

There's Something About Omar: Truth, Lies, and The Legend of 9/11

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It was almost an afterthought. On March 1, 2003, the War On Terror had finally served up the alleged paymaster of 9/11 -- a shadowy Saudi by the name of Mustafa Ahmed al-Hisawi. Yet his arrest just happened to coincide with the capture of a much bigger fish -- the reported 9/11 mastermind himself, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed -- thus relegating Mustafa Ahmed to the footnote section of the "official" 9/11 Legend. But there was another, more explosive side to this tale. Only seventeen months before, a former London schoolboy by the name of Omar Saeed Sheikh was first exposed as the 9/11 paymaster, acting under the authority of a Pakistani general who was in Washington D.C. on September 11, meeting with the very two lawmakers who would subsequently preside over the "official" 9/11 congressional inquiry. Omar Saeed, as reported back then by CNN, was acting under the alias of . . . Mustafa Ahmed. So where is Omar now? Sitting in a Pakistani prison, awaiting his execution for the kidnapping of Daniel Pearl -- while another man fills the shoes of his pseudonym. What follows is a reconstruction of one of the most extensive disinformation campaigns in history, and the chronicle of a legend that may now shine a devastating spotlight on some of the cliques behind 9/11 -- and the FBI Director covering the paper trails.

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"The hijackers left no paper trail," proclaimed FBI Director Robert Mueller on April 30, 2002. "In our investigation, we have not uncovered a single piece of paper . . . that mentioned any aspect of the Sept. 11 plot." Yet in the weeks immediately following September 11, Mueller and his FBI had left the public with a very different impression -- an impression that conjured the vision of truckloads of paper documents pointing any number of ways to the culpability of Osama Bin Laden for the events of 9/11. For one, there was the infamous handwritten "checklist" found not only in hijacker Mohamed Atta's abandoned luggage, but also in the car rented in hijacker al-Hazmi's name, discovered at Dulles Airport, and which included lofty Arabic prayers alongside last minute reminders to bring "knives, your will, IDs, your passport, all your papers." But more importantly, the treasure trove in

al-Hazmi's glove compartment yielded a paper trail that led all the way to London -- and to the arrest of a potentially major suspect.

On September 30, 2001, as reported in the *Telegraph* by David Bamber, British prosecutor Arvinda Sambir announced that authorities had arrested Lotfi Raissi, whose name was found in al-Hazmi's rental. A further search of Raissi's apartment had yielded up a video clip starring Raissi with alleged hijacker Hani Hanjour -- all in all, another circumstantial slam-dunk in the snowballing case against al-Qaida. Or was it? For by April of 2002 -- when Mueller made his "paper trail" declaration -- Raissi would go free for want of evidence.

As we will shortly see, Raissi was being set up to play his part in a prearranged drama, one in which a definitive money trail leading to al-Qaida would be announced just in time for the October 7, 2001 launch into Afghanistan. Yet a brief, almost innocuous, article in the October 9 *Times of India* would lay havoc to this plan, necessitating a massive cover-up and a search for an alternative smoking gun that would unveil itself before a skeptical world audience on December 13, 2001 as the *Official Bin Laden Videotape Confession*.

An essential player in that original plan was Omar Saeed Sheikh (hereafter Omar Saeed), a 27 year-old London-born man of Pakistani parentage who had attended the London School of Economics before answering the call of militancy, heading off to Bosnia, and from there, to Pakistan, where he would make his "bones" in a 1994 kidnapping, serving time in an Indian prison until being bartered out for hostages in a 1999 airplane hijacking. Packing a lifetime into the next two years, Omar Saeed caught the eye of the so-called militant faction of Pakistan's ISI (the Pakistani CIA), rounding out his curricular vitae by tinkering around with the al-Qaida computer network in Afghanistan.

Omar Saeed made his public post-9/11 debut on September 23, 2001, on the very same day that his pseudonym, Mustafa Ahmad, made its own post-9/11 debut through President Bush's Global Terrorist Executive Order, in which a "Shaykh Sai'id (aka Mustafa Muhammad Ahmad)" was mentioned as a financial operative in al-Qaida, among a list of 27 individuals and entities slated to have their assets frozen. On September 23, Nick Fielding of *The Sunday Times* reported: "British officials have now asked India for legal assistance in seeking the whereabouts of Omar [Saeed] Sheikh. British security services confirmed this weekend that they wanted him for questioning."

A week later, on September 30, 2001, we found out why, when David Bamber of the *Telegraph* reported: "Police also believe that . . . Omar [Saeed] Sheikh, who is British, trained the terrorists in hijacking techniques." As Bamber implied, Omar Saeed was working in cahoots with Lotfi Raissi, who was just recently arrested and charged with training the hijacker pilots. In other words, in less than three weeks after 9/11, authorities were closing in on Raissi and Omar Saeed, the alleged trainers of the alleged hijackers.

Now all that remained was to furnish a "smoking gun" link to al-Qaida by way of a money trail, all in time for the planned October 7 invasion of Afghanistan. On the very day that the *Telegraph* outed Raissi and Omar Saeed as the 9/11 trainers, *ABC News This Week* announced that a \$100,000 money trail had been traced in Florida from hijacker Atta to "people linked to Osama bin Laden."

The very next day, on October 1, Judith Miller of the *New York Times* reported that hijacker Atta received money from someone using the alias "Mustafa Ahmad". Five days later, on October 6, Maria Ressa of *CNN*, quoting terrorism expert Magnus Ranstorp, officially unveiled Omar Saeed as the pseudonymous 9/11 money man: "He [Omar Saeed] is . . . linked to the financial network feeding bin Laden's assets, so therefore he's quite an important person . . . because he transfers money between various operatives, and he's a node between al Qaeda and foot soldiers on the ground." Ressa went on to report: "Because investigators have now determined that [Omar Saeed] and Mustafa Muhammad Ahmad [the pseudonym] are the same person, it provides another key link to bin Laden as the mastermind of the overall [9/11] plot."

Two days later, on October 8, Ressa revisited the story, this time connecting Omar Saeed to an October 1 attack on the provincial legislature in Kashmir -- an incident that led Pakistan and India closer to the brink. October 8, incidentally, was also one of the very last times that *CNN* touched upon Omar Saeed -- at least until he bobbed up a few months later, on February 6, as the FBI's main suspect in the kidnapping of Daniel Pearl. Yet by then, *CNN* -- and Maria Ressa -- was stricken by a curious case of amnesia, neglecting to mention that Saeed was previously outed by them as the 9/11 bag-man. Why this sudden silence? And, more to the point, why did Omar Saeed virtually drop off *CNN's* radar after October 8?

Perhaps the answer lies in an October 9 bombshell, courtesy of the *Times of India*:

"While the Pakistani Inter Services Public Relations claimed that former ISI [Pakistani intelligence] director-general Lt-Gen Mahmud Ahmad sought retirement after being superseded on Monday, the truth is more shocking. Top sources confirmed here on Tuesday that the general lost his job because of the "evidence" India produced to show his links to one of the suicide bombers that wrecked the World Trade Center. The U.S. authorities sought his removal after confirming the fact that \$100,000 were wired to WTC hijacker Mohammed Atta from Pakistan by [Omar Saeed] at the instance of General Mahmud [Ahmad]."

In short, the *Times of India* revealed that Omar Saeed was acting under the direct orders of the head of Pakistani intelligence and *not* Osama bin Laden. That in itself could perhaps have been explained away, as it was widely acknowledged that Islamic elements in the ISI were sympathetic to the Taliban and their al-Qaida guests. Yet tracing the "smoking gun" money trail to General Ahmad created an entirely new smoking gun that led straight back to Washington, D.C. -- for General Ahmad had already been reported as having breakfast in the nation's capital with Senator Bob Graham and Representative Porter Goss on the morning of September 11 (Both Graham and Goss would go on to co-chair the joint Senate-House 9/11 inquiry). In fact, as early as September 9 -- two days before 9/11, for those who didn't notice -- *Karachi News* had weighed in with the following observation:

"ISI Chief Lt-Gen [Mahmud Ahmad's] week-long presence in Washington has triggered speculation about the agenda of his mysterious meetings at the Pentagon and National Security Council. . . What added interest to his visit is the history of such visits. Last time Ziauddin Butt, [General Ahmad's] predecessor, was here during Nawaz Sharif's government, the domestic politics turned topsy-turvy within days. That this is not the first visit by [General Ahmad] in the last three months shows the urgency of the ongoing parleys."

If ever there was a paper trail leading to the 9/11 conspirators, these articles provided the print-smear paving. Taken together, they would conjure up the following plausible scenario: Omar Saeed, acting under the direction of General Ahmad and the ISI, had

provided money and "training" (as reported in the Telegraph) to the hijackers while "false-flagging" himself to the hijackers as an operative of al-Qaida. The General, on the other hand, may have represented himself to Omar Saeed as acting exclusively under ISI authority, when in fact he was acting under the direction of his American-Anglo handlers. With Omar Saeed seeding the "legend" of a bona fide money trail leading back to bin Laden, the stage would then be set for Omar Saeed to take the fall as the main patsy providing the smoking gun of al-Qaida complicity for 9/11. Yet at some point, this carefully enacted "legend" began to unravel once Indian intelligence was able to establish (or just mischievously leaked) Saeed's link with General Ahmad, forcing a reluctant FBI - or, alternatively, a cooperative element in the FBI outside of the hermetically compartmentalized loop -- to go along and confirm the findings.

Naturally, in the light of the *Times of India's* Oct. 9 bombshell, somebody would have to organize a prophylactic strategy of damage control. Yet where the original money trail "legend" was carefully, even artfully, crafted, the efforts to perform a partial-birth abortion on it were piecemeal, ill-considered, and -- most damaging of all- worked to highlight the participation of individual accessories in the cover-up campaign.

A comprehensive cover-up strategy would entail four objectives: i) explaining General Ahmad's "sudden retirement"; ii) gradually minimizing the money trail story while subtly transforming it; iii) providing a new "smoking gun"; and iv) carving out an alternative "legend" for Omar Saeed while finding an alternative paymaster. Of the four objectives, the last one would turn out to be the most convoluted.

Meanwhile, the mainstream media -- except for a brief mention by the *Wall Street Journal* - would largely ignore the October 9 *Times of India* item. General Ahmad's "sudden dismissal" was accounted for by *TIME* and *The Washington Post* as being due to his "pro-Taliban" loyalties -- leaving out any mention of an al-Qaida or money trail connection. With General Ahmad thus safely "out of sight", he was also presumably "out of mind." Omar Saeed, on the other hand, represented a trickier problem, as the authorities and the mainstream media -- *CNN* at least -- had already gone on record as fingering him as the 9/11 paymaster. Moreover, Omar Saeed had originally been set up to be a major player in the overall 9/11 "legend".

As we will see, many of the players in this carefully plotted, decade-long "legend" -- Ramzi Yousef, Mohamed Atta, Ramzi Binalshibh (or bin al-shibh), Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Zacarias Moussaoui, and the paymaster role -- were intricately interconnected in a web of activities and unfolding revelations. With the definitive identification of a paymaster now put on hold, the full crystallization of the *Official 9/11 Legend* would also have to await a more opportune time. In the short term, Omar Saeed would have to disappear, yet due to his prior exposure in the media, and in view of his deep involvement with many of the other players in the legend, his role in all this would ultimately have to be accounted for. And so, Omar Saeed would need to be reintegrated back into the 9/11 picture by way of an alternative legend, most of which would play itself out *after* September 11.

As for the formerly snowballing money trail story, post-October 9, it was gradually being ushered to a slow death of irrelevance, awaiting its temporary replacement with a new "smoking gun." In the meantime, the "Mustafa Ahmad" pseudonym was being passed on to a

new owner -- or a number of alternative ones, depending on which media outlet was offering whichever version. In some reports, the paymaster alias would be tagged to an Egyptian "Shayk Saiid". In its November 11, 2001 issue, *Newsweek* bequeathed the alias to a 33 year-old Saudi named "Shaikh Saiid," who was apparently caught on surveillance video picking up a package in Dubai mailed by hijacker Mohammed Atta. On December 18, 2001, the *Associated Press* added further details, revealing that "Shaikh Saiid" was also the alias for bin Laden's brother-in-law, Sa'd al-Sharif. Both items, taken together, would mean that we would have an actual video of bin Laden's brother-in-law picking up a package from one of the hijackers -- a smoking gun if ever there was one, and just one more example of the incredible carelessness by which these throwaway details were revealed as "evidence." In any case, the original smoking gun -- the money trail story -- was officially supplanted earlier in that week, on December 13, 2001, with the worldwide release of the *Official Bin Laden Videotape Confession*.

Now all that remained was to properly dispose of the Omar Saeed "legend." Whether a new "legend" was being crafted for Saeed right after October 9, or considerably later, is a fact that may never be known with certainty. What we do know, however, is that Saeed was later linked to a December 13, 2001 suicide attack on the Indian Parliament in addition to a January 22, 2002 attack on the American Cultural Center in Calcutta.

In fact, January 22, 2002 was a key date for the plan to carve out a new "legend" for Omar Saeed. As we will see, FBI Director Robert Mueller just happened to be on scene in India, awaiting his crucial role in the unfolding drama -- just one day before Daniel Pearl disappeared off the streets of Karachi.

Enter Daniel Pearl

We may never know the true motivation that set Daniel Pearl on a quest that would ultimately lead to his grisly demise. However, thanks to an invaluable article by Robert Sam Anson in the August 2002 issue of *Vanity Fair*, we *do* know which key player was involved in guiding him on his quest for knowledge.

Mansoor Ijaz is not a man widely known outside his circle, but his intimate connections run deep in Washington's power circles. A counter-terror expert, a member of the Council On Foreign Relations, a *Fox News* analyst, as well as a business partner of former CIA Director James Woolsey, Ijaz is represented by the public relations firm of Benador Associates, whose client list reads like a "who's who" of the propaganda heavy-hitters who were pushing for a war in Iraq -- Richard Perle (former Chairman of the Defense Policy Board), Woolsey (also a member of the Defense Policy Board), Iraqi scientist (and chronicler of Saddam's weapons program) Khidir Khamza, former *Washington Times* publisher (and *UPI* chief) Arnaud De Borchgrave, anti-Saddam author Laurie Mylroie, Harvard professor/CIA associate Richard Pipes (mentor of Mylroie, and father of Daniel Pipes), and Frank Gaffney, president of the hard-right Center For Security Policy (of which Perle and Woolsey are on the advisory council).

The interlocking relationships of members of this clique -- or "crew", in the parlance of organized crime -- is indeed a testament to the power of networking, yet the astonishing scope of their most recent activities -- both in the lead-up to and aftermath of 9/11 -- is

perhaps indicative of a more covertly sinister tint in the psychological makeup of some members of the political "power elite."

Ijaz's frequent writing partner, James Woolsey, for example, was one of just 17 participants in a July 2001 bio-warfare exercise dubbed "Dark Winter," a simulation of a mass smallpox attack, co-sponsored by the *ANSER Institute of Homeland Security* and the *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*. Among the other participants was Benador client Arnaud De Borchgrave and New York Times journalist Judith Miller, who had co-authored a book with Benador client Mylroie in the early '90's. Mylroie's book - an attempt at linking Iraq to 9/11 -- was released just weeks after September 11 with a foreword written by James Woolsey. Around the same time, Judith Miller had just launched her own well-publicized book on the germ warfare threat -- within a week or two of her own well-publicized role as one of the very few recipients of an "anthrax" mailing (which turned out not to be anthrax).

As for the anthrax threat, a major principal in the company that holds the exclusive license for the anthrax vaccine is former Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff William Crowe, whose business associate in the consulting firm Global Options is -- you guessed it -- James Woolsey.

As for the present smallpox threat, the man charged with overseeing President Bush's mass vaccination policy was another "Dark Winter" alumnus, Jerry Hauer. Hauer, a former director of Kroll Associates -- the security firm at the helm when the Twin Towers fell -- is also the man who personally pulled strings in order to get senior FBI official John O'Neill his job as head of security at the World Trade Center. O'Neill, who had left a 30-year career in the FBI only two weeks before September 11, had perished in the rubble of the Twin Towers on his very first day at the post. Incidentally, O'Neill just happened to have been the main FBI official in charge of investigating all things bin Laden.

Given the above social contacts, from Daniel Pearl's point of view, Mansoor Ijaz was indeed the man to meet. "He [Pearl] wanted me to introduce him to people who could open doors for him," explained Ijaz in *Vanity Fair*. One of those doors opened to Khalid Khawaja, a former ISI agent whose militant credentials included a longstanding friendship with Osama bin Laden. But Khawaja was a liberal militant, counting among his acquaintances both Ijaz and Woolsey, with whom he carried on a lengthy correspondence.

With Ijaz's letter of reference in hand, Pearl established contact with Khawaja in Pakistan. As reported by Arshad Sharif in a February 14, 2002 item from *Dawn*, "Khawaja claimed that he introduced Mr. Pearl to his contacts and arranged interviews with Taliban diplomats and other people." According to the "official" record of Pearl's journalistic quest, he was on the trail of Richard Reid, otherwise known as the "shoe bomber." According to Anson, Pearl believed that Reid was a follower of Sheikh Mubarak Ali Shah Gilani, "a leader of an obscure Muslim militant group named Jamaat ul-Fuqra."

