

September 11: The case gathers steam

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May 23, 2002—With the White House admitting that George W. Bush was briefed on the possibility of a terrorist attack, much of the corporate media is finally asking the questions they should have been asking all along. This news has emboldened those who had been cowed by knee-jerk patriotism to abandon their silence and put the case before the public. Finally, their voices are starting to join with those of us who have been calling for a full investigation to get at the truth.

We can hope that so many of the items which have been ignored by the corporate press may finally see the light of day, as the rigidly enforced “united we stand” brand of patriotism begins to crumble. The venality with which the Bush administration has used this tragedy alone should be grounds for suspicion.

The administration is now playing the “honest mistake” card. The spin so far is this: Sure, Bush was briefed that al-Qaeda was planning to hijack American airplanes, but there were no specifics, and besides, there was no way we could know that they were going to use the planes as suicide bombs.

Let’s examine these claims.

The Threats Were Too Vague to Be Taken Seriously

The FBI field office in Phoenix, Arizona sent a memo to Washington in late July 2001 warning of significant numbers of Middle Eastern students studying at American flight schools and recommending an investigation. The memo even specifically cited Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. This recommendation was supposedly turned down. But at almost the exact same time, *CBS* reported that Attorney General John Ashcroft stopped taking civilian flights due to what FBI officials termed a “threat assessment.” Does that sound like the memo was ignored?

Today, the FBI claims that it was a precaution based on specific threats against Ashcroft. However, a senior official at the CIA had told *CBS News* that he was unaware of any specific threats. Also, why would the FBI tell Ashcroft to travel by private jet *for the remainder of his term*, as the article states, if it weren’t a specific threat?

Last August, the FBI *arrested* suspected terrorist—Zacarias Moussaoui. Yet the FBI did nothing during the month between the arrest of Moussaoui and September 11. After the attack, John Ashcroft had no compunction about rounding up and holding thousands of Middle Eastern men

without bail for unlimited periods of time. Interestingly, the local FBI in Minnesota was denied permission by the Justice Department to check what was on Moussaoui's laptop computer.

How did all of that information not wind up where it needed to be? So far, it's claimed to be a simply an honest mistake. But was it? This excerpt from the Miami Herald may reveal the answer:

'The FBI in South Florida has a long-established Joint Terrorism Task Force—an elite squad assigned to track possible espionage and terrorism cases.

“Agents say they were never warned to check all flight schools in Florida.

“That Arizona memo would have been invaluable. *With all the flight schools in Florida, we would have sat on these guys,*’ ' said one federal investigator assigned to the hijacker detail after Sept. 11.

“Right after the hijackings we knew the [U.S.] government had a problem. *Within hours of the attack we had names of the hijackers and that we needed to focus on flight schools,*’ ' the investigator said. *'It was clear how the information quickly flowed down that someone in Washington must have had previous knowledge. They sat on this and they blew it and it's finally coming out.'*” [italics mine]

According to this agent, within *hours* of the attack the agents knew where to look and whom to look for. And yet we are expected to believe that a memo indicating that possible al-Qaeda operatives were training at flight schools just got lost in the shuffle, despite being issued more than *two months* before the attack. Furthermore, if information flowed this quickly after the attack, why did it flow so slowly during the month between that arrest of Moussaoui at a *flight school* and the attacks? And why did Ashcroft's Justice Department prevent the Minneapolis field office from checking Moussaoui's laptop?

We Couldn't Imagine a Suicide Attack Using Airplanes

U.S. and Israeli intelligence received warning signals three months before the attacks that hijackers were planning to hijack commercial aircraft and use them to attack important symbolic targets. This was reported in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, one of Germany's most respected daily newspapers. The report cites unnamed German intelligence officials, who also said that as far back as six months prior to the attacks, Middle Eastern press services were receiving reports of plans for such an attack. The officials claimed that U.S. and British intelligence had advanced warnings of these threats via the Echelon system, an advanced electronic communications monitoring network.

A September 1999 federal report specifically warned the executive branch that al-Qaeda terrorists could crash a jetliner into a government building such as the CIA or the White House. The World Trade Center bomber, Ramzi Yousef, had actually planned such an attack, intending to fly a plane into CIA headquarters.

