period for a serious kidney ailment.[59]

Dubai is one of the Arab Emirates located in the Persian Gulf. The story cannot be based on just rumor or hearsay because it includes many details: Bin Laden was reportedly accompanied by his personal physician, a nurse, four body guards, and at least one of his lieutenants. It also states that the local CIA station chief, evidently a well known figure in the tiny country, was seen entering bin Laden's hospital suite during his stay, and immediately after the meeting caught a flight back to the US. If the story is accurate, bin Laden held court from his hospital room, welcoming various members of his extended family, as well as prominent Saudis and Emiratis. It is no secret that bin Laden suffered from kidney disease. Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had informed the Clinton administration about bin Laden's deteriorating health as early as 1998, during a state visit to Washington.[60]

A follow-up report in the *Guardian (UK)* on November 1, 2001 confirmed the above story and added further details, noting that bin Laden's Saudi guests included Prince Turki al Faisal, who was then head of Saudi intelligence. The article in the *Guardian* names French intelligence as the source of the story in *Le Figaro*. It also claims the information was leaked because the French were "keen to reveal the ambiguous role of the CIA and to restrain Washington from extending the war to Iraq and elsewhere." Given that bin Laden was already wanted at the time for the US embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, why did the US not arrange to have local authorities snatch the terrorist in Dubai, in order to bring him to justice? Of course, it goes without saying that bin Laden would never have visited the US hospital in the first place had he not been confident of his protected status. Do we dare to connect these dots? Surely the story in *Le Figaro* suggests that elements of the US intelligence establishment knew about the coming 9/11 attack and allowed bin Laden to remain free to play his assigned role. As shocking as this sounds, if the story is correct there is no other plausible explanation.

Such a conclusion is further supported by powerful evidence that first came to light on November 6, 2001, when the *BBC* program *Newsnight* produced FBI documents on British television proving that soon after G.W. Bush entered office the White House ordered the FBI to "back off" from ongoing investigations of Osama bin Laden and other members of his family, some of whom were living in the US at the time.[61] To the best of my knowledge, none of these stories from European and UK press were ever reported in the US media. Again, why not?



Were elements of the US government and intelligence community complicit in the events of September 11, 2001? Did they allow the attack to happen, or even help to stage it, in order to generate the pretext for a much more aggressive US foreign policy which the American people would not otherwise support? Either way, the implications are shocking, indeed, so shocking that many of our fellow countrymen (and women) cannot bring themselves to think such thoughts. Yet, it is a matter of record that the neoconservatives openly advocated an imperial shift in US foreign policy before the November 2000 election.[62] Moreover, Clinton was already moving in this direction.

These are grave questions for our nation and we must not fail to address them. If there is any truth in them we face a Constitutional crisis unlike anything in our history.

Mark's forthcoming book, THE 9/11 MYSTERY PLANE will feature, among other disclosures, the first published discussion and analysis of the NORAD/FAA radar data from 9/11, released last October thanks to a FOIA request. Mark Can be reached for comment at [markhgaffney@earthlink.net](mailto:markhgaffney@earthlink.net)

Mark's book can be pre-ordered at amazon.com:

[http://www.amazon.com/11-Mystery-Plane-Vanishing-America/dp/0979988608/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1216184222&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/11-Mystery-Plane-Vanishing-America/dp/0979988608/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1216184222&sr=1-1)

1 According to another account the stewardess was Betty Ong. Lynn Spencer, *Touching History: The Untold Story of the Drama that Unfolded in the Skies over America on 9/11*, Free Press, New York, 2008, p.18.

2 "The President's Story," *CBS News*, September 10, 2003.

3 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm, My Years at the CIA*, HarperCollins, New York, 2007, pp.xix and 167; Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, Free Press, New York, 2004. pp. 13-14.

4 Jim Miklaszewski and Alex Johnson, "US planned for attack on al-qaida," *MSNBC and NBC*, May 16, 2002,

5 Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, Free Press, New York, 2004, p. 26. Evidently the name of the plan was "Blue Sky." George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm, My Years at the CIA*, HarperCollins, New York, 2007, pp. 171 and 130-131.

6 The three US officials were Tom Simmons, a former US Ambassador to Pakistan, Karl Inderfurth, former Assistant Secretary of State for Asian Affairs, and Lee Coldren, a former State Department expert on south Asia. George Arney, "US 'planned attack on Taliban'," *BBC news*, September 18, 2001.

7 *At the Center of the Storm, My Years at the CIA*, HarperCollins, New York, 2007, pp.. 23.

8 Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, Penguin Press, New York, 2004, p. 409, also see note 21, p. 628.

9 Ibid.

10 "White House Wavers on Publicizing bin Laden Case," *UPI*, September 24, 2001.

11 Transcript: President Freezes Terrorists' Assets: Remarks by the President, Secretary of the Treasury O'Neill and Secretary of State Powell on Executive Order, The Rose Garden, September 24, 2001, posted at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010924-4.html>

12 News Sunday, FOX News, September 23, 2001.

13 Seymour Hersh, "What Went Wrong: The C.I.A. and the failure of American intelligence," *New Yorker*, October 1, 2001

14 *The Guardian*, September 17, 2001, p. 11; also see *The (London) Times*, September 28, 2001, p. 5.

15 Schmidt reportedly made the statement on German television on December 10, 2001. See the Webster Tarpley

segment in the video by Barrie Zwicker, "The Great Conspiracy: The 9/11 News Special You Never Saw," 2004.

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