As Khawaja spins the tale, when Pearl asked for an introduction to Gilani in early January, Khawaja's militant toes went cold. With Khawaja now purportedly out of the picture, Pearl was left to scrounge up his own contacts. Eventually, Pearl found a "connected" militant who went by the name of Chaudry Bashir -- but who was, in actual fact, Omar Saeed clothed in yet another alias. Or so that is the "official" version. If true, our man Saeed had his terrorist

appointment book just about crammed with militant activities at the time, for he was, according to Indian intelligence, intimately involved with the man who took responsibility for the terrorist attack in Calcutta on January 22, 2002 -- just one day before Pearl's disappearance.

On that very day, a militant/gangster by the name of Aftab Ansari called in his claim of responsibility for the carnage. As for his connection with Omar Saeed, here is how the *Times of India* reported it on January 22:

"[Indian] CBI Director P C Sharma told visiting FBI Chief Robert S Mueller that Ansari, who claimed responsibility for [today's Calcutta] attack, had taken a ransom of Rs 37.5 million to free shoe baron Parthapratim Roy Burman through hawala channels to Dubai, CBI sources said. Out of this amount, Omar [Saeed] . . . had sent \$100,000 to Atta through telegraphic transfer, CBI sources said."

What was going on here? Apparently, the January 22 Calcutta incident was the trigger for an update on the "legend" of 9/11 -- and FBI Director Mueller was on scene to play his part in the unfolding drama. Within hours of the January 22 attack, the Indian Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was circulating news that the main suspect in the Calcutta attack, Ansari, had sent money to Omar Saeed, who then sent it on to Mohamed Atta in preparation for the September 11 attacks. No mention was made of the previously reported involvement of the chief of Pakistani intelligence. In fact, *The Times of India* would, within the next few weeks, back away from its October 9 article linking Omar Saeed to the Pakistani General -- perhaps at the behest of Indian intelligence. The 9/11 money, in the CBI's new version, came from an August 2001 kidnapping masterminded by Ansari and Asif Reza Khan. Unfortunately, Khan was not around by this time to confirm it, as he had already been killed in what was believed to be a staged shootout with Indian police several weeks earlier.

The story at this point gets a bit murky, as it becomes difficult to distinguish fact from disinformation, but what is clear is the very real perception of a well-timed and coordinated set-up. The next day -- on January 23, 2002 -- Daniel Pearl disappeared off the streets of Karachi, Pakistan after setting up an appointment to meet Omar Saeed, alias "Bashir", for the first time. Meanwhile, on that very day, Aftab Ansari was arrested by UAE authorities at Dubai International Airport while attempting to board a plane bound for Islamabad. Also on the very day of Pearl's disappearance, the *Los Angeles Times* reinstated Omar Saeed back into "mainstream" view by citing a report by India Today, which mentioned the new *Saeed/Ansari/9/11 Money Trail* connection. The British *Independent*, on January 24, also gave voice to the Saeed revelations stemming from the Indian CBI, throwing in, for good measure, an extensive biography of Omar Saeed. This was followed by a January 27 item in the *Telegraph* that also touched upon Saeed's link to the Calcutta attack.

Why was Omar Saeed suddenly being "resurrected" worldwide within hours of the January 22 attack, after being mostly forgotten after October 9? It should be pointed out that Saeed's purported links to the Pearl kidnapping were not yet "known" until February 5, 2002. In that light, Robert Mueller's subsequent travel itinerary bears closer scrutiny. As reported by the *Los Angeles Times* on January 23, "FBI Director Mueller said Tuesday (i.e. January 22) that Indian authorities provided leads in the search for Al Qaeda members and cells, based on arrests in India." There was no word from Mueller, however, on his reported discussions with the CBI Chief concerning the 9/11 money trail.

The very next day -- January 23 -- Mueller was in Pakistan, just in time for the Pearl kidnapping by Omar Saeed. Of course, Mueller could not have known by then that the person who was mentioned to him the day before as being the 9/11 paymaster would be involved in the Pearl kidnapping the very next day. One might even chalk it up to coincidence -- or maybe not. On January 24, Mueller reportedly took up the matter of Omar Saeed with Pakistan President Musharraf. Was he discussing CBI Chief Sharma's revelations about Omar Saeed and the 9/11 money trail? As later revealed by an "anonymous" Bush administration official, Mueller was formally requesting the extradition of Omar Saeed -- for a 1994 kidnapping of an American tourist.

What, according to the "mainstream" media, prompted this sudden, rather overdue, request? According to the February 24, 2002 issue of *Newsweek*, Saeed was "secretly" indicted back in November 2001 for that obscure kidnapping. As reported by *CNN* on February 28, 2002: "Justice Department officials won't say what prompted that indictment, which came more than six years after the incident." It also came several weeks after Saeed was first outed as the 9/11 paymaster.

The possibility also exists that the November 2001 "secret" indictment was a late February fiction meant to explain Mueller's sudden interest in Omar Saeed. For good measure, timed with the *Newsweek* revelation, Wendy Chamberlin, the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, revealed to *CBS News* that she had preceded Mueller's request with an informal approach to Musharraf concerning Saeed's extradition a few months before. The reader would be cautioned as to drawing any firm conclusions as to the true nature of the "secret" November indictment. Instead, one should focus on the compelling circumstantial evidence of a disinformation campaign that appears to be organized around a number of conveniently timed set-ups. According to *CNN*, Mueller was also the one who first informed Musharraf of the Pearl kidnapping. So, to recap: only two days after the *Times of India* reported Mueller's discussions with the CBI concerning the Omar Saeed link to 9/11, Mueller reportedly discussed Omar Saeed *only* in connection with an obscure 1994 kidnapping, while broaching a new kidnapping that occurred the day before, which, in a matter of weeks, would publicly be linked to . . . Omar Saeed.

Incidentally, the FBI also happened to be instrumental in coordinating Saeed's eventual capture as the Pearl kidnap mastermind. As the "official" story had it soon after Saeed's "official" arrest on February 12, the case was solved when the authorities successfully traced a series of e-mails back to one of Saeed's alleged accomplices, who then confessed that he was only acting under Saeed's orders. The government's case, as reported by Zarar Khan of the *Associated Press* on July 1, 2002, "rests heavily on technical FBI evidence, which traced the e-mails to fellow defendant Fahad Naseem."

Mueller, incidentally, also played a crucial role in arranging for the deportation of Aftab Ansari from the UAE to India. Ansari, by reason of the Calcutta bombing, was delivered to Indian custody on February 9, just three days before Omar Saeed was "officially" arrested for the Pearl kidnapping. In short, these two purported 9/11 partners had been arrested separately in the same week of February for crimes they had separately committed in the same week of January.

Meanwhile, Daniel Pearl's chaperone, the "militant" Khalid Khawaja, was beginning to feel

the heat due to his involvement in managing Pearl's appointment book. For a presumed partisan of bin Laden, Khawaja seemed to be unduly concerned about the bad press that Pearl's disappearance was garnering him. According to a February 15, 2002 article in *Dawn* by Arshad Sharif: " Khawaja said it was on the intervention of [Mansoor] Ijaz that *Newsweek* toned down its article which was allegedly raising an accusing finger on him." In a typical example of post-9/11 news management, Khawaja -- presumed friend of Osama bin Laden -- shared his correspondence from editor Gretel Kovach of *Newsweek*:

"If it is of any consolation, you may have read in the e-mails I sent Mansoor that the *Newsweek* article would have been much stronger in pointing the finger at you as the person who led Danny into trouble. Thankfully, I spoke with Mansoor and was able to offer a contrary account -- that you refused Danny's request, and that others tricked him into thinking he could meet Gilani."

Mansoor Ijaz -- fellow propagandist and business partner of the ubiquitous James Woolsey -- wasn't exactly a disinterested party in the matter, for if it was Khawaja who had led Pearl to his ultimate fate, so, too, by association, would suspicion lie with Ijaz, who had sent Pearl on to Khawaja.

Meanwhile, Omar Saeed appeared to be at the very broiling geo-political center of the Pakistan-India stand-off. With Indian authorities publicly highlighting Omar Saeed as the poster boy of Pakistani terrorism, using him as a cudgel to prod the reluctant Americans into action against the Pakistani ISI, one could read Mueller's trip to the region as an effort to broker the competing interests of these incompatible allies in the so-called War on Terror. Publicly, Mueller was in India on January 22 as part of a U.S.-Indo Working Group on Counter-Terrorism. But as we do not have access to the minutes of those meetings, we might surmise that, behind closed doors, Mueller was negotiating with his Indian counterparts the final dispensation of Omar Saeed within the overall 9/11 Legend. Not that negotiations were going particularly smoothly -- as evidenced by the upsurge in daring attacks against Indian interests in the few months previous. Yet it seems that a quid-pro-quo had been worked out along the following lines: the Indian authorities would excise the ISI Chief from their version of 9/11 and instead splice in a less incriminating "gangster" from Dubai as the partner of paymaster Omar Saeed. In return, the Americans would redouble their efforts in moving against terror groups based out of Pakistan.

Mueller, for his part, would deal with this new version of the *Omar Saeed/Money Trail Story* in the same manner that he dealt with the older version -- by ignoring it. With the Indian CBI now circulating this new version of the *Omar Saeed/ Money Trail Story* to various mainstream Western newspapers in the wake of the January 22 Calcutta attack, Mueller would publicly go on record as reserving judgment as to the true culprits and motives behind that incident -- while assisting India behind-the-scenes in arranging for the deportation and arrest of Aftab Ansari. And while the Indian press was widely presenting the Calcutta attack as an Ansari/ISI production, according to the January 23, 2002 *Indian Express*, the Indian government was backing down on pushing an ISI link to Calcutta after consultation with the U.S. government. Why the apparent U.S. squeamishness concerning the ISI in regards to the Calcutta attack? Perhaps due to its proximity to the latest *Omar Saeed/Ansari/Money Trail Story* being marketed by the Indians -- for if the American aim was to gradually erase Omar Saeed from the 9/11 paymaster role and place him in a *post-9/11* context, Omar Saeed would have to come by his ISI connections through a different route, one that would in fact *distance* him from his reported role on September 11. In other words, the Americans would need to

muddy the waters over Omar Saeed and the role of the 9/11 paymaster.

It wouldn't be easy. As reported by Paul Sperry of WorldNetDaily on January 30, 2002 (i.e. one week before Omar Saeed was first outed as a suspect in the Pearl kidnapping):

"India's Central Bureau of Investigation is turning up evidence that is proving inconvenient for the Bush administration as it tries to maintain its shaky alliance with Pakistan. As administration officials, led by State Secretary Colin Powell, praise Pakistan for its help in the war on terrorism, FBI agents responding to Indian leads are quietly investigating Pakistan-based terrorist groups connected to al-Qaida and the Sept. 11 hijacking."

In other words, India was apparently putting the screws to the Americans. If the Americans, for purely pragmatic reasons, had opted to cozy up to the Musharraf regime, India needed insurance to hedge against the possibility that its strategic interests would be harmed through this likely temporary alliance. In that context, it would be somewhat naive to assume that India just happened to "discover" the *Omar Saeed/ ISI Chief/ 9/11* connection through one of those ubiquitous cell phone "intercepts" -- for as early as September 23, 2001, the British government was reported as seeking India's help in locating Omar Saeed. Moreover, in view of the fact that the Mustafa Ahmad paymaster alias *also* made its debut on that very day through Bush's Global Terrorist Executive Order, there is perhaps another plausible explanation for India's apparent obsession with Omar Saeed and his activities.

Flashback: Assembling The Legend

As we shall see, the various elements of the 9/11 Legend were assembled with the help of a number of international players. Through the Pakistani ISI (an organization, in fact, with close historical ties to the CIA and British intelligence), the Taliban were armed and installed as the resident overlords of Afghanistan. Under the watchful eye of German intelligence, lead hijacker Mohamed Atta would set up his Hamburg "cell" of conspirators, sharing a flat with senior al-Qaida operative Ramzi Binalshibh. Through French authorities, particularly with the assistance of Judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere (a friend of John O'Neill), Zacarias Moussaoui (arrested August 2001) and senior Al-Qaida leader Abu Zubaydah (the first "big fish" captured in March 2002) would work their way into the official 9/11 Legend. By way of Spanish Police Chief Juan Cotino (who was also a senior figure in Europol), other al-Qaida cells were discovered as further proof of bin Laden's global reach. In fact, as the 9/11 Legend would have it, Mohamed Atta had rendezvoused with Ramzi Binalshibh in Spain sometime in July 2001, where the two presumably made final preparations for September 11. Around the same time, the FBI's lead point man on al-Qaida, John O'Neill, was in Madrid to discuss counter-terror issues with Police Chief Cotino. Thereafter, O'Neill made his last public appearance (before his retirement the next month) at a counter-terror conference held at a three-star hotel in the Spanish resort town of Salou -- coincidentally, only a few days before Mohammed Atta had checked into the *very same* hotel in *his* last international trip before September 11 (a curious fact reported in John Miller's book "The Cell"). Atta's previous trip to Madrid had been in January 2001, within days of the very first Europol Conference On Terrorism, also held in Madrid.

Finally, the United Kingdom served as a major transit point, educational center, and source of "evidence" pointing to the hijackers and various al-Qaida operatives -- most notably,

Omar Saeed, Zacarias Moussaoui, and Richard Reid, the so-called "shoe bomber." Thus, the very countries that were so prominent in furnishing the various elements of the 9/11 Legend -- "burnishing" it with a globalized gloss -- also happened to be the same countries that served as senior partners in the War On Terror.

The fact that France and Germany have since headed up opposition to the War In Iraq should not be taken as an irreconcilable contradiction in this regard. Rather, just the opposite. As we shall see, a strategy to cast doubt on the War In Iraq -- fuelled by elements in the CIA and some of the more vociferous supporters of the War On Terror - has actually worked to *strengthen* the credibility of the overall 9/11 Legend. In counter-point to that strategy lies a fall-back option that "localizes" any potential conspiracy to a "rogue" clique of "hawks" holding President Bush in their ideological sway -- the markedly Jewish and pro-Israeli neo-conservatives, an apparent CIA "cut-out" helmed by Richard Mellon Scaife during the Clinton years, then by Richard Cheney in the early months after 9/11 before he mostly disappeared from public view along with his defibrillator, and most famously now, by Richard Perle (a product of the RAND Corporation).

As I argued previously in *The Propaganda Preparation For 9/11*, the Saudis, Pakistanis, and Israelis were set up as the primary alternate foreign patsies to divert attention from the far more plausible (and obvious) involvement of the U.S./U.K./E.U., the very alliance which now spearheads the War On Terror even as it choreographs the *Official 9/11 Legend*. As we shall see, with the relatively recent prominence of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed as 9/11 mastermind, Iraq now takes its place as a plausible patsy (particularly since Colin Powell's introduction of a new al-Qaeda leader by the name of Abu Musab Zarqawi, a Baghdad-based Palestinian whose legend and motives will no doubt grow out of the recently completed War In Iraq). With regard to the Saudis, their actual involvement was more indirect -- as they financed the various Pakistani *madrassas* (Muslim yeshivas) that served as a farming system for the hordes of wild-eyed Wahhabi idealists looking to set up camp in Afghanistan. Still, their domination of the Middle East media served to give an impression -- to Western eyes - that bin Laden was more intimately known among the Arab/Muslim masses than he was by an insular clique in the Western security establishment.

Heading up that clique was Richard A. Clarke, who joined the National Security Council under the first President Bush, and stayed there under Clinton. As reported by Lawrence Wright in *The New Yorker*, "In the web of federal agencies concerned with terror, Clarke was the spider." Tim Weiner of the *New York Times* wrote of Clarke on February 1, 1999: "He has placed proteges in key diplomatic and intelligence positions, creating a network of loyalty and solidifying his power."

It was Clarke who, together with John O'Neill, "discovered" bin Laden as a global terrorist mastermind. Here, as reported by Lawrence Wright in *The New Yorker*, was Clarke's version of his discovery: "*We'd [O'Neill and I] see CIA reports that referred to 'financier Osama bin Laden' and we'd ask ourselves, 'Who the hell is he?' The more we drilled down, the more we realized he was not just a financier -- he was the leader. John said, 'We've got to get this guy. He's building a network. Everything leads back to him.' Gradually the CIA came along with us.*"

Presumably, Clarke had help in marketing bin Laden -- for bin Laden himself would soon

enough make his high profile media debut as the declared enemy of American interests the world over, thereby giving the world's only superpower a plausibly sophisticated foe who would overshadow the efforts of one Muslim fanatic (Ramzi Yousef, World Trade Center '93) or one right-wing nutcase (Timothy McVeigh, Oklahoma '95). Meanwhile, the gregarious John O'Neill would make the global rounds, liaising with various counterparts as he shadowed the presumed activities of Osama bin Laden. In other words, if one were theoretically to posit the type of operatives who would be most suited to running a highly compartmentalized "op" to develop a global legend of Osama bin Laden, one could find no more conveniently placed men than Richard Clarke and John O'Neill. Where Clarke would manage the national security rank-and-file through his network of loyalists, O'Neill would be the globetrotter, coordinating the unfolding legend through his counterparts in various countries.

