

The 9/11 Report and Mohamed Ali, Al Qaeda's Chief Terrorism Trainer

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I want to talk tonight about using the 9/11 Report as evidence - evidence of what is being suppressed. We can use it in this way because some parts of the Report are accurate and reliable. This base line of reliability helps define other parts of the Report which are misleading, and in a few places I believe dead wrong. These relevant omissions and deceptions should be taken as clues as to what is being suppressed, and where the hidden truth lies.

I shall talk of the Report's occasional resistance to the truth. Let me give an easy and incontrovertible analogy from the Warren Report. The Warren Report got many things right; but it also minimized the links between Jack Ruby and organized crime.[1] This resistance was a clue that Ruby in fact was crime-related and that this was important. The House Select Committee on Assassinations, even though they got many things wrong, amply confirmed the importance of Ruby's crime links.

We find similar symptomatic resistance in the 9/11 Report.

1) Here is an easy example: the identity of the hijackers. the FBI had distributed a list naming 18 of the 19 alleged hijackers by 10 AM on 9/11.[2] Within two weeks the identities of at least six of the hijackers were unclear; as men in Arab countries with the same names and histories, and in some cases the same photographs, were protesting that they were alive and innocent.[3] In response to these protests, FBI Director Robert Mueller soon acknowledged that the identity of several of the suicide hijackers was in doubt.[4] But there is no discussion of this problem in the detailed treatment of the alleged hijackers in the 9/11 Commission Report.[5]

2) WTC-7 This is obviously a big area of doubt, as you have just heard. The Report's solution was not to mention WTC-7 at all. And yet Kean and Hamilton, the 9/11 Commission Co-Chairs, have the nerve to claim in their new book that after the Report "those believing conspiracy theories now had to rely solely on imagination, their theories having been disproved by facts." [6] In other words, they are still covering up that there was a cover up.

3) The U.S. government's intimate on-going connection to al-Qaeda and a chief 9/11 plotter.

In our book, 9/11 and Empire: Intellectuals Speak Out, I write of Ali Mohamed, the close ally of Osama bin Laden and his mentor Ayman al-Zawahiri.[7] It is now generally admitted that Ali Mohamed worked for the FBI, the CIA, and U.S. Special Forces. The 9/11 Report mentioned him, and said that the plotters against the U.S. Embassy in Kenya were "led" (their word) by Ali Mohamed.[8] That's the Report's only reference to him, though it's not all they heard.

Patrick Fitzgerald, U.S. Attorney who negotiated a plea bargain and confession from Ali Mohamed, said this in testimony to the Commission:

"Ali Mohamed. ... trained most of al Qaeda's top leadership -- including Bin Laden and Zawahiri -- and most of al Qaeda's top trainers. He gave some training to persons who would later carry out the 1993 World Trade Center bombing..... From 1994 until his arrest in 1998, he lived as an American citizen in California, applying for jobs as an FBI translator." [9]

Patrick Fitzgerald knew Ali Mohamed well. In 1994 he had named him as an unindicted co-conspirator in the New York landmarks case, yet allowed him to remain free. This was because, as Fitzgerald knew, Ali Mohamed was an FBI informant, from at least 1993 and maybe 1989. [10] Thus, from 1994 "until his arrest in 1998 [by which time the 9/11 plot was well under way], Mohamed shuttled between California, Afghanistan, Kenya, Somalia and at least a dozen other countries." [11] Shortly after 9/11, Larry C. Johnson, a former State Department and CIA official, faulted the FBI publicly for using Mohamed as an informant, when it should have recognized that the man was a high-ranking terrorist plotting against the United States. [12]

Ali Mohamed may have been more than just an informant for the U.S. Government. The Report claims (56) that "Bin Ladin and his comrades had their own sources of support and training, and they received little or no assistance from the United States."

But we are now told that Mohamed, while on a leave from the U.S. army, went to Afghanistan and trained "the first al-Qaeda volunteers in techniques of unconventional warfare, including kidnappings, assassinations, and <I>hijacking planes" (Wright, <I>The Looming Tower, 181). This was in 1988, one year before Mohamed left active U.S. Army service and joined the Reserve.

As I say in our book, in 1993 Ali Mohamed had been detained by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Canada, when he inquired at an airport after an incoming al Qaeda terrorist who turned out to be carrying two forged Saudi passports. Mohamed immediately told the RCMP to make a phone call to the United States, and the call secured his release. [13] We've since been told that it was Mohamed's West coast FBI handler, John Zent, "who vouched for Ali and got him released." [14]

This release enabled Ali to go on to Kenya, take pictures of the U.S. Embassy, and deliver them to bin Laden for the Embassy bombing plot.