But most importantly, the FBI arrested Moussaoui in August. Here was a man who wanted to learn how to fly an airplane, but not to take off or land. Does that sound like he was planning a standard hijacking to you? Why didn't the FBI realize what that meant? "Typical" hijackers would have no interest in learning to fly, period.

We Didn't Know When It Would Happen

On September 7, 2001, just four days prior to the attacks, Florida governor and George W. Bush's brother, Jeb, signed an executive order (2001-261) with provisions for the National Guard to provide support for law enforcement personnel. Section three reads, in part:

"Based on the potential massive damage to life and property that may result from *an act of terrorism* at a Florida port, the necessity to protect life and property from *such acts of terrorism*, and inhibiting the smuggling of illegal drugs into the State of Florida, the use of the Florida National Guard to support FDLE in accomplishing port security training and inspections is 'extraordinary support to law enforcement' as used in Section 250.06(4), Florida Statutes." [italics mine]

This executive order superceded Executive Order 2001-017, which already contained provisions for the assistance of law enforcement personnel by the National Guard, yet made no mention of terrorism.

On September 11 itself, Governor Jeb Bush issued another executive order (2001-262), declaring a state of emergency. Florida was the first state to do so, even before New York and Washington D.C., where the actual attacks took place.

The fact that many of the terrorists continued to train at Florida flight schools after the July FBI memo already kicks up a cloud of suspicion around Florida.

Also, the suspicious insider trades reveal a knowledge of when, where and how the attacks were going to happen and were placed the month after Bush's CIA briefing. I find the assertion that the options were placed by al-Qaeda operatives unlikely for the following reasons: 1) The investors would have had to do a significant amount of research to make some of the trades, and it is unlikely that bin Laden could do so from his cave in Afghanistan. 2) It seems doubtful that bin Laden would risk blowing the plan by talking about it with other wealthy Arabs. 3) The source of many of the transactions, Deutsche Bank Alex Brown, was run by someone who was a former associate of the chief operating officer of the CIA, W.B. Krongard. Mayo Shattuck III resigned immediately after the attacks and went to work as the CEO of an energy company with ties to Dick Cheney's secret energy commission.

It seems that the mysterious anthrax attacker had a pretty good idea when the attacks were going to take place. The first letters were sent a mere seven days after September 11, signifying that the anthrax mailer was set to go before the attacks. An anonymous letter sent to a U.S. army medical research facility claiming that a doctor there was involved in terrorism was sent *before* the attacks, as were several hoax anthrax letters. The hoax letters sent just before the attacks and the real anthrax letters sent after the attacks have the same distinctive block handwriting, making a

copycat attack doubtful. We know the anthrax came from government labs. Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge himself has identified the anthrax attacks as domestic terrorism. How did this “domestic terrorist” time his attacks so precisely with September 11? What was his motive? Most importantly, who is the attacker?

Did a lone CIA agent meet with bin Laden in July, as the French newspaper *Le Figaro* asserted?

Finally, the US was planning to attack Afghanistan in October as per reports in *BBC News Online* and *The Guardian*. Is it a coincidence that the operation was coordinated to take place exactly one month after the attacks?

Attempts to investigate so far have been quashed by the executive branch.

According the Philadelphia Inquirer. “Sens. John McCain (R., Ariz.) and Joseph I. Lieberman (D., Conn.) announced they would push for legislation to create a 14-member commission to investigate. The members would be appointed by the President and Congress.”

Congress had clamored for such an inquiry directly after Sept. 11, and the Senate's Governmental Affairs Committee approved a bill in March. But it never went further, because Vice President Cheney asked lawmakers to help the country stay focused on the battle against terrorism.’

In January 2002, both Bush and Cheney privately asked Tom Daschle to back off from the Senate investigation of the attacks. There is obviously something they don’t want the public to know. Cheney has recently warned that the Democrats need to be “very cautious” about their criticisms of Bush.

Those who deny the existence of a conspiracy have, among other things, claimed that any such cover-up would have to have too many people in the know, which would cause it to unravel. Could we be seeing the first threads of that process now? Let’s keep pulling on them. We can hope that a full independent investigation will spur the corporate media to finally join the independent media in calling for full disclosure of the connections between the executive branch, the CIA and Osama bin Laden. The American people deserve to know the truth.

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