In short, Clarke and O'Neill would theoretically be conducting their activities in "plain sight." Under the cover of *counter*-terrorism, O'Neill would be building a terror legend fit for the New World Order -- in the same manner that Oliver North in the '80s employed the cover of counter-terrorism to conduct, on behalf of Vice-President Bush, the illegal arms dealing operations popularly known as *Iran-Contra* (for which North took a decidedly light rap as the designated patsy). The main difference would be that where North would eventually be tagged as the *moron* of *Iran-Contra*, O'Neill would take his place as the *martyr* of 9/11.

In the few months leading up to September 11, O'Neill -- for the first time in his 30-year career with the FBI -- would make the headlines in two separate scandals. The first, reported in July 2001, concerned O'Neill's dispute with Ambassador Barbara Bodine in Yemen, where O'Neill was reportedly pursuing al-Qaida links to the U.S.S. Cole bombing. As the story had it, O'Neill was too much the cowboy for Bodine's tastes, and so she summarily banned him from returning to Yemen. The second scandal, reported in August 2001, concerned a briefcase of classified documents that O'Neill had misplaced during a convention in Tampa. Considering the resolution of the latter scandal -- the documents were found, "untouched," a couple hours later -- it seemed much ado about nothing. Yet in the light of O'Neill's subsequent death as head of security for the World Trade Center on September 11, the scandals began to take on a more suspicious tint. Was O'Neill digging too deep? A maverick who stepped on too many feet in his efforts to bulldog his way through the hierarchy? Put bluntly, had the maverick been taken down a notch by a bloated bureaucracy beholden to a "cover-your-ass" ethic? As Richard Clarke, Jerry Hauer, John Miller, Chris Isham, and O'Neill's friends/colleagues at Kroll Associates would spin it, O'Neill's was the lone voice shouting in the wilderness, warning all who would listen about the approaching bin Laden threat before falling himself, "ironically", at the hands of bin Laden.

It was an ingenious cover story -- for if O'Neill was a crucial operative in *assembling* the al-Qaida elements that fed into the 9/11 Legend, then O'Neill's crystallized role as official 9/11 *martyr* would forever obscure the trail to September 11, and, by extension, leave his most intimate comrades and contacts out of the suspect category. In short, it would be like reconstructing the murder of Nicole Simpson without O.J. in the tale. With O'Neill cast as martyr, 9/11 critics would now be left with a mishmash of innuendos and bits and pieces of shadowy conspiracies: Israeli spy rings that trail off into the ether of *Fox News*; passenger lists with missing hijackers; and abandoned "put" options. If the shadowy conspiracy had a

face, it was in the image of either Dick Cheney or Richard Perle. But then again, who marketed *them* as the latest powers behind the throne? Where were the folks who brought us *BCCI*, *Iran-Contra*, and the *Warren Commission*? Where were James Baker, Zbigniew Brzezinski, David Rockefeller, Kissinger?

Assembling The 9/11 Counter-Legends (or, *Stacking Your Patsies*)

The events of September 11 gave birth to three parallel threads -- or counter-legends -- pointing the way to the culpability of three possible foreign suspects, or patsies - namely, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Israel. Of the three, the Saudis were the patsies of choice for the mainstream "critics", who were a motley assortment of neo-cons, FBI investigators, or "retired" national security types opposed to the war in Iraq. The Pakistan/ISI thread to 9/11 flared up most noticeably in the events surrounding the death of Daniel Pearl and the alleged involvement of Omar Saeed Sheikh -- events which were used, in fact, to smother the Pakistani/ISI connection to the 9/11 money trail. As regards Israel, the most radical opponents of the War On Terror were nursed on the twin threads of an Israeli spy ring and a neo-con cabal supposedly at the helm of the Bush Administration.

It was not by accident that these three countries were chosen to play the role of second-tier patsies -- for each of them contained insular cliques of operatives which had played seminal roles in the covert arms and drug trade -- in cahoots with their more senior Anglo-American handlers -- throughout the Reagan-Bush years. Moreover, these countries would make useful patsies for the very reason that they were essentially outside the "established" -- i.e. Euro-American -- ring of nations. In other words, if insular cliques of criminal operatives were to be ferreted out of Germany, France, or Italy, no one would think to brand these nations wholesale with the mark of Cain. The same could not be said of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Israel, whose very security -- physical, political, and economic -- would be staked to the publicized activities of their own respective political/criminal cliques.

Moreover, much of the political and corporate elites within these countries were integrally networked with their American counterparts -- indeed, largely subservient to them -- to such a degree that they would also serve as useful proxies in building their own counter-legends under Anglo-Euro-American supervision. In the early stages of the 9/11 Legend, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan were employed as the central bases for building up a terrorist home front within the borders of Afghanistan. As for Israel -- despite its aforementioned spy ring and its supposedly allied neo-con "cabal" -- its most *direct* and public contribution to the 9/11 Legend in fact occurred *after* 9/11, with the November 2002 coordinated attack on an Israeli-owned hotel and airliner in Kenya -- an attack for which Israeli investigators now marshaled evidence as proof of Osama bin Laden's opening shot against the State of Israel (which was more likely Israel's "buy-in" in return for a promised attack on the Saddam Hussein regime).

Thus, evidence could be amassed to cast aspersions on the activities of each of these three countries, depending on the intended audience. On another level, political elites within these countries could be assured that any aspersions would be relegated to insular "rogue" cliques. In the case of Saudi Arabia, a few princes of the Saudi royal family were thus eliminated within days of one another in 2002. In the case of Pakistan, "rogue" elements within the ISI were publicly purged in the months after 9/11. Yet in the case of Israel, its apparent "buy-in"

through the 2002 Kenya attack served to strengthen, rather than weaken, the thread connecting Israel as a possible 9/11 culprit. If, in the context of this article, this would appear to be a short-sighted strategy by Israeli political elites, one can only surmise that these elites were blinded -- or assured -- by an apparent post-9/11 geo-strategic shift in favor of Israeli interests (i.e. an attack on Iraq) in conjunction with a publicly affirmed surge in influence among its supposed neo-con allies.

With three alternative counter-legends in place to co-exist with the *Official* (i.e. mainstream) *9/11 Legend*, the stage was thereby set to muddy the real trail leading to the events of September 11. With the participation of a global network of well-connected *spinmeisters* - both passive and active -- each of the 9/11 threads could thus be nurtured through a series of carefully calibrated revelations.

Of all the 9/11 *spinmeisters*, one of the most effective -- and therefore damaging -- was Jean-Charles Brisard, co-author with Guillaume Dasquie of *The Forbidden Truth*. Brisard burst on to the mainstream scene shortly after September 11 as one of the first "credible" critics of 9/11, weaving a trail of seemingly incriminating red herrings that will, in all probability, tie up a number of otherwise industrious conspiracy researchers for decades. In Brisard and Dasquie's version of 9/11, the main protectors of al-Qaida were the Saudis, who in turn were protected by greedy oil interests which sought -- through the State Department -- to obstruct any investigations that might unsettle their Saudi business associates. To nail down the point, Brisard recounted his summer 2001 meeting with John O'Neill, in which a frustrated, scandal-ridden O'Neill purportedly confided to Brisard that the "answer" to the al-Qaida riddle lay in Saudi Arabia. For good measure, Brisard had the well-timed implosion of Enron as a backdrop for his revelation, implicating this now-dead shell of a corporation in a stubborn push for an oil pipeline through Afghanistan (though senior Enron exec -- and CIA offspring -- Frank Wisner, Jr., was, as it happens, also one of the 17 elite "players" in the aforementioned "Dark Winter" exercise).

Through Brisard (in addition to Pakistani Foreign Minister Niaz Naik), we learned that the U.S. had made plans as early as June of 2001 to invade Afghanistan by October of that year. During that summer, as Brisard chronicled it, a number of nations -- including Iran, Russia, and India -- got together for a four-day conference in Berlin, where the dispute with the Taliban was broached by U.S. diplomats. The U.S. demanded that the Taliban hand over bin Laden (in addition to negotiating for pipeline rights). Otherwise, the Americans threatened to blanket Afghanistan with "a carpet of bombs."

Brisard's initial theory, then, was that this threat *prompted* bin Laden to launch a pre-emptive attack against the very nation that was now placing him in imminent peril. Brisard also seemed to implicate Bush, Sr. by way of his Carlyle Group interests. But in the end, as Brisard essentially kept bin Laden in place as the *sole* 9/11 culprit, the aspersions cast on the Bushes, the State Department, "oil interests", et al, would not amount to much -- at least from a legal standpoint. At most, these parties could be judged as too blinded by greed to recognize -- and pre-empt -- the very real threat from al-Qaida. However you clothed Brisard's revelations, the "official" 9/11 Legend remained in place. Al-Qaida was still the defendant (albeit with a new excuse), O'Neill was still a martyr (albeit with a new Saudi gripe), and the Saudis were still suspicious (albeit with possibly a new gripe against Brisard). Brisard, incidentally, also happened to have written -- for French intelligence -- the first

comprehensive report on the financial structure of al-Qaida, a copy of which was furnished to the Bush administration. Thus do national security types and their 9/11 critics have a deeper understanding of the 9/11 Legend courtesy of the efforts of Jean-Charles Brisard.

Brisard's co-author, Guillaume Dasquie, also comes by his own intelligence connections, by way of his role as editor of *Intelligence Online*. It was through Dasquie's efforts that *Intelligence Online*, in March 2002, announced that it had come into possession of a 61-page "secret" DEA report on a large Israeli spy ring of "art students" who were casing federal buildings several months before September 11. The "leaking" of this document, in conjunction with Carl Cameron's December 2001 *Fox News* report on the spy ring, ignited an online firestorm among 9/11 critics -- pointing the way, for some, to the Israelis as the main operative agents behind September 11.

Yet, as we shall see, in the campaign to paint Israel as the main suspect, here was a case of mostly right wing sources doling out the goods for largely left wing consumption (with the obvious exception of Justin Raimondo, a political supporter of, and former speechwriter for, Pat Buchanan). Thus, while the likes of Stephen Emerson, Daniel Pipes, and John Loftus were doing the lecture circuit at Jewish Community Centers across North America, regaling this influential community with insinuations of possible Saudi and/or Iraqi involvement in 9/11, a more covert -- and subtle -- plan was afoot to plant the seeds of a new Jewish neocon/Zionist conspiracy among the left wing (i.e. the traditional foothold of the bulk of the American Jewish community).

This relatively recent campaign to subvert the left with visions of a Jewish neocon/Zionist conspiracy dovetailed nicely with a more longstanding covert campaign -- dating back more than thirty years -- to build up a small but powerful right wing contingent of Jews to wean the rest from their knee-jerk liberalism (and thereby sap the strength and vigor of the traditional Democrat wing). The species of the Jewish "neo" conservative is best represented by Irving Kristol, a self-admitted former Trotskyite who had been a member of the "left-wing" Congress of Cultural Freedom (later exposed as a CIA front) before making a "sudden" right turn in the late sixties, bringing along with him a few other like-minded "disillusioned" Jews from CIA-funded "leftist" groups. The typical neo-conservative was "neo" in the sense that he would continue to hold liberal social values while espousing hard right (i.e. pro-corporate) economic views and a hawkish foreign policy -- pretty much the course that American society has taken in the thirty-odd years since Kristol made his ideological "shift."

Though the history is far more complex and detailed than indicated above, the crux of the point is this: in order to neutralize the influential American Jewish community on the subject of civil rights and domestic dissent (where they historically predominated), it was not sufficient only to wean the Jews from the left, but to *turn* the left against the Jews by now slurring them as right wing, Zionist "imperialists" (best exemplified by Richard Perle, who is actually more a product of the national security community than of the Jewish community).

In concert with this strategy was a plan -- also dating back more than thirty years -- to wean the South from the Democrats by promoting a fundamentalist Christianity that grew in counter-point to the overall loosening social values. The typical fundamentalist Christian Republican would hold conservative social views while espousing hard right (i.e.

pro-corporate) economic views and a hawkish foreign policy (best exemplified by John Ashcroft, who is actually more a product of a deeply cynical political community than of the community of belief).

With that background in mind, we may now touch upon the national security/conservative clique which has furnished most of the information concerning Israeli perfidy and 9/11. For our purposes, the story begins on May 7, 1997, when Nora Boustany of *The Washington Post* first broached the existence of *Mega*, a suspected code name for a suspected Israeli mole within the upper echelons of the Clinton government. As reported by Boustany, the National Security Agency had intercepted a request from a Mossad operative to view a diplomatic letter from Yasser Arafat. When the operative was heard to ask his superior for the assistance of someone or something called *Mega*, he received the reply, "We don't use *Mega* for this."

The story, in fact, broke on the very day when South Korean spy Robert C. Kim was scheduled to deliver a guilty plea after a plea bargain -- a similar bargain that was, in fact, *dishonored* in the case of convicted Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard in the mid-80's. Kim, like Pollard, had worked in the Office of Naval Intelligence, though Pollard had worked in the counter-terrorism section. A week before the *Mega* story broke -- on April 30, 1997 -- Pollard had petitioned the Israeli High Court to compel the Israeli government to reveal what it knew about his case. If a battle was brewing between Pollard supporters (Likud/ neocon elements) and opponents (the Bush/ Baker clique/ Woolsey/the national intelligence apparatus), the May 7 *Mega* leak by way of the National Security Agency seemed to head it off, publicly raising the specter of yet another Israeli mole. And then the story ultimately went cold, with no official resolution and -- most crucially -- no hard details by which to flesh out this possible mole hunt.

Yet Jeffrey Steinberg of Lyndon LaRouche's *Executive Intelligence Review* has attempted to draw a line between this morsel of an item and a *Mega Group* that was mentioned by Lisa Miller in the *Wall Street Journal* on May 4, 1998. In Steinberg's telling, the *Mega Group* is, in fact, the shadowy *Mega* from the Boustany article. As Steinberg put it, the *Mega Group* - a select group of Jewish billionaires including Bronfman, Steinhardt, Spielberg, Tisch, and others -- had come together to influence U.S. security policy toward Israel. Yet that was a disingenuous -- and I dare say, dishonest -- reading of the Miller article. In other words -- and this was very clear from the Miller article -- their main concern was *assimilation* and *philanthropy*, not Israeli national security issues, as Steinberg had reported. But Steinberg's technique was all too typical -- mischievously weaving two totally disconnected items so as to give the *impression* that he was uncovering bona fide evidence of a fully known Jewish/Israeli conspiracy.

Yet taking the thread of a burgeoning Israeli spy conspiracy further, in May 2000, J. Michael Waller and Paul M. Rodriguez of *Insight* magazine (the sister publication of the ultra-right wing *Washington Times*, which is in turn owned by the Moonies) broke the story that the Israelis had possibly compromised U.S. government phone lines, giving them access to sensitive information. Carl Cameron of *Fox News* followed this up on May 5, 2000 by reporting on the investigation into the Israeli-founded company AMDOCS, describing "an alleged penetration of U.S. government phone systems."

This thread was also taken up by Gordon Thomas, the MI5 (British intelligence) connected editor of the website *Globe-Intel*. Thomas, in his book, *Gideon's Spies*, broached the subject of the Israeli infiltration of the Clinton White House by way of the *Mega* mole. He also had alleged that the Mossad had a possible role in the death of Princess Diana; that the Mossad tapped Monica Lewinsky's phone in order to pick up her conversations with President Clinton; and that the Israelis stole the sophisticated *PROMIS* software, which eventually ended up in the possession of Osama bin Laden. Incidentally, Gordon Thomas holds himself out as a friend and intimate confidant of Mossad insiders. We shall return to Thomas shortly, for he -- like Brisard and Dasquie -- has also played a significant part in lining up new alternate 9/11 suspects (most recently China, in his book *Seeds of Fire*).

Picking up the thread, in March 2001 -- significantly, several months before September 11 -- the U.S. National Counterintelligence Center sent out an advisory for federal employees to be aware that a number of young Israelis were approaching federal agents at their offices and at their residences throughout the country, passing themselves off as art students looking to sell their work -- but more peculiarly, *identifying* themselves as *Israeli* art students, thereby "red-flagging" themselves for the benefit of the National Counterintelligence Center. A few months after September 11, Carl Cameron -- in December of 2001 -- once more visited the issue of Israeli penetration, this time naming a second Israeli company, Comverse Infosys, as having access to nearly all wiretaps placed by U.S. law enforcement. As part of a four-part series for *Fox News*, Cameron also cited a "secret" DEA report that chronicled the actions of the aforementioned Israeli "art student" spy ring. Soon after a transcript of Cameron's report was uploaded on the *Fox News* website, it was taken offline and purged from the archives -- a presumed cover-up that actually raised far more suspicions over Israeli/Jewish influence than the report itself.

Perhaps that was the intended effect -- as the purpose would be to "red flag" this item for an "alternative" online audience, not for the mainstream couch potatoes who were wedded to the *Official 9/11 Legend* in any case. Was Cameron simply a dedicated journalist who was muzzled by his conservative, pro-Israeli, employers at *Fox*? Or was he rather a passive disinformation asset, coyly nursing the Israeli thread when told to do so? On May 13, 2002, with government warnings of a follow-up terrorist attack seeding the media zeitgeist, Cameron red-flagged the Israelis once more, this time reporting that a rental truck with traces of TNT was pulled over near an army base in the State of Washington. Once again, suspicious Israelis were discovered as occupants, and once again, the news suspiciously disappeared from the airwaves.