In August 2006 there was a National Geographic Special on Ali Mohamed. We can take this as the new official fallback position on Ali Mohamed, because John Cloonan, the FBI agent who worked with Fitzgerald on Mohamed, helped narrate it. I didn't see the show, but here's what TV critics said about its contents:

"Ali Mohamed manipulated the FBI, CIA and U.S. Army on behalf of Osama bin Laden. Mohamed trained terrorists how to hijack airliners, bomb buildings and assassinate rivals. [D]uring much of this time Mohamed was ... an operative for the CIA and FBI, and a member of the U.S. Army." [15] "...Mohamed turned up in FBI surveillance photos as early as 1989, training radical Muslims who would go on to assassinate Jewish militant Meir Kahane and detonate a truck bomb at the World Trade Center. He not only avoided arrest, but managed to become an FBI informant while writing most of the al Qaeda terrorist manual and helping plan attacks on American troops in Somalia and U.S. embassies in Africa." [16]

That Mohamed trained al Qaeda in hijacking planes and wrote the al Qaeda terrorist manual is confirmed in a new book by Lawrence Wright, who has seen US Government

records.[17] Let me say this again: one of al-Qaeda's top trainers in terrorism and how to hijack airplanes was an operative for FBI, CIA, and the Army.

Yet this TV show, just before the 9/11 anniversary, was itself another cover-up. It suppressed for example the information given it about Mohamed's detention and FBI-ordered release in Canada. According to Peter Lance, the principal author for the show, the show suppressed many other sensational facts. Here is Lance's chief claim: that Fitzgerald and his FBI counterpart on the Bin Laden task force, John Cloonan, learned shortly after 9/11 that Mohamed "knew every twist and turn of" the 9/11 plot.[18]

"Within days of 9/11 Cloonan rushed backed from Yemen and interviewed Ali, whom the Feds had allowed to slip into witness protection, and demanded to know the details of the plot. At that point Ali wrote it all out - including details of how he'd counseled would-be hijackers on how to smuggle box cutters on board aircraft and where to sit, to effect the airline seizures." [19]

If all these latest revelations about Ali Mohamed are true, then:

1) a key planner of the 9/11 plot, and trainer in hijacking, was simultaneously an informant for the FBI.

2) This operative trained the members for <I>all of the chief Islamist attacks inside the United States -- the first WTC bombing, the New York landmarks plot, and finally 9/11, as well as the attacks against Americans in Somalia and Kenya.

3) And yet for four years Mohamed was allowed to move in and out of the country as an unindicted conspirator. Then, unlike his trainees, he was allowed to plea-bargain. To this day he may still not have been sentenced for any crime.[20]

Peter Lance has charged that Fitzgerald had evidence before 1998 to implicate Mohamed in the Kenya Embassy bombing, yet did nothing and let the bombing happen.[21] Did Fitzgerald have similar advance evidence before the 9/11 attack, and again do nothing as well? Skeptics will need a lot of evidence to be reassured that this is not the case.

As a first step, all U.S. agencies should release the full documentary record of their dealings with Ali Mohamed, the FBI and CIA informant who allegedly planned the details of the airline seizures. I hope my audience will insist on this. Then and only then will a close interrogation of Fitzgerald satisfy those who accuse members of the U.S. Government of assisting the 9/11 plot, or alternatively of failing to prevent 9/11 from happening.[22]

Now, what did the 9/11 Commission know about this scandalous situation? I suspect they knew more than they let on. Is it just a coincidence that they selected to write the staff reports about al Qaeda and the 9/11 plot, and conduct the relevant interviews, a man who had a personal stake in preventing the truth about Mohamed from coming out. This man was Dietrich Snell, who had been Fitzgerald's colleague in the Southern District of New York U.S. Attorney's office, and his co-counsel in prosecuting Ramzi Yousef in the Bojinka airline plot which was a precursor for 9/11. Of the nine people on Snell's team, all but one had worked for the U.S. Government, and all but two for either the Justice Department or the FBI.[23]

Keep in mind that what I have said so far is about a government-Mohamed connection and cover-up that goes back to at least 1990, long before the Bush-Cheney administrations. But the 9/11 Commission staff reports went out of their way to cover this up. The 9/11 Report, based on Snell's staff reports, mentions Mahmoud Abouhalima and Mohammed Salameh, two co-conspirators of Ramzi Yousef in the first WTC bombing of 1993 (72). It does not mention that these two men had been trained by Ali Mohamed, even though Fitzgerald referred obliquely to this fact in his testimony. Nor does it mention that, had it not been for a police and FBI cover-up protecting Ali Mohamed back in 1990, Abouhalima and Salameh should probably have been in jail at the time of the WTC bombing --for their involvement in the murder of Meir Kahane by Ali Mohamed's trainees three years earlier.[24]

Before leaving Mohamed, I want to say that in a day or two I will have a footnoted text of this talk on my website at www.peterdalescott.net. I invite you to read it; and if you are persuaded by it exert pressure for full disclosure of the U.S.-Ali Mohamed story.