There was a curious parallel to the manner by which various Israelis tended to be "pulled over" in the *Israeli/9/11 Counter-Legend* as opposed to the manner by which various al-Qaida operatives tended to incriminate themselves through those fortuitous cell phone and email "intercepts" in the *al-Qaida/9/11 Legend*. On June 23, 2002, *ABC News* picked up the earlier story of five "suspicious" Israelis celebrating on the roof of their van in the wake of September 11. When the police had pulled them over and searched the contents of the van, sure enough, they found . . . box cutters. And just as sure enough, this story also "suspiciously" vanished without a follow-up. It is also a curious fact that former CIA counterterrorism chief/ *ABC News* consultant Vincent Cannistraro lent his own spin on that report. As I had pointed out in *The Propaganda Preparation For 9/11*, and as I will show further in this article, Cannistraro has "spun" a great deal of information on the 9/11 Legend.

While the spy ring story has been neglected by much of the mainstream media, it nevertheless remains in the background, ready to be "mainstreamed" if or when the "official" 9/11 Legend begins to show cracks (or if the resident Israeli government proves to be troublesome). As I have pointed out, much of the first-hand revelations of Israeli penetrations have come not from alternative sources, but from well-established, "credible" *conservative* sources highly placed within the intelligence apparatus. While Daniel Pipes (CFR member and former Defense Department employee) made a disingenuous attempt at discrediting the spy ring story, the actual DEA report that was acquired by Dasquie's *Intelligence Online* was confirmed as authentic on February 25, 2002 by Will Glaspy of the DEA's public affairs bureau. Moreover, according to a May 5, 2002 report in *Le Monde*, Cameron's four-part *Fox* broadcast was shown and cleared with the CIA, FBI, and NSA before its airing. Clearly, *somebody* high up wants this out in the ether.

Yet it is a curious fact that some of this information comes from sources which are traditionally known to be friendly to Israeli interests. For instance, J. Michael Waller, who wrote the *Insight* piece with Paul M. Rodriguez, is a member of the right wing, pro-Israel Center For Security Policy, which, according to the Center's own site, includes an "extraordinary number of members of the Center's National Security Advisory Council" in the top echelons of the Bush Administration. Waller, incidentally, also wrote an *Insight* piece entitled "Preparing For The Next Pearl Harbor Attack" -- just a few months before 9/11 -- in which he described the plan for a *Homeland Security Agency*, as recommended by the Hart-Rudman Commission report (yes, they had the "homeland security" blueprint in place several months *before* 9/11).

As for Waller's associate, Paul M. Rodriguez -- the managing editor of *Insight* -- has had a history of printing incriminating items that don't quite circulate yet get the point across all the same. One particularly creepy example concerns an *Insight* piece that Rodriguez wrote in 1989, reporting on a pedophile ring in the nation's capital, linking one of its participants to Donald Gregg, a senior aide to President Bush. Since then, Gregg has served as Ambassador to South Korea and as head of the Korea Society. This might have *something* to do with the fact that the Moonies, owner of *Insight*, have been rumored to be a front for the South Korean CIA. Incidentally, since President George H.W. Bush has left office, he has put in a considerable number of appearances at Moonie functions.

As for Gordon Thomas of *Globe-Intel*, it turns out that he has been a major contributor to the *Israel/9/11/ Counter-Legend* in addition to his other contributions to Israeli legends. Perchance he had come by this good fortune through his father-in-law, a former MI5 British intelligence operative who had introduced Thomas to so many of his intelligence contacts. Adding his own "insider" gloss to the spy ring tale, Thomas is a source for the claim that Israel sent out spies to infiltrate al-Qaida in the U.S., writing that Israel sent warnings about the impending attacks to the Bush administration through French and German intelligence.

In his May 21, 2002 article for *Globe-Intel*, Thomas -- in a Mossad "insider" scoop -- revealed that Israeli Prime Minister Sharon in fact *authorized* a "leak" of documents showing that Bush was warned by Israel of the approaching al-Qaida threat by virtue of Israel's comprehensive infiltration of al-Qaida cells on *American* soil. In other words, Sharon wanted to *prove* to Bush (and to *Globe-Intel* readers?) that his Mossad agents -- art students, perhaps? -- had learned of 9/11 over coffee with Mohammed Atta. As Thomas put it:

"Sharon's reaction is a calculated response to growing claims that Mossad has been running spy operations in the United States . . ." A *calculated response*? Either Thomas is serving us up some fairly heavy British intelligence disinformation (false-flagged as a Mossad scoop), or he's implying that Sharon was on some pretty serious weed at the time -- for insisting with documented proof that, yes, his own agents *did* in fact illegally spy on U.S. territory, and what's *more*, did *lunch* with the 9/11 hijackers. Yet given Thomas' record of pinning likely British intelligence "hits" on the Mossad -- Princess Diana, Robert Maxwell, etc. -- I'm willing to bet that the former is the case.

In that context, it is perhaps curious that Thomas -- like Brisard -- has chosen to use John O'Neill, this time in order to weave a counter-legend of Israel at the center of a global criminal network. In his latest book on Robert Maxwell, Thomas alleges that Maxwell was an Israeli "super-spy" who, in the words of John O'Neill, "was at the heart of the global criminal network." Thomas writes that O'Neill's contribution to the book was "enormous" -- which is indeed interesting, as the book covers much of the corruption wrought through the British/C.I.A./ *BCCI* networks, though Thomas employs O'Neill to "spin" the global corruption instead as the joint work of Israel (via Maxwell) and Russian criminal gangs.

Thomas' fellow *Globe-Intel* editors are also an interesting bunch. One fellow editor, the British *Sunday Express* correspondent Yvonne Ridley, had made her own entry into the 9/11 Legend as a high-profile captive of the Taliban. Ridley, who claimed that the British government were inciting the Taliban to kill her by implying that she was their covert agent, was fortunately released by her captors on October 8, 2001, just one day after the invasion of Afghanistan had begun. Given such a grave accusation, one wonders why she would subsequently take up office space with an MI5 "groupie" (Thomas) -- unless, of course, she had now established her bona fides as a "credible" source of disinformation.

Rounding out the *Globe-Intel* editorial group is terrorism expert Martin Dillon, who wrote a well-circulated tribute to his friend John O'Neill, substantiating the official legend that O'Neill was "frustrated" by State Department efforts to block his pursuit of bin Laden.

In reading the detailed revelations of Brisard, Dasquie, and Thomas, one enters the proverbial hall of mirrors, where subtle truths reflect back upon themselves as half-lies, and perceptions splinter amid a cascade of contradictions. Such is the world of the disinformation operative. As a first defense, all you need to know is *when* you're in it, not particularly *what's* in it.

Still, a more curious case is that of John Loftus, a long-standing Catholic friend of the Jews who had served in the Justice Department's Nazi-hunting unit, where he had discovered -- through CIA archives -- the depth of the CIA program to smuggle in Nazi war criminals through "ratlines" to the United States after the Second World War. In his book, *The Secret War Against The Jews*, Loftus documented in painful detail the anti-Semitic history of the powerful Anglo-American "Establishment", the *Wasp* clique which, through their oil and industrial holdings, has had a stranglehold on American foreign -- and military -- policy for close to a century. Loftus, clearly intimate with a great many operatives in the intelligence community -- whom he refers to as the "old spies" -- had posited that the Jews were repeatedly used as pawns and scapegoats in the grand match played out by these men on the geopolitical chessboard. Loftus' reading of this Establishment -- which encompasses the

likes of the Rockefellers, the Dulles brothers, the Bakers, and the Bushes - dovetails nicely with the writings of scholars like Peter Dale Scott (whose personal integrity and research skills are beyond question). In other words, Loftus knows who is the *real* power behind the throne.

Yet in the light of 9/11, it appears that Loftus has put on his blinders, going out on the lecture circuit and offering the warmed-over neo-conservative view that September 11 was essentially the work of wicked Saudis intent on destabilizing the West by priming the terror pumps with their oil wealth. More ominously, Loftus was offering his audiences a neocon bird's eye view into the near future (courtesy of his military contacts out of MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa) -- a future in which a liberated Iraq would be turned over to a compliant Hashemite monarchy (now resident in Jordan), and then on to Saudi Arabia, where the Saudis would be booted and replaced by compliant Hashemite monarchs in a new *Hashemite* Arabia. And as for the West Bank Palestinians -- well, they would be handed over to the custody of the compliant *Jordanian* Hashemites. As for Loftus, he was making his own contribution by heading up a class action lawsuit on behalf of the families of 9/11 against those ruthless Saudi financiers. And, as an aside, he was assuring his mostly Jewish audience that George W. Bush is, at root, a decent fellow.

In short, Loftus was *propagandizing* his audience toward a highly selective reading of 9/11. Gone were the ominous shadows of *BCCI* and *Iran-Contra*, casting their pall over the credibility of those powerful politicians feeding us their take on a new world order. More than anyone (this writer included), Loftus should have been able to detect a high-level disinformation campaign to set up "the Jews" and "the Zionists" as the main evil conspirators behind 9/11. Yet ironically, here was Loftus casting his lot in with those very neo-conservatives who will one day serve as the showcase exhibits for what is sure to be the latest entry in an updated blood libel. From the Crucifixion, to the Rothschilds, and on to the Twin Towers, the Jews were being set up once more to play their historical role as punch toys to smokescreen a powerful oligarchy.

The set-up was on two fronts -- foreign and domestic. On the domestic front, the neo-conservatives headed by Dick Cheney and Richard Perle -widely dubbed by the mainstream press as the "hawks" -- were being marketed as the true ideological powers behind the Bush administration. Their patchwork of inter-connected think tanks -- *Center for Security Policy*, *Project for A New American Century (PNAC)*, *Center For Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*, *American Enterprise Institute (AEI)* - were deeply involved in sending out various "experts" to explain the War On Terrorism in a mainstream forum, thereby setting out the parameters of debate (in addition to the parameters of the perceived threat).

But did these neo-conservatives constitute a mere "rogue element" -- an insular "cabal" of pro-Zionist conservatives holding a largely naive President Bush in their sway (as Lyndon LaRouche and the folks at *Executive Intelligence Review* would have us believe)? Or rather, were they just a group "cut-out" for other, more powerful interests -- in other words, the public face that would skew the ultimate responsibility, letting the true masterminds off the hook while the "cut-out" proxies would double as potential patsies?

It had certainly been the case during the Clinton era, when Richard Mellon Scaife's

organization took center stage as the most vociferous entity in attacking the integrity of President Clinton. Thus, while Scaife's cronies made sure that all eyes were focused on Whitewater, Lewinsky, Foster, et al, the mainstream focus was kept far from the infinitely more nefarious, and damaging, scandal that was known by the four-letter word *Mena*, the crucial transit point in Arkansas which, under Governor Clinton, had served to sustain the arms/drug dealing operations that were fed through *Iran-Contra* and laundered through *BCCI*. Thus, with Whitewater as the Scaife-funded public face of the Starr inquiry into Clinton, those Clinton associates who could *really* provide the dirt on the Clinton/Mena connection were being "purged" in plain sight -- through various prosecutions, accidents, murders, or well-timed heart attacks (in the case of Jim MacDougall). Meanwhile, all eyes were directed to the curious stain on the blue dress. Once Clinton was safely out of office (and a leash presumably was no longer needed), Scaife disappeared from public view as suddenly as he entered it -- to be replaced by Dick Cheney, Richard Perle, and their coalition of fundamentalist Christian/Jewish Zionists.

On the foreign front, journalists like *Globe-Intel's* Thomas laid the groundwork for a future expose of Israeli complicity. An example of the subtlety of this effort: in his May 21, 2002 piece on the Israeli spy ring, Thomas mentioned that the Mossad sent its agents trailing the hijackers to New York, Florida, and -- *very* significantly - the Netherlands (in particular, to the Schipol Airport). Whether Thomas here was a witting or unwitting agent of disinformation cannot be ascertained, but clearly *somebody* knew the crucial importance of including the Netherlands on the Mossad infiltration itinerary -- for it was an Israeli-founded company, ICTS, which, through its subsidiary, Huntleigh, handled passenger screening for one of the airliners out of Boston's Logan Airport on September 11. And, as it so happened, ICTS was based out of the Netherlands. As we shall see, the security companies would theoretically be the ideal operative agents for ensuring that the September 11 "op" would go off without a hitch. Thus, an Israeli connection on this front would be a key factor in a counter-legend placing the State of Israel -- as opposed to *individual* Jews and/or Israeli operatives -- front and center as the *main* perpetrator of 9/11.

Securing The Plot -- The Lead-Up To 9/11

In the immediate aftermath of September 11, the mainstream newspapers were replete with items implicating Argenbright security (which was charged with overall security at Logan Airport) with lax procedures, thereby largely giving a "free pass" to the two companies that actually handled passenger screening for the hijacked planes out of Logan.

Besides Huntleigh, the other security company at Logan screening passengers was Burns Security, through its subsidiary, Globe Security. Burns Security, the former employer of Timothy McVeigh and suspected al-Qaida member Mohamed Abdi (connected by authorities to attempted "millennial" bomber Ahmed Ressam), also happened to make the news in the most high profile incident preceding September 11. Just a few days before the Twin Towers came down, a disgruntled Burns security guard by the name of Joseph Ferguson went on a murderous rampage, killing, among several others, his supervisor at Burns -- a Ukrainian immigrant by the name of Nikolay Popovich, in the Sacramento suburb of Rancho Cordova. Before Ferguson turned his gun on himself, he claimed that he was inspired to follow in the footsteps of Timothy McVeigh and Nikolay Soltys, a Ukrainian immigrant who, only a couple weeks before Ferguson, had went on *his own* mass murder

rampage in the suburb of Rancho Cordova. In Ferguson's home, authorities found right wing militia literature, particularly that of the World Church of the Creator. The Ferguson episode also caused a temporary disruption in Burns' West Coast operations, forcing many of its employees to steer clear of work, out of harm's way, until Ferguson could be apprehended.

A post-script on Nikolay Soltys, the Sacramento mass murderer who inspired Ferguson's rampage: on February 12, 2002, Soltys' lawyer, Tommy Clinkenbeard, revealed in an Associated Press article that a Sacramento County social services agency was tracking Soltys before the slayings, and that Clinkenbeard was barred by court order from seeing all of Soltys' social services records, which were sealed. Clinkenbeard said that he intended to subpoena those records, but Soltys was found hanging in his jail cell the very next day. His cell had been under 24-hour surveillance.

What, if any, was the connection here to September 11? Were these copy-cat mass murder episodes just a random occurrence -- or perhaps indicative of a far more murky, complex drama playing out just below the surface? Yet none of this would have merited any notice in chronicling the *Legend* of 9/11, had there not been a crucial *Burns/Al-Qaida/Right Wing Militia/Sacramento* nexus in the millennial lead-up to 9/11.

In the weeks leading up to January 1, 2000, the news media were swamped with speculations of impending catastrophe. We had already experienced the domestic terror wrought by Timothy McVeigh (representing the right wing militia set) and Ted Kaczynski alias the "Unabomber" (representing the lone wacko set). Now we were told to expect an apocalyptic meltdown of our technological infrastructure by way of the Y2K "bug", or, alternatively, an attack by America's self-declared Number One Enemy -- Osama bin Laden. The expected catastrophe came 21 months later than expected, with the blow struck in New York City.

Yet according to the *Official 9/11 Legend*, the expected millennial catastrophe was actually *averted* two weeks before the new year, with the arrest in Seattle of al-Qaida operative Ahmed Ressam. Ressam, as was later discovered, was on his way to mastermind a massive terror attack on the *West Coast* -- at Los Angeles International Airport, a facility secured through the services of Burns Security. After September 11, authorities arrested a former Burns security guard named Mohamed Abdi in Washington, D.C., on the pretext that he was connected to Ressam.

Ten days before Ressam was arrested -- on December 4, 1999 -- two right wing "militiamen" were arrested on charges of plotting to blow up, on the new year, a Suburban Propane facility at Elk Grove near Sacramento. It was thought that had they succeeded, hundreds of casualties might have resulted. It is thus on the West Coast, in the lead-up to the millennial new year, that we have the convergence of a pre-existing domestic threat (i.e. the militias stoked through the legends of Waco and Ruby Ridge) and a pre-existing *foreign* threat (i.e. the bin Laden minions stoked through the legends of Gulf War '91 and World Trade Center '93). As we shall see later in this article, these two threats had actually converged for the first time back in April 1995, with Timothy McVeigh's destruction of the FBI Murrah building in Oklahoma.

Sacramento, though by no means the *only* West Coast city with an alleged al-Qaida connection, did seem to have a magnetic pull for this type of convergence. An al-Qaida

graduate of Cal State, Sacramento, Raed Hijazi, was charged with plotting to blow up a Jordanian hotel on the millennial new year, while another al-Qaida operative, Ali A. Mohamed -- a former Sacramento resident who was also a U.S. Army sergeant in Fort Bragg, N.C. -- had pleaded guilty to the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Africa (the bombings that had garnered bin Laden his most widespread notice up until the U.S.S. Cole attack in October 2000). On the domestic terror front, Sacramento was also the scene of the notorious racist attacks on local synagogues by the Williams brothers.

In *The Propaganda Preparation For 9/11*, I posited the existence of two key domestic operative cliques -- one based in New York City and the other in Florida (particularly in Tampa, by MacDill Air Force base). But the crucial question is this: was a West Coast operative clique *also* to play a role on September 11 -- and if so, then at what point was the West Coast aspect of these operations scotched?

Alternatively, perhaps the West Coast millennial operations were a bluff -- a diversion meant to take the exclusive focus off of New York, and perhaps lay the psychological groundwork for the eventual assignment of blame for 9/11. Toward that end, the pre-millennial Ahmed Ressam episode was a key pivot point in the *Official 9/11 Legend*, as Ressam provided the crucial links to the networks that the authorities would later use in constructing the case against al-Qaida for the September 11 attacks. It was through Ressam that authorities allegedly got a peek at the upper structures of al-Qaida, with Ressam detailing the operational role of senior al-Qaida man Abu Zubaydah (subsequently the first "big fish" caught in the War On Terror in March 2002). The Ressam episode also provided a close-up view as to how those all-important connections were made, and, most importantly, by whom.

As chronicled in a multi-part *Seattle Times* investigation, *The Terrorist Within*, by Hal Bernton, immediately after Ressam was arrested on December 14, 1999, John O'Neill called up the Seattle-based FBI agent assigned to the investigation, Fred Humphries, and hooked Humphries up with O'Neill's friend, the powerful French anti-terror prosecutor, Jean-Louis Bruguiere. Humphries, who seemed to be "out of the loop" as regards the complexities of the terror networks, was taken by the hand by Bruguiere, and pointed in the "right" direction -- that is, toward the evidence showing the full depth of Ressam's connections. On the very night that Humphries first met up with Bruguiere in New York City, O'Neill orchestrated a four-alarm, razzle-dazzle show of FBI authority that could not have failed to make an impression on the novice agent Humphries:

"That evening, O'Neill took them out on the town, requisitioning a SWAT team for security and roaring off in a black SUV, lights flashing and sirens echoing along Manhattan's skyscraper canyons.

At Cité, a fashionable steakhouse, the SWAT team checked for danger, then set up a guard post outside while the trio dined in style."

Thereafter, Bruguiere led Humphries to his associates in the Canadian intelligence service, who furnished Humphries with the evidence of Ressam's Montreal "cell." Then Bruguiere provided Humphries and his assistant a refresher course in the Terror Story, bringing them to Paris where they could likewise be fed the latest information from the "official" French intelligence dossiers. Back stateside, Bruguiere kept on with the Ressam case, furnishing the prosecution -- and the media -- his expert take on Ressam's fit in the overall al-Qaida puzzle.

To the casual observer, there is absolutely nothing nefarious in any of this. It would make sense that a highly esteemed international expert and prosecutor of terror would be so intimately involved in such an important case. Yet, as in so much of this tale, it is the overall *context* that one must consider when evaluating the specific elements of the 9/11 Legend. Proceeding on the hypothesis that O'Neill would theoretically be the most well-placed operative to assemble the various global elements implicating al-Qaida in 9/11 -- and in view of the fact that O'Neill was at the improbable center of *far* too many coincidences -- one could judge O'Neill's involvement here in the Ressam episode as one plausible example by which O'Neill (along with his colleague, Bruguiere) could use his authority and prestige in order to "structure" an investigation in a certain direction. In this respect, Humphries would be playing the role of any number of people in his position -- trusting in the expert opinion of a superior authority, and honestly taking his leads where directed. In such a manner do literally *thousands* of decent law enforcement folk become party to a set-up managed by the few in the upper echelons, reinforcing among one another the *perception* that the truth is known among a wide swath of their colleagues -- a "herd mentality" that is as prevalent in the realm of law enforcement as it is in government and media.

If Bruguiere had given Humphries the initial impression that Humphries was receiving a fully independent assessment from the Canadian intelligence service, well, that wasn't exactly the case either. As chronicled in Bernton's *Seattle Times* investigation, only a few years before -- back in the summer of 1996 -- it was Bruguiere who had first contacted the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), informing them of his belief that "terrorists had formed a 'cell' in Montreal. In particular, Bruguiere told CSIS, watch for a man named Fateh Kamel."

Bruguiere led the skeptical Canadians to an apartment he dubbed the "*appartement de conspiracie*", among whose occupants was the aforementioned Fateh Kamel and his protege, Ahmed Ressam. At Bruguiere's urging, the Canadians proceeded to monitor the apartment for a period of two years, amassing a "400-page file on the men who came and went from the apartment." Though impressively thick, the file contained little more than the macho rantings of men whom the Canadians considered to be petty thieves and immigrant visa violators at the worst. All the same, Ressam's voice made it on to the "record" in "nearly 400 wire-tapped conversations." Once the Canadians ended their fruitless two-year surveillance in 1998, Ressam was off to Afghanistan -- the finishing school for his terrorist education. The Canadians had apparently lost interest, and subsequently, the denizens of the "*appartement de conspiracie*" had moved on.

Phase Two: almost one year later, in February 1999, Ressam returned to Montreal, now presumably indoctrinated and trained in the al-Qaida brand of covert terror. In one of those recurring synchronicities we tend to find popping up in the Legend of 9/11, Bruguiere -- after more than two years of laying low -- decided that now was the time to make his move on the aforementioned Fateh Kamel, who he just happened to find in Jordan, and subsequently prodded the Jordanians to arrest him and extradite him to France to face charges of abetting terror. As chronicled in the *Seattle Times* investigation, Bruguiere made his next move several weeks later -- requesting that the Canadians question Kamel's former apartment mates in Montreal, among them the newly returned Ressam.

Now, pay special attention to the timing: Ressam, upon his recent return to Montreal, moved

into a new apartment on Sherbrooke Avenue. The Canadians, however, showed up at the old "*appartement de conspiracie*", now bereft of its alleged conspirators, who had moved on in the past year. Bruguiere continued to harangue the Canadians. A few months later, they finally tracked down the address of Ressam's Sherbrooke Avenue lodgings. Only problem was, Ressam was no longer officially lodging there. In the interim, he had moved on to *another* apartment on Rue du Fort (what may, in retrospect, be considered as a "safe house" in more ways than one). However, Ressam "occasionally spent the night at his old apartment on Sherbrooke, where his friends still lived." As happenstance would have it, on one of those overnight stays, at the tender hour of a quarter past six in the morning, the Canadian authorities showed up in the foyer of the building and dialed up Ressam's old apartment, waiting to be "buzzed in." Bruguiere had been given the heads-up for this raid, though he did not join in. Here is what happened next, as chronicled by the *Seattle Times*: "At the sound of the bell, Ressam bolted from the apartment and out a back door into an alley. The door was unguarded. He got away."

Nevertheless, the Canadians *did* find inside the "dingy apartment" some photographs of the aforementioned Fateh Kamel, along with a conveniently placed black address book left in Ressam's presumably abandoned knapsack, which contained the phone number of Abu Zubaydah (relatively unknown by then) and the address for Evergro Products, an agricultural-supply store in British Columbia (later to be tagged as Exhibit A for the prosecution). As reported in the *Seattle Times*, it was all pretty much Greek to the Canadian corporal who led the raid, and who subsequently "made a copy of the book and sent it off to Bruguiere in Paris to figure out."

And where did Ressam run off to? Back to his Rue du Fort apartment (or "safe house"), where he reportedly proceeded that night to plan his explosive attack on the Los Angeles International Airport in the weeks ahead. Oddly, it did not occur to him that the authorities might also track him down to this apartment as well (from the perspective of a man who was apparently alert enough -- and prescient -- to bolt from his overnight lodgings at the first toll of a bell in the wee hours of dawn). But as fate -- or perhaps Bruguiere? - would have it, the authorities would not pick up on Ressam's trail again until that designated day in December 1999 when he was pulled over with the "smoking gun" explosives at customs in Seattle.

On that fateful day, Ressam had almost gone out of his way to draw suspicion on himself, as reported in the *Seattle Times*:

"Driving through the island city of Victoria to get to Seattle from mainland Canada was a bizarre choice -- understandable for a tourist, maybe, but not for a business trip."

Even so, Ressam's car was allowed on to the ferry to Seattle. Stateside, with his car the last in line off the ferry at customs, Ressam put on a sweaty, "jittery" show for the benefit of the discerning customs inspector, who this time got the message and proceeded to do a standard search of Ressam's car. The rest, as they say, is history. By the time agent Humphries was handed the case, the Canadians now had a fully documented dossier on Ressam waiting for him.

Though the *Seattle Times* investigation kept fairly close to the contours of the *Official 9/11 Legend*, the obvious anomalies in a simple reading of the Ressam episode fairly scream out for more attention. Was this all a well-timed set-up, orchestrated by Bruguiere, using the

unwitting Canadian authorities -- and, subsequently, Agent Humphries - to give the general impression that Ressam's activities were being ferreted out by a virtual army of independent investigators? In short, through just the prism of the Ressam episode, might we detect the inner workings of a covert legend-in-progress?

Backdrop -- Detecting The Puppet Masters

With the above-stated hypothesis in mind, one should perhaps cast a discerning eye toward those manning the counter-terror posts in Los Angeles *today* - for an important element in John O'Neill's New York circle has recently relocated to the West Coast. In particular, O'Neill's friend, John Miller, has left a lucrative job at *ABC News* in order to work under William Bratton in the Los Angeles counter-terror office. Miller, some might recall, was one of the very few Americans to conduct a face-to-face interview with bin Laden before September 11. Before he had come aboard as a correspondent for *ABC News*, Miller had worked under Bratton in the NYPD. Bratton, through his acquaintance with O'Neill's friend Jerry Hauer, has also had intimate business dealings with Kroll Associates, the World Trade Center security firm which hired O'Neill.

It is, in fact, security firms like Kroll Associates, Burns Security, Teg, Wackenhut, and their ilk that should garner our interest at least as much as the web of conservative think tanks that have welded in place the parameters of "mainstream" debate -- for it is through these very firms that the former stars of law enforcement have gone through the revolving door into the lucrative private sector. It is a world where former military types mix with various operatives of the CIA, FBI, DEA and any number of alphabet soup agencies charged with the security of our nation.

Moreover, the top people in the private security sector have the authority, prestige, and, most importantly, the *skill* to carry out -- successfully and below the radar -- the kinds of domestic operations that have been pegged as the province of shaggy al-Qaida operatives. Who, after all, could *best ensure* that 19 terrorists would be able to make it aboard four separate flights without any real danger of detection? And who, after all, would be best placed to ensure a complete and successful *implosion* of not just the two Twin Towers, but the neighboring building -- 7 World Trade Center -- which housed a bio-warfare "command and control bunker" under the direction of Jerry Hauer?

With that in mind, we get a bit closer to the "how" of 9/11 -- an important consideration in analyzing the *Legend* of 9/11. A good part of the early work on that legend had been accomplished through the offices of Michael Cherkasky, the managing director of Kroll Associates -- in his capacity as a prosecutor working in the New York office of Robert Morgenthau. Cherkasky had worked on the case arising out of the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993, which had established Ramzi Yousef as the terrorist mastermind behind the attack. Cherkasky had also worked on the John Gotti and *BCCI* criminal cases, two cases that would not, at first glance, seem to be related, much less to the events of September 11.

Yet there is a curious continuity here -- one that highlights the global *infrastructure* that has made 9/11 such a successful worldwide "op", with a legend whose global parameters defy the perceptions of even the most dogged investigators. As Peter Dale Scott has argued in great and persuasive detail, the "deep political structure" of American society -- and I would

argue that this now applies globally -- is permeated by an interwoven nexus between political/corporate elites and an organized criminal subculture, whereby certain political or business arrangements are made in an extra-legal sphere, beyond the reach of sanction or salience. Although this dual-purpose netherworld has been with us for over a century -- and roughly parallels the rise of an American industrial "Establishment" of which the Bushes and Rockefellers are most representative -- for our purposes, we will date the true globalization of this "deep political structure" with the creation of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, better known as *BCCI*.

The story goes that *BCCI* was founded by Pakistani financier Aga Hassan Abedi. In truth, it was mostly a British intelligence operation using Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates as fronts, while C.I.A. elements allied with George H. W. Bush used the banking network to conduct a number of under-the-table operations throughout the '80's. Before it went under, *BCCI* served as the cardiovascular system for a global criminal milieu, its laundered arteries servicing the needs of various drug lords, arms dealers, fraudsters, dictators, corrupt politicians, terrorists, and intelligence agencies seeking loose cash for their extra-legal activities.

In short, *BCCI* was *Disneyworld* for the *New World Order* of political/corporate crime. With ample supplies of heroin leaving Afghanistan and heading stateside throughout the '80's, there were ample funds left to underwrite the activities of Osama bin Laden and his *mujaheddin*, ensconced in a battle to oust the Soviet occupation forces from their midst. And with cocaine coming stateside by way of Colombia, a little pocket money could be set aside to furnish the Nicaraguan Contras with their own anti-Soviet toys.

Could it, then, perhaps have been nothing more than a coincidence that a brother-in-law of Osama bin Laden, Khalid bin Mahfouz, was reported in the early 90's to own a 20% stake in *BCCI* -- and that bin Mahfouz, as reported by the *Houston Chronicle* on June 4, 1992, had intimate business dealings with James Bath, the personal representative of bin Laden brother Salim who had invested \$50,000 in George W. Bush's company, *Arbusto*? Bin Mahfouz, incidentally, had taken over Salim bin Laden's interest in the Houston Gulf Airport after Salim met his demise in an airplane crash over Houston in 1988 (the same year that Iran-Contra witness, and Israeli counter-terror coordinator, Amiram Nir met his *own* fortuitous demise by airplane over Mexico, thus denying Congress one witness who could testify to Vice-President Bush's personal involvement in the scandal).

In the decadent 80's, Bush friend and C.I.A. asset Manuel Noriega served as a critical conduit for the drug transit through Panama. Meanwhile, C.I. A. asset Saddam Hussein played the essential role of wearing down the Iranian Revolution by throwing waves of Iraqi young men at waves of Iranian young men, costing over a million lives, though earning *billions* for a voracious world arms industry. As for John Gotti, on June 21, 1991, former C.I.A. agent Richard Brenneke gave a sworn deposition before Congressman William Alexander, fingering Gotti as an active detergent in "laundering" the C.I.A. drug shipments coming into the Mena Airport in Arkansas.

As history has shown, being a friend and/or C.I.A. asset of George H. W. Bush can be an uncertain proposition. One by one, once these psychopathic proxies had served their purpose, they were "taken out". In the case of Noriega and Gotti, they were silenced through the

capable tools of the American justice system. And overseeing the prosecutions -- Noriega, Gotti, and *BCCI* - happened to be a man who would, years later, be entrusted with overseeing the investigation into the causes of 9/11 -- Robert S. Mueller III.

In the case of *BCCI*, Mueller had steered the case along the manageable "official" contours, away from the seamier aspects of American foreign policy, ensuring that the domestic aspect of this worldwide fraud would only singe the toes of two well-connected, designated patsies -- Clark Clifford and Robert Altman. And while Morgenthau's New York office had indeed pushed the envelope in investigating *BCCI*, as always, the essential integrity -- the *goodness* - of the American political/intelligence apparatus was left intact.

The real scandal of *BCCI*, however, was not simply that it was a worldwide Ponzi scheme defrauding its investors of billions -- for that is the "limited", official version -- but that, in the context of 9/11, it provides a glaring spotlight on the very networks most intimately connected with the corruption. *BCCI*, the brainchild of British intelligence, was the ideal tool by which a supra-national network of compromised politicians and corrupt officials would "play ball", fattened up with a stream of capital furnished through the fruits of drugs, arms, and terrorism.

As Oliver North had pioneered the use of the counter-terrorism office in dealing with narco-terrorists like Monzer al-Kassar (connected to the Pan Am explosion over Lockerbie), would it be such a stretch to posit that the counter-terror apparatus -- this time under Richard Clarke and John O'Neill -- was once again being employed to "work" the corrupt networks wrought by *BCCI*? Can it be a mere coincidence that the arteries of the bin Laden strain of terrorism were fed not by Iran or Syria -- the "traditional" sponsors of the more low-key types of terrorism in the '80's -- but rather by those very countries that have long served as agents and proxies of their American-Anglo cohorts in crime: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates (i.e. the principal countries fronting for *BCCI*)? Could it be that the mutually corrupt global relationships wrought by *BCCI* persist to this day, with a bevy of compromised political officials standing ready to make their contribution to the New World Order -- and perhaps scam some extra pocket change on the side?

As they say -- follow the money. And where are the big movers and shakers of 9/11 -- those who are interpreting the threat for you -- putting their money? In vaccines, pharmaceuticals, bio-tech, utilities, security consulting, and surveillance technologies. In other words, they are shifting their money toward those burgeoning industries where they can simply *legislate* the market need -- the favored modus operandi of the "Establishment" captains of industry who had formerly used their clout in the political sector to secure their all-important interests in the oil and banking sectors.