If I had had time today, I would have written about other key areas where the 9/11 Report shows resistance to relevant facts and allegations. Central to these, and to my forthcoming book on 9/11, would have been the Report's failure to deal with important testimony challenging Vice President Cheney's account of his conduct on 9/11, and in particular his important relationship (which the Report obscured) to the stand-down and shoot-down orders of that day. There was important testimony contradicting both Cheney and the Report itself from two eyewitnesses inside the White House, Norman Mineta and Richard Clarke, which the Report flagrantly, and symptomatically, failed to deal with.

But I consider the scandal of Ali Mohamed's tolerated terrorism to be a still more fundamental problem, an on-going problem for which we need a more serious remedy than just putting a Democrat in the White House. As has happened after past intelligence fiascoes, our intelligence agencies were strengthened as a result of the 9/11 Commission, and their budgets increased.

It's time to confront the reality that these agencies themselves, and their own sponsorship and protection of terrorist activities, have aggravated the greatest threats to our national security.

[1] Warren Report, 801.

[2] Richard Clarke heard that the FBI had the names at 9:59 AM, the time of the collapse of WTC Tower 2. See Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terrorism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 13-14; Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 441. This investigative tour de force is even more amazing when we consider that in the FBI, according to the 9/11 Report (77), "prior to 9/11 relatively few strategic analytic reports about counterterrorism had been completed. Indeed, the FBI had never completed an assessment of the overall terrorist threat to the U.S. homeland."

[3] Peter Dale Scott, "The 9/11 Commission Report's Failure to Identify the Alleged Hijackers,"

<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~pdscott/Hijackers.mht>

The mainstream U.S. press, such as the *New York Times*, later attributed the confusion about the hijackers' identity to the number of different Arabs sharing the same

names. But at least five shared histories as well as names with the alleged hijackers. Waleed al-Shehri told the BBC "that he attended flight training school at Daytona Beach in the United States, and is indeed the same Waleed Al Shehri to whom the FBI has been referring. But, he says, he left the United States in September last year, became a pilot with Saudi Arabian airlines and is currently on a further training course in Morocco" (BBC, 9/23/01). Saeed al-Ghamdi, alive and flying planes in Tunisia, also studied at Florida flight schools, as late as 2001. According to the *London Telegraph* (9/23/01), CNN used his photograph in describing the hijacker with his name. Abdulaziz al-Omari acknowledged the same date of birth as the accused hijacker al-Omari, but claimed his passport was stolen when he was living in Denver, Colorado (*London Telegraph*, 9/23/01; Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 497).

[4] BBC, 9/23/01; *Newsday*, 9/21/01; Paul Thompson, *The Terror Timeline: Year by Year, Day by Day, Minute by Minute* (New York: HarperCollins/Regan Books, 2004), 498.

[5] 9/11 Report, 1-14, 215-42. Discussion in David Ray Griffin, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Errors and Omissions* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2005), 19-23.

[6] Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton, with Benjamin Rhodes, *Without Precedent: The Inside Story of the 9/11 Commission* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 268.

[7] David Ray Griffin and Peter Dale Scott (eds.), *9/11 & American Empire: Intellectuals Speak Out*. (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2006), 74, 76-77.

[8] 9/11 Report, 68.

[9] Patrick Fitzgerald, Testimony before 9/11 Commission, June 16, 2004, <http://www.9-11commission.gov/hearings/hearing12.htm>, emphasis added. Actually Mohamed was in Santa Clara, California, by 1993 (*New Yorker*, 9/16/02). Fitzgerald was flagrantly dissembling. Even the mainstream account by Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon (*The Age of Sacred Terror* [New York: Random House, 2002], 236) records that "When Mohamed was summoned back from Africa in 1993 [sic, Mohamed in his confession says 1994] to be interviewed by the FBI in connection with the case against Sheikh Rahman and his coconspirators, he convinced the agents that he could be useful to them as an informant."

[10] Peter Lance, "Triple Cross: National Geographic Channel's Whitewash of the Ali Mohamed Story," *Huffington Post*, 8/29/06, http://news.yahoo.com/s/huffpost/20060829/cm_huffpost/028270. Unfortunately Lance's book on Mohamed, *Triple Cross*, was not yet available when I gave this talk. Cf. Lawrence White, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 181-82; Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002), 236; Lawrence Wright, *New Yorker*, 9/16/02: "In 1989...Mohamed talked to an F.B.I. agent in California and provided American intelligence with its first inside look at Al Qaeda."