And what of FBI Director Robert Mueller? Was it a coincidence that he was consistently chosen to oversee cases in which the whole bloody mess -- Gotti, *BCCI*, Noriega et al -- had threatened to spill over the "officially" designated sides? Was it a result of happenstance that Mueller officially had taken up his job as FBI Director only one week before September 11? Is it Mueller's job to cover the paper trails -- or just cover them *up*?

Polishing The Legend: A New 9/11 Mastermind

With the foregoing background in mind, we are now in a position to chronicle and analyze the final crystallization of the 9/11 Legend. On February 12, 2002, Omar Saeed Sheikh was "officially" arrested by the Pakistani police for the kidnapping of Daniel Pearl after *unofficially* being held in ISI custody for a week. With Omar Saeed now back as a world headliner, his updated terror resume was also making the rounds: jailed for a 1994 kidnapping, bartered out for a 1999 hijacking, headed up an ISI-linked terror group (the *Jaish-e-Mohammed*) responsible for a number of high-profile attacks on Indian interests in recent months, and -- almost as an afterthought -- sending \$100,000 along to Mohamed Atta before September 11.

Not that the newspapers were really pushing a 9/11 connection with the Pearl kidnapping. In fact, of those few news sources that offhandedly *did* mention that Saeed had been a 9/11 paymaster -- for example, *TIME* and the *Associated Press* in February - there was no mention at all of an incriminating connection with the Pakistani ISI Chief. Meanwhile, other journalists would mention Omar Saeed's links to al-Qaida or the ISI, yet neglect to connect him in any manner to 9/11. A particularly egregious example of this omission concerned Maria Ressa of *CNN*, who, only months before, had definitively identified Omar Saeed as the 9/11 paymaster acting under the alias "Mustafa Ahmad." Yet by the time of her July 7, 2002 article on Saeed, she was curiously silent on the question of Saeed's alleged paymaster role with al-Qaida, reporting instead that "Al Qaeda funded the [1999 Indian Airlines] hijacking operation" which resulted in Omar Saeed's release from prison. For good measure, her July 7 piece also mentioned the fact that bin Laden was active in supporting terror groups in Kashmir (a cause which bin Laden had, in fact, only formally adopted on October 14, 2001 -- that is, a mere five days after the incriminating October 9 *Times of India* article). In view of the fact that Omar Saeed now was widely being marketed as an ISI-connected terrorist leader active in Kashmir, he would find an alternative bin Laden link (and cover story), courtesy of Maria Ressa and colleagues.

As for the *Times of India*, only one day after Saeed's "official" arrest, they were now explicitly backtracking on their October 9 revelation linking Omar Saeed to the ISI Chief. Instead, they were going full-on with the *Saeed/Ansari* route to the money trail.

And what of that money trail? Was it a dead issue by the time of Saeed's arrest for the Pearl kidnapping? Not exactly. In fact, the mainstream media seemed to adopt -- or was passively used to employ -- an extremely subtle technique to obfuscate the whole issue. Here is how it worked in the aftermath of Omar Saeed's arrest: where an article now mentioned Saeed's link to the \$100,000 transaction, the usual detail provided was the fact that such money was sent through "*hawala channels*", a phrase that would point more curious researchers to the *Saeed/Ansari* thread that had briefly made headlines with the January 22 Calcutta attack. Those articles, however, would tellingly omit the "Mustafa Ahmad" alias from the details.

At around this time, articles that briefly touched upon a paymaster by the name of "Mustafa Ahmad" would reveal nothing about the man, except for the fact that he was still "at large." Prior to the January 22 Calcutta attack, there was another thread of articles which pushed the "*Mustafa Ahmad = Shaikh Saiid = Sa'd al-Sharif*" angle, culminating in the December 18, 2001 *Associated Press* article which had identified the 9/11 paymaster as bin Laden's Saudi

brother-in-law and financial chief. In light of the recent arrest of the now "official" 9/11 paymaster, Mustafa Ahmed *al-Hisawi*, it is possible to perceive another thread of articles -- a thread that arose full-blown, in fact, from the Zacarias Moussaoui indictment, which was unsealed December 11, 2001.

As will become clear, the Zacarias Moussaoui indictment was a crucial pivot point in the unfolding 9/11 Legend, locking down the money trail story with a firm delineation of details. When Moussaoui first made the news, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, he was touted as the possible "twentieth hijacker" who just wasn't able to get up to bat. In fact, by September 11, Moussaoui was already in detention, on suspicion of being connected to al-Qaida. As the story goes, suspicions were aroused when Moussaoui had made inquiries at a flight school. Known to French intelligence as a suspicious character, Moussaoui was promptly investigated by the FBI office out of Minnesota. He was then arrested and detained in August 2001. As the 9/11 Legend has it, by the time of the September 11 attacks, the Minnesota office was still scrambling for a warrant to check Moussaoui's hard drive for incriminating material. The implied moral of the *Moussaoui Tale* was this -- if not for the undue concern over civil rights and due process, the FBI might have been able to ferret out Moussaoui's true role, and thus avert the 9/11 tragedy. The *Moussaoui Tale* also had the added bonus of *seeming* to be an incriminating aspect of the 9/11 Legend, thereby garnering it a dollop of credibility even as it mostly functioned to shore up the evidence pointing to al-Qaida complicity for 9/11. In the same manner through which Brisard had offered up his own "mainstream" criticisms, the *Moussaoui Tale* was just another example of a red herring news item offered up as an "incriminating" detail, keeping the guilt balanced squarely on the toga-clad shoulders of bin Laden.

The unsealed December 2001 Moussaoui indictment also set out two "unindicted co-conspirators" who had yet to play their final roles in the unfolding 9/11 Legend - Ramzi Binalshibh and Mustafa Ahmed *al-hawsawi* (the "official" paymaster). Binalshibh was hijacker Mohammed Atta's roommate in Hamburg, and the senior operative directly linking Atta to al-Qaida. According to the Moussaoui indictment, Binalshibh was also a "paymaster," allegedly transferring funds to Moussaoui. As we will see, the Moussaoui indictment had lain the groundwork for the eventual *Khalid Shaikh Mohammed/ Ramzi Binalshibh/ Mustafa Ahmed* nexus that really gets rolling in June 2002, when Khalid is first introduced as the 9/11 "mastermind", then proceeds through Binalshibh's choreographed arrest in September 2002, and culminates with the simultaneous arrest of Khalid and Mustafa Ahmed in March 2003. Further, we will see how FBI Director Mueller uses the details in the Moussaoui indictment to explicitly pair up Khalid and Mustafa Ahmed -- a full nine months before these characters end up sharing news space for *their* own simultaneously choreographed apprehensions.

If, up until the March 2003 arrest of the "official" 9/11 paymaster, the mainstream news media seemed to be going with obscure, conflicting versions of the paymaster role, the Moussaoui indictment exhibited no such confusion. Where "federal", "intelligence", or "law enforcement" officials were variously reported as identifying the paymaster as either Omar Saeed or bin Laden's brother-in-law (among others), the Moussaoui indictment way back in December 2001 -- though well after the controversial Oct. 9 *Times of India* -- gave the impression that the paymaster role was a settled fact. And the "settled fact" was: the man providing and receiving back funds under the alias of "Mustafa Ahmad" was actually a flesh

and blood 33-year old Saudi named Mustafa Ahmed *Alhawsawi* (or *al-Hisawi*, depending on the news source).

And sure enough, a bit too far below the radar to really attract notice, there existed a thread of articles that referenced the *Money Trail Story* by means of a paymaster named Mustafa Ahmed *al-Hawsawi*. In this particular thread of articles, where Hisawi was spelled out as *Hawsawi*, there was absolutely no doubt as to the mind-numbing details of the 9/11 money transactions -- perhaps because they were lifted bodily from the Moussaoui indictments which, in retrospect, may now be considered as the first book of Scripture in the 9/11 Legend. As early as three months after the fall of the Twin Towers, it was all known -- the full details, the money trail, the essential players, and their roles - and the eventual arrests of Khalid, Binalshibh, and Mustafa Ahmed would merely serve to cast an official imprimatur on the unsealed word of the *Book of Moussaoui*.

Perhaps the obvious extended public obfuscation over the paymaster role -- long after it was definitively revealed in the Moussaoui indictment -- was intended until such time as the fates of Omar Saeed, Binalshibh, and Mustafa Ahmed could be settled. Or, quite possibly, the December 2001 Moussaoui indictment was only officially adopted on the fly - perhaps as late as June 2002, when a decision was made to introduce Khalid Shaikh Mohammed as the 9/11 mastermind.

Of the various pivot points in the unfolding 9/11 Legend, the time period of June 4-5 2002 was among the most significant. While, at this point, the new and improved *Omar Saeed Legend* was fully crystallized for the history books -- though he had as yet to be convicted for the Pearl kidnapping -- the early summer of 2002 was a time for tying up loose ends in the 9/11 Legend, wrapping it up for the history books, and getting on with reaping the benefits of September 11 -- a new legal infrastructure (i.e. police state) for the American people and a geopolitical grab at some prime Central Asian resources (with perhaps a plan for world population reduction by way of the related germ threat).

And, indeed, it was a busy week. The Joint House-Senate Committee looking into 9/11 was getting up to gear, and first up was Coleen Rowley, the FBI counsel who had been widely hailed as a "courageous" whistleblower. Only a month earlier, the media was reporting how Rowley had sent FBI Director Mueller a memo questioning his version of the Moussaoui incident. As Rowley had framed it, the Minnesota FBI office had been repeatedly obstructed in its efforts to obtain a warrant for accessing Moussaoui's hard drive, and she cast the blame on the "higher-ups" in the Washington office. In the lead-up to the hearings, the media was "pre-selling" Rowley's scheduled appearance as a brewing scandal, with intimations that perhaps some damaging revelations would be aired before the probing audience of the nation's esteemed lawmakers. As a ratings booster, the marketing plan was a bona fide success, with millions of viewers tuning in to hear Rowley offer her "stunning" indictment of a pre-9/11 bureaucracy plagued by "antiquated" computer hardware and a bloated managerial structure. Prodded by her approving Senatorial inquisitors, Rowley offered her helpful recommendations in making America a more efficient police state -- all in all, an extended advertisement for the Patriot Act and the inevitable Homeland Security apparatus. For all the smoke and mirrors, Rowley in the end was just one more "credible" witness for the prosecution -- a media-certified "whistleblower" who adhered to the central contours of the *Official 9/11 Legend*.

Around the same time that the joint Senate-House Inquiry was proceeding under the co-chairmanship of Bob Graham and Porter Goss (the September 11 breakfast partners of Omar Saeed's reported ISI "handler"), Khalid Shaikh Mohammed was formally introduced as the operative mastermind behind 9/11. John J. Lumpkin of the *Associated Press* wrote the definitive article here, courtesy of the revelations of an anonymous "top U.S. counterterrorism official." As we will see, Lumpkin will play a crucial role in tying up the loose ends of the paymaster story -- or rather, "muddying the waters" for any future investigators. Lumpkin's article (the June 4 or June 5 2002 version) was largely posted verbatim on the *CBS* and *Fox* websites, with each of these sites giving the impression that the news was actually ferreted out by their own reporters, acknowledging only that the *Associated Press* had merely "contributed" to the report. In the case of *CBS*' June 5 item, they largely cut-and-pasted in Lumpkin's article *after* a brief paragraph suggesting that this was all being reported by *CBS News* correspondent Jim Stewart -- in other words, suggesting that the reader was mostly perusing the words of Stewart, not Lumpkin. Did Lumpkin take offense at this? Or did Lumpkin himself merely affix his own byline to an item that was likely nothing more than an official press release from the National Security Council? The article itself reads like government "talking points" for the unfolding 9/11 Legend. Moreover, it highlights the degree to which the "mainstream" news media is managed, centralized, and strategically compartmentalized to give the misleading impression that a widely circulated fact is "known" among a large body of "independent" journalists -- when, in actual fact, they merely cite the same government press releases.

Lumpkin's key June article -- or "press release" -- served as a guidepost as to how the unfolding 9/11 Legend would finally crystallize. As reported by Lumpkin, in the same article where Khalid was introduced as the new 9/11 mastermind, he was also "accused of working with Ramzi Yousef in the first bombing of the World Trade Center [in '93]" in addition to working with Yousef on a 1995 plot (code-named *Bojinka*) to bomb a dozen airliners headed to the United States. But most significantly, Lumpkin's article referenced the 9/11 paymaster, now identified as "Shaikh Saiid al-Sharif, also known as Mustafa Ahmed al-Hisawi, who is bin Laden's financial chief." Gone was any mention of a Shaikh Saiid alias *Sa'd al-Sharif*, bin Laden's brother-in-law, as reported by the *Associated Press* back in December 2001. Now, in Lumpkin's June 5, 2002 version, *Shaikh Saiid* had been spliced together with *al-Sharif*, creating a *Shaikh Saiid al-Sharif*, the "financial chief" -- tossing out the *Sa'd* portion of Sharif's name and any suggestion that bin Laden's brother-in-law had anything to do with this.

It was not by accident that the 9/11 paymaster -- now officially dubbed as Mustafa Ahmed *al-Hisawi* - was mentioned in an article introducing Khalid as the mastermind. As it turned out, about the same time that Lumpkin's article was making the rounds, Robert Mueller was making a statement before the Senate-House Committee, narrating the full details of the money trail story (as set out in the Moussaoui indictment), but this time adding the role of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, who, according to Mueller's statement, shared a credit card with Mustafa Ahmed "Alhawsawi."

Thus, Mueller inserted Khalid into the *Money Trail Story* by way of a direct connection with the "Mustafa Ahmad" alias. And now, thanks to Lumpkin, "Mustafa Ahmad" was not to be thought of as simply a convenient pseudonym, but rather as a *real* person, bin Laden's bona fide "financial chief." Omar Saeed was now fully excised out of the *Money Trail Story*,

which, as of June 2002, was officially and unambiguously adopting the *Hisawi* (or *Hawsawi*) thread as the way to go. Still, the Omar Saeed thread would linger on past Saeed's July 15, 2002 conviction and death sentence, with Robert Sam Anson of *Vanity Fair* mentioning Saeed's \$100,000 transaction, along with his association with Aftab Ansari. As a textbook example of "muddying the waters", all contingencies -- or threads -- were accounted for. Now all that remained was for Lumpkin to smooth over the apparent contradictions, which he would do -- twice more -- for the record before Mustafa Ahmed's conveniently timed arrest in March 2003.

Once Lumpkin's June 2002 article on Khalid was out, further incriminating details were coming out fast and furious. According to *CBS News*, U.S. officials now had "evidence" that Khalid had met with "some of the 9/11 hijackers at their Hamburg, Germany apartment in 1999." Presumably, Ramzi Binalshibh -- Mohammed Atta's Hamburg roommate who was also thought to be a potential "twentieth hijacker" -- was among them. Lumpkin's key June article also mentioned Binalshibh as part of Atta's Hamburg "cell." And as Binalshibh was paired with Mustafa Ahmed as an "unindicted co-conspirator" in the Moussaoui indictment, we have perhaps an indication that Khalid, Binalshibh, and Mustafa Ahmed were part of a concerted strategy touched off in early June 2002 to bring this phase of the 9/11 Legend to a close. Conveniently timed for release on the very next day -- June 6, 2002 -- further news followed that, according to National Security Agency intercepts, Khalid was heard talking on the telephone with hijacker Mohammed Atta. Moreover, for the very first time, authorities were now reporting that Khalid was actually the *uncle* of Ramzi Yousef. In other words, when the nephew failed to bring down the Towers in '93, the uncle took up the slack in '01.

Perhaps it was this sort of conceptually artistic symmetry that made Khalid so attractive as the designated mastermind. Through Khalid, one had a direct connection to the first World Trade Center attack, providing a smoking gun continuity leading directly to al-Qaida. Prior to Khalid's June 2002 public promotion, he was lurking on the official terror lists merely as an indicted conspirator in the 1995 *Bojinka* plot masterminded by Ramzi Yousef. Thus, while Khalid had not previously been *directly* connected to the 9/11 plot, he *did* make the "most wanted" cut based on his alleged 1995 collaboration with Yousef. With that in mind, one can almost picture sitting in with the members of the National Security Council on a balmy Spring morning in late May 2002, leafing through their photo albums as they argued over the most appropriate candidate to close off the official 9/11 Legend. As it turned out, they chose the guy with the unibrow and the hair shirt.

What was the official reason for revealing the role of Khalid at this point in time? According to *CBS News*, it was senior al-Qaida figure Abu Zubaydah (captured a few months previously) who had "fingered [Khalid] as the mastermind behind the Sept. 11 attacks." Abu Zubaydah, the first "big fish" captured in the War On Terror, had previously -- and conveniently -- been fingered as a major al-Qaida player by Ahmed Ressam. Moreover, thanks again to John O'Neill's friend, Jean-Louis Bruguiere, Zubaydah's role in al-Qaida was fully delineated through Bruguiere's interviews with al-Qaida operative Djamel Begal, who purportedly had been part of a plot to bomb the U.S. Embassy in Paris prior to September 11.

As we will see, once Ramzi Binalshibh's number comes up for apprehension (in September 2002), followed by the capture of Khalid and Mustafa Ahmed in March 2003, another

version will be offered for the timing of Khalid's introduction as 9/11 mastermind. But first, we should take note of James Risen's June 5, 2002 article for the *New York Times*, in which Risen reported that the authorities "had begun to suspect soon after the [Sept. 11] attacks that [Khalid] had some role in the hijackings. But in the next months, a detailed financial investigation of the money trail from the plot led officials to believe that he had a more prominent role than previously suspected." In other words, as Risen had framed it, Khalid had first garnered notice for 9/11 by way of his connection to the *money trail*. Was this a retrospective addition into the record? -- for Khalid most certainly did *not* make it into the *Money Trail Story* as of December 2001, when pretty much all the details of the money trail were crystallized within the Moussaoui indictment. On the other hand, there is a possibility that Khalid was *intended* from the very beginning to be featured as the 9/11 mastermind, yet perhaps he could not be safely inserted back into the Legend by way of the money trail *until* that nasty confusion over the "Mustafa Ahmad" alias was resolved.

To construct a viable Legend, it is not always a simple matter of outright fabrication -- for then it would be a logistical nightmare in keeping an army of otherwise honest investigators from ascertaining the true physical facts. Rather -- in terms of covert operations -- a Legend works best when all its elements are actually played out, with *real* operatives making *real* transactions, leaving a trail of evidence that can -- with assistance from apparent insiders like Bruguiere -- help those investigators outside "the loop" to come to the desired conclusions. This would explain the apparent difficulty in fabricating an alternative Legend for Omar Saeed as paymaster -- as his *real* role in 9/11 was already physically seeded into so many elements of the Legend as planned. If Omar Saeed Sheikh had actually played out the role as paymaster, then he would be physically linked to Binalshibh and Atta, who were essential elements in the Legend as it was played out.

Moreover, if Khalid was originally part of that Legend, his inclusion in the money trail aspect of that Legend would be problematic so long as Omar Saeed was being linked back to the ISI Chief (who in turn links back to Washington, D.C.). Furthermore, in order to ensure that all "insiders" were equally blackmailable -- that is, no one party could use its inside knowledge to bring down another -- the senior participants would each run their respective operatives in the Legend. Thus, insider elements within the U.K., France, Germany, Spain, and others would each run their own agent, committing to the Legend and thus staking their credibility on the *viability* of that Legend.

In this respect, we could imagine Binalshibh and Atta as being "handled" by elements in German intelligence (with the assistance of federal German prosecutor Kay Nehm, perhaps), while French intelligence (in conjunction with Bruguiere, perhaps) would "handle" operatives such as Ressam or Zubaydah. As for the U.K., it is likely that Omar Saeed was their agent, for the obvious reason that Saeed's ideological transformation began there. Less certain, though plausible, is the prospect that Omar Saeed was in fact being "handled" by *both* British and Indian intelligence. That would, perhaps, explain the curious fact that, in the aftermath of 9/11, Indian authorities always seemed to have the inside scoop on the whereabouts and activities of Omar Saeed. As early as September 23, 2001 (the date of Omar Saeed's post-9/11 public debut), British authorities went on record as querying India on the whereabouts of Saeed -- suggesting, by implication, that India had inside knowledge on this purportedly Pakistani ISI operative. Was Saeed, then, a double agent, putting himself at the service of the Pakistani ISI Chief, when in fact he was operating on behalf of Indian

intelligence all along?

Certainly India had a stake in scapegoating the ISI for 9/11. Moreover, if there was an accompanying plan to use a second tier of proxy/patsies -- generally, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Israel -- this second tier would, by necessity, have to be outside the innermost "loop" yet employed in some direct, though compartmentalized, capacity. With concerted "leaks" pointing suspicions toward the second tier, the members of that tier could either be lulled -- in the case of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, blame could be placed at the feet of "rogue" neo-cons for the leaks -- or, alternatively, their silence could be coerced through the very real threat of "mainstreaming" the evidence already in place to implicate them (in the case of Israel). Certainly, given the scope of mainstream coverage in this respect, this scenario would seem most plausible.

Given the obvious murkiness of these complex interactions, it would be impossible at this point to fully posit *what* exactly went wrong in that first week of October 2001, when the *Money Trail Story* was picking up steam. Was the Omar Saeed "leak" a mischievous ploy by India to shore up its geopolitical interests vis-a-vis Pakistan? Was it a set-up to pressure the Americans? Or did the Indians, as outsiders, learn of the plan to use the Pakistani ISI as a proxy/patsy, and thereby sought to pressure the Americans against too heavily favoring their Pakistani proxy. It is not within the scope of this article to fully solve that riddle (if indeed it can be solved with the available evidence at hand). Rather, the intent is to put in place the contours of a general hypothesis that would plausibly be able to account for many of the strange coincidences, synchronicities, and conveniently timed set-ups that are so much a part of the 9/11 Legend. In short, without the proper analytical foundation, the events surrounding September 11 would remain a disjointed, inscrutable medley of facts -- exactly in keeping with the intentions of its covert architects.

Returning to the matter of Khalid's new public role as 9/11 mastermind, his connection with Ramzi Yousef would also serve another purpose -- linking Iraq to al-Qaida by way of Timothy McVeigh and the 1995 bombing of the FBI building in Oklahoma. The McVeigh-Iraqi thread, in fact, pre-dates the events of September 11 by a few years. In 1998, Timothy McVeigh's lawyer, Stephen Jones, had broached the existence of a videotaped interview with the co-founder of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group, a purported al-Qaida front based out of the Philippines. The Abu Sayyaf leader, Edwin Angeles, had turned police informant in February 1995 (a couple months before the Oklahoma bombing), becoming, in the words of Richard Parry of *The Independent*, "a deep penetration agent of the Marines and the Philippine National Police." According to Jones, Angeles had informed the Philippine police that he had attended a series of meetings in the early '90's with Ramzi Yousef and an American who Jones was able to identify as Terry Nichols, the convicted accomplice of Timothy McVeigh. Nichols, married at the time to a Philippine woman, had made a series of trips to the Philippines -- without his wife -- visiting the very areas where Abu Sayyaf predominated. As Jones argued, it was Nichols who was the operative brains behind the Oklahoma bombing, and his client -- a Gulf War veteran and former Burns security guard -- was taking the fall as a patsy under the influence of Terry Nichols.

Moreover, Jones -- through the Ramzi Yousef connection -- was positing an Iraqi link to the Oklahoma bombing. As reported by Howard Pankratz of the *Denver Post* on October 12, 1998, Jones had personally learned from Laurie Mylroie (mentioned earlier in this article)

and Vincent Cannistraro (also mentioned earlier) that Ramzi Yousef was an Iraqi intelligence agent. Yousef, a Kuwaiti, was on scene when the Gulf War broke out. As the legend goes, that conflagration led him -- like bin Laden -- to spearhead a permanent jihad against the United States.

Yousef's first big role was to act as the mastermind behind the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. As the legend has it, he managed to stay below the radar until January 1995, when a fire broke out in a Manila flat that he shared with his fellow conspirator, Abdul Hakim Murad. When Philippine authorities entered the premises, they managed to get a hold of documents and the contents of a computer hard drive that pointed to Ramzi Yousef's various activities, among them a plot to take out a dozen U.S.-bound airliners over the Pacific, code-named *Bojinka*. While Yousef's partner, Murad, was arrested, Yousef managed to evade Philippine authorities, escaping justice until February 1995, when he was finally arrested in a hotel room in Pakistan. As the official 9/11 Legend has it, John O'Neill's intensive collaboration with Richard Clarke began with the capture of Ramzi Yousef that February.

After the events of September 11, the *Bojinka* plot has taken on an added aura, presented, in retrospect, as the conceptual seed for the kind of massively coordinated hijackings that would be the trademark of the 9/11 plot. Thus, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed's connection to the *Bojinka* plot would serve to illustrate -- compellingly so - the evolution of al-Qaida's operational ambitions. In a similar manner, back in early October 2001 -- before the original paymaster legend had fully fallen apart -- *CNN's* Maria Ressa had sought to demonstrate the operational similarities between the 9/11 hijackings and the 1999 Air India hijacking that had resulted in Omar Saeed's release. Curiously, only a week before that item, Ressa had reported a possible 9/11 money trail leading back to the Philippine-based Abu Sayyaf gang, and by implication, to a bin Laden brother-in-law named Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, a suspected financier of Abu Sayyaf. In short, the Philippines-based Abu Sayyaf group is an integral part of the 9/11 Legend, and so a cursory look at its shadowy history will also serve to demonstrate that, here, too, exist a number of synchronicities that cannot so easily be dismissed.

According to a June 4, 2000 article by Zainon Ahmad in the *New Straits Times*, the Muslim fundamentalist Abu Sayyaf group "was a creation of the [Philippines] military." It was co-founded in 1991 by Abdurak Janjalani and Edwin Angeles. Of the two, Angeles' resume has all the markings of a classic deep penetration agent. Of mixed Muslim-Catholic parentage, Angeles was formerly trained as a guerilla fighter with the Communist New People's Army before his entry into the Muslim fundamentalist milieu. Angeles had served as Abu Sayyaf's operations chief until he suddenly defected in February 1995 (around the time that Ramzi Yousef was arrested for the Philippines-based *Bojinka* plot). As reported by Keith B. Richburg on May 25, 1995, Angeles may have openly defected from Abu Sayyaf when he came under suspicion by his comrades as being a possible government agent. But even in his new official capacity as a police informant, Angeles had proven to be somewhat erratic. On January 13, 1996, as reported in the *Weekend Australian*, Angeles claimed that the Philippine National Police had faked evidence in a massive dragnet of foreigners from Pakistan and the Middle East in order "to paint a scenario that [would] pave the way for the immediate passage of the [Philippine] anti-terrorism bill."

By the Fall of 1998, Angeles was once more in the headlines, this time courtesy of Timothy McVeigh's attorney, who had used Angeles' videotaped testimony before the Philippine police to show that Terry Nichols, McVeigh's alleged accomplice, had met with Angeles and Ramzi Yousef on several occasions. Thus, courtesy of Angeles, there was now a bona fide link between the domestic militia threat (exemplified by McVeigh and Nichols) and the foreign terror threat (exemplified by Yousef and bin Laden). Soon thereafter, on January 15, 1999, Angeles was gunned down on a city street -- barely one month after his fellow Abu Sayyaf co-founder, Janjalani, had been killed in a shoot-out with the Philippine police. Oddly enough, according to a *BusinessWorld* article by Conrad M. Carino, Angeles had been "contesting the ASG [Abu Sayyaf Group] top post when he was killed by a lone gunman . . . The military believes Angeles was killed by his rival inside the [Abu Sayyaf Group]." One wonders, though, why a high profile Philippine police informant and defector would want to contest, much less have a shot at, the leadership post of the Muslim terror organization he had turned against. But more ominously, one wonders what this says about the Abu Sayyaf organization, a reputed al-Qaida affiliate that figures so prominently in the 9/11 Legend.

Moreover, the Angeles/ Terry Nichols episode serves to illustrate a suspicious convergence between the respective militia and al-Qaida threats. And in this respect, Timothy McVeigh and Ramzi Yousef are most emblematic of that convergence -- for their respective paths to infamy had arisen out of the 1991 Gulf War conflagration known as *Desert Storm*. In the years thereafter -- in fact, almost in lockstep with the passing of the Soviet threat -- we now had the unfolding legends of Waco, Ruby Ridge, World Trade Center I, Oklahoma, the Unabomber, and World Trade Center II. In all these events, the message was singular: we were entering a new age of insecurity, with new and sophisticated dangers bearing down on us from within and from without. If the Ramzi Yousef episode had not quite made a sufficient impact on our collective consciousness, if Timothy McVeigh had failed to stir us from our complacent slumber, then we were ripe for the plucking by September 11, 2001 -- ready to serve up our civil rights, our right to privacy, our constitutional checks and balances -- and prepared to place our trust in a government empowered by our collective ignorance of the facts.

If the presumed McVeigh/Ramzi Yousef link had only hinged on the slim thread of Stephen Jones' accusations, it would perhaps have been easy to dismiss it all as the opportunistic ramblings of a defeated counselor. Yet this link would be resurrected as late as April 22, 2002, when Kenneth Timmerman of *Insight* had broached the existence of an audiotaped interview with Philippine authorities, given by the dying 27-year old widow of Edwin Angeles. Angeles' widow, Elmina, had repeated Angeles' contention that he had met with Nichols and Yousef, but more revealingly, she was now contending -- in the words of her deceased mate -- that Yousef was acting on behalf of Saddam Hussein. In other words, Yousef -- by this time definitively tagged as an al-Qaida operative -- was doing double duty as an Iraqi agent. Elmina died within days of her interview, felled by liver disease.

Once again, here was an example of a counter-legend masking the plausible reality. As this particular counter-legend had it, there really *was* a militia/al-Qaida convergence, yet it was a result of a common desire to bring down the U.S. federal government. This counter-legend, though, served to mask an opposing reality -- that it was the *federal government*, in fact (or the powerful elites behind it) that were managing this convergence so as to *consolidate* the power of the federal authorities. The counter-legend of this convergence thus remained in

the background, ready to be "mainstreamed" if needed, but most importantly, serving to muddy the waters in ferreting out the true, opposing reality.

While the mainstream media was continuing to treat this particular counter-legend as a fringe conspiracy theory, it was gradually being "beefed up" through the carefully calibrated revelations of two major players in the dissemination of the Official 9/11 Legend -- James Woolsey and Vincent Cannistraro. As reported by Jack Kelly in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* on July 7, 2002:

"On April 19 [1995], the day of the Oklahoma City bombing, a source in Saudi Arabia's intelligence service told Vincent Cannistraro, then the chief of counterterrorism for the C.I.A., that an Iraqi hit squad was scouting targets to attack in Oklahoma City, Houston, and Los Angeles."

In order to make the connection more clear, the article helpfully went on to point out that "the Oklahoma City bomb was identical to the 1993 World Trade Center bomb." In other words, here was the thread that linked Saddam Hussein to the whole kit and kaboodle of terrorism on the American mainland (now dubbed as the *homeland*).

Following up on this thread was an article in the *Indianapolis Star* on September 7, 2002:

"A statement by former C.I.A. Director James Woolsey has given new credibility to suspicions of Iraqi involvement in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and the World Trade Center bombing of 1993 -- enough to merit congressional hearings."

The article further revealed that Woolsey had credited Laurie Mylroie, "who independently unearthed evidence of a Baghdad connection to domestic terrorism prior to Sept. 11, 2001." As an example of this connection, the article mentioned that Terry Nichols had contacted Iraqi intelligence in the Philippines in order to acquire bomb-making experience.

Calibrated revelations, indeed -- for one need not have access to the National Security Agency's all-seeing *Echelon* surveillance network in order to track the early stirrings of the *al-Qaida/right wing militia/ Oklahoma* thread of the 9/11 Legend. On December 1, 1994 -- only a few months before Edwin Angeles' defection and Ramzi Yousef's arrest, and just five months before the Oklahoma bombing -- bin Laden brother-in-law and Abu Sayyaf financier, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, entered the United States where, within weeks, he was arrested in San Francisco and held over pending deportation hearings. Only two days before the Oklahoma bombing, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that Khalifa was linked by Philippine authorities to Ramzi Yousef, with the article further mentioning Khalifa's relationship to bin Laden.

By this time, bin Laden had yet to make his international splash in the public consciousness as the world's foremost terrorist mastermind. And certainly, bin Laden's al-Qaida network had yet to be unveiled to the world at large (at least by name). Thus, soon after the Oklahoma bombing, terrorism expert Kenneth Katzman took the opportunity to familiarize the American public with its soon-to-be-infamous nemesis and his "shadowy network," suggesting in an April 21, 1995 article in *USA Today* that Osama bin Laden was a potential suspect in the Oklahoma bombing: "If there is a Mideast connection, says terrorism expert Kenneth Katzman, it could lead to a shadowy network of former freedom fighters who train in terrorist camps in Sudan and then export their violence to Algeria, Egypt, and the USA."

With Katzman's declaration, one can almost hear -- in retrospect -- Katzman barely restraining himself from whispering . . . *al-Qaida* (though the term *al-Qaida* was scheduled for public release at a later date). The article went on to mention that bin Laden was being named by federal prosecutors as a potential co-conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

What a difference a few months make. In December 1994, bin Laden brother-in-law Khalifa was arrested and soon thereafter deported by U.S. authorities to Jordan, with nary a suggestion of any apparent connection to a worldwide terrorist plot. Yet in the aftermath of a fortuitous fire in a small Manila flat in January 1995, we now had the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center attack (Ramzi Yousef), the mastermind's potential co-conspirators (Khalifa and bin Laden), the designs of an attempted mass coordinated hijacking (Bojinka), the existence of another conspirator arising out of that attempted coordinated hijacking (Khalid Shaikh Mohammed), and the most indelible eruption of the domestic right wing threat (Oklahoma). Put bluntly, if September 11 was now being marketed as a failure to "connect the dots" by the intelligence apparatus, those dots were being lined up quite neatly by the mainstream media as early as April 1995.