[11] *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10/21/01.

[12] *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11/04/01. What was clear to Johnson cannot be clear to the American public. We have no way of knowing whether or not Mohamed forewarned his American handlers about the embassy bombings, or even (since his current whereabouts are a mystery) about 9/11. See below.

<http://www.mail-archive.com/hydro@topica.com/msg00224.html>

[13] *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 11/22/01, <http://www.mail-archive.com/hydro@topica.com/msg00224.html>; Peter Dale Scott, "How to Fight Terrorism," *California Monthly*, September 2004,

http://www.alumni.berkeley.edu/Alumni/Cal_Monthly/September_2004/How_to_fight_terrorism.asp. Mohamed's companion, Essam Marzouk, is now serving 15 years of hard labor in Egypt, after having been arrested in Azerbaijan. Mohamed's detention and release was months after the first WTC bombing in February 1993, and after the FBI had already rounded up two of the plotters whom they knew had been trained by Ali Mohamed.

[14] Peter Lance, "Triple Cross: National Geographic Channel's Whitewash of the Ali Mohamed Story," *Huffington Post*, 8/29/06, http://news.yahoo.com/s/huffpost/20060829/cm_huffpost/028270.

[15] Dave Shiflett, *Bloomberg News*, 8/28/06, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601088&sid=aNWwkZYujCIs&refer=home>

[16] Glenn Garvin, <I>Miami Herald, http://www.miami.com/mlid/miamiherald/entertainment/columnists/glenn_garvin/15310462.htm

[17] Lawrence Wright, <I>The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11 (New York: Knopf, 2006), 181. The Report claims (56) that "Bin Ladin and his comrades had their own sources of support and training, and they received little or no assistance from the United States." But Wright reports that Mohamed, while on a leave from the U.S. army, went to Afghanistan and trained "the first al-Qaeda volunteers in techniques of unconventional warfare, including kidnappings, assassinations, and hijacking planes." This was in 1988, one year before Mohamed left active U.S. Army service and joined the Reserve.

[18] Peter Lance, "Triple Cross: National Geographic Channel's Whitewash of the Ali Mohamed Story," *Huffington Post*, 8/29/06, http://news.yahoo.com/s/huffpost/20060829/cm_huffpost/028270. Cloonan was the FBI agent in the Bin Laden squad who received the famous memo from Kenneth Williams in Phoenix recommending that the FBI compile a list of all the Arabs attending flight schools. He reportedly "wadded it into a ball and threw it against a wall. `Who's going to conduct the thirty thousand interviews?' he asked the supervisor in Phoenix" (Lawrence White, <I>The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11 [New York: Knopf, 2006], 350).

[19] Peter Lance, "Triple Cross: National Geographic Channel's Whitewash of the Ali Mohamed Story," *Huffington Post*, 8/29/06, http://news.yahoo.com/s/huffpost/20060829/cm_huffpost/028270.

[20] According to publicity for the National Geographic special, Mohamed is "currently in U.S. custody," but "his whereabouts and legal status are closely guarded secrets" (<I>Rocky Mountain News, 8/28/06, 2D). Lance wrote that Mohamed was put into the witness protection program. "David Runke [Ruhnke], a defense attorney in the African embassies bombing case, says, ``I think the most likely thing that will happen is he'll be released, he'll be given a new name and a new identity, and he will pick up a life someplace.'" (Shiflett, *Bloomberg News*, 8/28/06). As of November 2001, Mohamed had not been sentenced and was still believed to be supplying information from his prison cell.

[21] "Ali Mohamed had stayed in [El-Hage's] Kenyan home in the mid 90's as they plotted the bombings. Another agent in Fitzie's squad Dan Coleman, had searched El-Hage's home a year before the bombings and found direct links to Ali Mohamed and yet Fitzgerald failed to connect the dots" (Lance, "Triple Cross," *Huffington Post*, 8/29/06).

[22] Fitzgerald is of course the U.S. Attorney who for years has been investigating the leak of the name of CIA covert operative Valerie Plame. It could appear that he has been putting pressure on the Bush White House to forestall disclosure of his own (and possibly the CIA's) embarrassing and improper relationship to the chief planner of the 9/11 plot.

[23] Kean and Hamilton, <I>Without Precedent, 273 (chapters); Lance, <I>Cover Up, 212-20 (reports). Snell was assisted by Douglas MacEachin, the former CIA deputy Director for Intelligence.

[24] Lance, <I>1000 Years, 31-35.

URL: <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~pdscott/Sept24.mht>