In short, the main structural contours of the 9/11 Legend were firmly in place by April of 1995, laying the groundwork in the months ahead for Osama bin Laden to take center stage as America's foremost enemy. Barely seven months later, in November 1995, a terrorist attack in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, resulted in the deaths of 5 U.S. personnel. A November 27, 1995 *U.S. News and World Report* item by Louise Lief was now raising the possibility of a bin Laden link, mentioning the Yousef/ Khalifa/ bin Laden nexus that was ferreted out only several months before. And, sure enough, the perpetrators of the Riyadh attack were duly apprehended, revealing -- before their execution by Saudi authorities -- that they were, in fact, connected to Osama bin Laden.

By the summer of 1996, bin Laden himself may have sensed that the American public had been seeded with enough innuendo and suspicion to merit a bona fide declaration of war -- and perhaps care enough to pay attention. On June 25, 1996, the Khobar Towers facility in Saudi Arabia was attacked, resulting in the deaths of 19 U.S. servicemen. Little more than two weeks later, on July 10, 1996, journalist Robert Fisk of the *Independent* managed to track down bin Laden at his tent headquarters somewhere in Afghanistan (after being booted out of his base in Sudan a few months earlier at U.S. insistence). There, Fisk recorded for posterity bin Laden's proclamation of "the beginning of war between Muslims and the United States." This was not Fisk's first encounter with bin Laden. His first encounter dates back to December 6, 1993, when Fisk had the distinction of being the first Western journalist ever to interview Osama bin Laden. At that time, bin Laden was ensconced in Sudan, apparently more obsessed with building a highway for the benefit of his impoverished Sudanese hosts than with launching an international jihad against the American occupiers of cherished Saudi soil. Perhaps overlooking the self-professed contributions of David Rockefeller's protege, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Fisk made a prophecy in his introductory bin Laden article:

"When the history of the Afghan resistance movement is written, Mr. Bin Laden's own contribution to the mujahedin -- and the indirect result of his training and assistance -- may turn out to be a turning- point in the recent history of militant fundamentalism; even if, today, he tries to minimise his role."

The above statement, more than any other, perhaps reveals why Osama bin Laden was chosen as the most suitable candidate to head up the Official 9/11 Legend -- for he was, by this time, more clearly known as the poster boy for the Afghani resistance which had ousted the Soviet occupiers. The 1993 version of bin Laden was certainly a far cry from the fire-breathing jihadist of 1996. "I am a construction engineer and an agriculturalist," he modestly proclaimed to Fisk in that Ur-interview, describing the fellow Afghani comrades that he had brought with him to Sudan as fellow road-builders. "Was it not a little bit anti-climactic for them," Fisk inquired, "to fight the Russians and end up road-building in Sudan?" "They like this work and so do I," bin Laden replied. If bin Laden, by this time, had any grievances against America, it seemed to be relegated to the assignment of credit for kicking Russian ass: "Personally neither I nor my brothers saw evidence of American help."

By Fisk's return visit, the "shy man" previously described by Fisk had apparently metamorphosed into a humorless fanatic, droning on about America and jihad - the kind of character one would expect in the months after April 1995. Though the American military had first set up base on hallowed Saudi territory as early as August 1990 (in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait), it took bin Laden a full six years to work up the nerve to publicly enunciate his *fullest* fury over the U.S. presence on the sacred Saudi *ummah*. And, now that he had crossed that rubicon in Fisk's presence, he apparently couldn't shut up -- setting up exclusive interviews hither and thither with Peter Arnett, Peter Bergen, John Miller, Rahimullah Yusufzai, Abdel Bari Atwan, and Jamal Ismail, among others -- spouting his venom in counterpoint to the ominous prophecies of media-favored "experts" now warning of an imminent worldwide campaign of terror.

Apparently emboldened by his July 1996 verbal declaration of war in Fisk's presence, bin Laden retreated to his tent in order to compose a more proper *written* declaration of war on America, formally unveiling it on August 23, 1996 -- a rambling, mind-numbingly boring 12-page screed against the "Zionist-Crusader" alliance. By that point, the widely marketed public face of that alliance -- Richard Perle for the "Zionists" and John Ashcroft for the Christian "Crusaders" -- had yet to be assembled within the inner sanctum of the Bush Administration (now strangely bereft of the "old-line" Rockefeller/ Baker folks).

With bin Laden's historic declaration of war, a new brand of terrorism was being marketed to the American public -- a global terror network with no clear state sponsor, employing "sleeper" agents and coded "go" messages, seeking out suitcase nukes and sophisticated weaponized germs. Marketed by an insular clique of terrorism "experts," al-Qaida (Arabic for "the Base") seemed to employ the kind of covert techniques that one would normally read about from the standard operating manuals of the C.I.A. or MI6. While the best that the Syrians and Iranians could muster up for Hamas and Hezbollah were car bombs and Katyusha rockets, al-Qaida was putting the "traditional" terror outfits to shame -- and all this on a purportedly "frozen" \$300 million investment portfolio (Osama bin Laden's estimated net worth).

If al-Qaida had one notable failing, it was in its almost obsessive inclination to leave a noticeably *untangled* trail of its operatives' names and pseudonyms. In other words, we know where Mohammed Atta worked, slept, played, and banked because he was thoughtful enough to scatter his name like bird droppings in the midst of his travels. Even more thoughtfully, when he sent out a package to a "Mustafa Ahmad," it turned out -- as the

official legend now has it -- that the intended recipient really *was* named Mustafa Ahmad. In the end, one could not ask for a more ideal organization than al-Qaida in building a clear-cut legend with all the dots connecting.

The Summer 2002 Marketing Plan: Khalid and Binalshibh In The Spotlight

By June of 2002, the contents of the Moussaoui indictment could indeed be viewed as the clear signpost pointing the way to the manner in which the final loose ends of the Official 9/11 Legend would be tied up for posterity. With Ramzi Binalshibh and Mustafa Ahmed al-Hisawi already tied together as unindicted co-conspirators in the Moussaoui case, FBI Director Robert Mueller would, by this time, explicitly weave in Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, pairing him up with Mustafa Ahmed and thereby inserting this newly-christened 9/11 mastermind into the *Money Trail Story*. The *Associated Press*' John Lumpkin would reference all three in his key June 2002 article. It is as if the powers-that-be were putting this trio of nefarious characters on notice -- from here on, their fates were to be indelibly entwined.

If habitual coincidence is the mother of all conspiracy theories, then one must surely raise a discerning eyebrow at the revelation that, around this time -- after more than a decade of staying hidden in the shadows -- Khalid Shaikh Mohammed suddenly was stricken with an urge to conduct his very first interview, with none other than Ramzi Binalshibh at his side. The journalist chosen for this honor was the London bureau chief of *Al-Jazeera*, Yosri Fouda. Fouda, a former employee of the BBC Arabic Service (many of whose employees resurfaced at *Al-Jazeera* after the Arabic Service's demise), was taken blindfolded to Khalid's Karachi residence, where he was then given -- over the course of two days - a detailed step-by-step account of the planning and execution of the 9/11 hijackings. Binalshibh, apparently concerned with his place in the official history textbooks, instructed Fouda to submit a copy of the interview to the Library of Congress.

In Binalshibh's telling (assuming the teller on Fouda's audiotape was in fact Binalshibh), the execution of September 11 was mostly the work of a Hamburg-based al-Qaida cell under the leadership of Mohammed Atta. Atta's story begins in Cairo where, as a young man working at a German-owned company, he was sponsored to come to Hamburg, where he attended the Technical University as a student of urban planning. There, he was recruited into al-Qaida -- as was Binalshibh -- at Hamburg's al-Quds mosque.

Atta's indoctrination and sudden "conversion" in the "Crusader" bowels of Europe has its curious parallels in the sudden conversions of Omar Saeed, Zacarias Moussaoui, and Richard Reid (a.k.a. the "shoe bomber"). In each case, we have the example of a well-educated man from a westernized background who had undergone a drastic "religious" transformation in an insular, cult-like atmosphere, leaving his former friends and family to wonder whether their loved one had perhaps been brainwashed. Certainly this was the concern of the family of Zacarias Moussaoui, who was himself indoctrinated into the cause by way of the Finsbury Park mosque in North London (which also churned out the likes of Reid and Djamel Beghal, an alleged suspect behind the aforementioned plot to bomb the U.S. embassy in Paris). Presiding over the Finsbury Park recruitment drive was a one-eyed, one-handed sheikh with a metal claw who went by the name of Abu Hamza. Abu Hamza, like bin Laden, was a veteran of the C.I.A.-funded drive to oust the Soviets from Afghanistan. In the mid-eighties,

Abu Hamza settled in Britain where he eventually became known as one of the key point men in laying the groundwork for Muslim fundamentalism in the United Kingdom.

As a testament to Abu Hamza's glass-eyed charisma and oratorical skills, hundreds of freshly radicalized British Muslim youths were "processed" through the Finsbury Park mosque, and then sent off to Afghanistan -- the "finishing school" for the worldwide jihad. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, with British authorities rounding up suspected al-Qaida operatives hither and thither, it was indeed a curious fact that Abu Hamza was given free rein to continue his indoctrination activities. On July 30, 2002, *Fox News'* Carl Cameron and *Globe-Intel's* Gordon Thomas and Yvonne Ridley reported that a combined FBI-MI5 raid on the former Dublin office of the International Mercy Relief Agency -- an alleged al-Qaida front -- had yielded up documents linking Moussaoui to Abu Hamza. The documents had also conveniently linked Moussaoui to Mustafa Ahmed al-Hisawi (roughly eight months after they were first linked together in the Moussaoui indictment). As an aside, an earlier raid on the Dublin offices of the Islamic Relief Agency had, as reported in *Newsweek* on November 11, 2001, yielded up the documents that had first supposedly led authorities to assume that Mustafa Ahmed was a senior al-Qaida financial operative.

As late as September 11, 2002, journalist Farukh Dhondy was raising the question as to Abu Hamza's puzzling status as a free man, given his by now obvious role as a senior - indeed, crucial -- recruiter for al-Qaida:

"Scotland Yard's information office refuses to answer questions as to why Abu Hamza isn't under arrest. Several leaders of the Muslim community in Britain allege that he is working for the British Secret Services -- in particular MI5 -- as an agent provocateur . . ."

Of course, raising an allegation does not make it so. Yet the very fact that mainstream Muslim leaders would level such a charge at Abu Hamza says something about Abu Hamza's place in that community. In other words, was this al-Qaida recruiter an organic outgrowth of Britain's largely immigrant Muslim community, or was he simply grafted on to serve purposes other than those of his purported constituents?

Abu Hamza's role as an Islamic fundamentalist recruiter (along with that of his counterpart in Hamburg, Mohammed Haydar Zammar -- the recruiter of Atta and Binalshibh) must be judged in the light of present demographic realities. And the reality is this: with a population in excess of one billion adherents, and a geographic span that stretches from the West African Straits of Gibraltar to the far east of Asia, the Muslim World apparently was not up to the task of furnishing the most hardcore, sophisticated operative cells of al-Qaida. Contrary to popular wisdom, the inferno of 9/11 was not conceived in fetid slums like Gaza, where deprivation and bitterness has stoked inter-generational hatred of Westerners and Jews. Rather, the peculiarly sophisticated strain of Muslim terror that has been branded as *al-Qaida* was largely incubated among an insular network in the U.K. and the E.U., where a conveniently incriminating trail could be tracked and showcased as definitive proof of the authorship for 9/11.

In this respect, the likes of Atta, Moussaoui, Omar Saeed, and -- most importantly -- Osama bin Laden stood in stark contrast to the homegrown Middle Eastern suicide bombers who pathetically offer themselves up as anonymous solitary firecrackers in a nihilistic gesture of "resistance." Rather, these major players in the 9/11 Legend more closely resembled the likes

of Lee Harvey Oswald and John Hinckley -- men whose sudden psychopathic "transformations" occurred in the context of curious synchronicities.

In the case of Oswald, the very organization that provided the most incriminating evidence in Oswald's background also happened to be the organization most peculiarly evident in Oswald's pre-assassination biography -- for it was Oswald who, in his posting at the Atsugi military base in Japan, had access to the C.I.A.'s secretive U2 spy plane program before he defected in 1959; who was one of the very few Americans ever to defect to the Soviet Union; whose very noticeable defection would have brought him under the domain of C.I.A. counter-intelligence chief James Angleton; and finally, whose most high profile associations seemed to be with individuals intimately connected to the C.I.A.'s anti-Castro operations (a fact that was systematically overlooked at the time of the Warren Commission).

In short, Oswald was well within arm's length of the C.I.A. during those very years in which he was laying his "officially" incriminating trail, much of which was retrospectively ferreted out by the C.I.A. And the punch-line to all this: the K.G.B. officer charged with handling Oswald's file once he defected to the Soviet Union - Yuri Nosenko -- turned out to be a C.I.A. mole who later rashly fled to the Americans only a few months after the assassination, forcing James Angleton -- the C.I.A.'s liaison to the Warren Commission -- to stash Nosenko out of sight for three years in a C.I.A. dungeon, thus keeping this "smoking gun" out of the Warren Report. As for the attempted assassin of Ronald Reagan, John Hinckley, it turned out that his brother Scott was scheduled for a dinner date with Neil Bush on the very day that Reagan was shot (as reported by John Chancellor of *NBC News*). Is it any wonder that this Bush brother is studiously kept out of public view?

In a similar fashion, Mohammed Atta had a peculiar proclivity to "lay tracks" practically in the backyard of his purported pursuers. Europol's very first conference on terrorism took place in Madrid, within days of Atta's arrival. Atta and Binalshibh put the finishing touches on their 9/11 plans in July 2001, with Atta touching down one final time in Madrid -- within days of John O'Neill's meeting with Europol bigwig Juan Cotino in Madrid -- and then proceeding 500 miles to meet up with Binalshibh at the Spanish coastal resort of Salou, where he checked into a hotel that, only days before, had hosted John O'Neill in a counter-terror conference.

As for his choice for flight training, Atta and his comrades presciently chose to hone their skills within commuter distance of the C.I.A./military base that would later serve as Central Command for the War in Afghanistan. As posted on the *CBS News* site on March 5, 2003, here was Binalshibh's simple explanation to Yosri Fouda as to why Florida was chosen for its flight schools:

"The prices in America were convenient and the weather was ideal for more flying hours, especially in the coastal states like Florida . . . and the term of study wouldn't take long."

Perhaps Binalshibh might have added that it would also allow Atta and his comrades to lay an incriminating trail in the presence of bona fide *American* eyewitnesses, and all within shouting distance of the military handlers at MacDill Air Force Base. As an added bonus, two of Atta's fellow hijackers would also be set up with rental accommodations by the wife of the employee of a C.I.A.-founded company. Gloria Irish, the wife of the tabloid *Sun* editor Michael Irish, rented a Delray Beach apartment to hijackers Marwan Al-Shehhi and

Saeed Alghamdi. Perhaps it is a coincidence, but the very first victim of the post-9/11 anthrax attacks also happened to be a *Sun* photo editor by the name of Bob Stevens. And perhaps another peculiar coincidence, as reported in the *St. Petersburg Times* on October 15, 2001:

"Mike Irish, whose records show, is a licensed airplane pilot, several years ago was a member of the Civil Air Patrol based at a small-plane airport in Lantana, just north of Delray Beach, an official there told the Washington Post. One of the hijackers, Atta, reportedly rented a plane at that airport to practice flying for three days in August. Stevens, the Sun photo editor who died of anthrax Oct. 5, also lives in Lantana. But there is no indication whether Irish or Stevens ever crossed paths with Atta."

To anyone familiar with covert operations, the above item would perhaps set off alarm bells. In theory, if Atta and his comrades were intelligence assets, they would be handled by resident, intelligence-connected, "babysitters" whose job it would be to set up accommodations and provide support where needed. Were the Irishes "babysitters" in an intelligence operation? Again, the example of Lee Harvey Oswald provides a compelling comparative framework: Oswald's entree into the military/intelligence milieu dated from his entry, at the age of 15, into the Civil Air Patrol, which was co-founded by D.H. Byrd, the owner of the Texas School Book Depository. Oswald served under captain David Ferrie, a pilot who was later heavily involved in C.I.A. anti-Castro operations out of Florida and Louisiana (and who mysteriously died within days of being publicly outed as a possible witness in the JFK assassination probe conducted by New Orleans prosecutor Jim Garrison). Upon Oswald's return from the Soviet Union, his closest acquaintance was George DeMohrenschildt, a man who -- according to DeMohrenschildt's own testimony -- was directed by the C.I.A. Domestic Contacts Division to "babysit" Oswald. Incidentally, DeMohrenschildt was found dead on the very day that investigator Gaeton Fonzi came to interview him on behalf of the House Select Committee on Assassinations (the last official government investigation of the JFK assassination, which ruled the assassination a "probable conspiracy"). A search of DeMohrenschildt's belongings by Fonzi yielded up DeMohrenschildt's personal address book, which contained the name and former home address of then-C.I.A. Director George H.W. Bush.

It has long been a practice of the C.I.A. -- and other intelligence agencies -- to set up "front" companies to represent their interests as needed. With that in mind, and in keeping with the abovementioned comparative framework, perhaps it would bear fruit to review briefly the history of American Media Inc., the parent company which owns the *Sun*, the *National Enquirer*, and virtually all of the major American tabloids. American Media Inc. (AMI) was founded in 1952 by Generoso Pope, a "former" C.I.A. agent. In 1999, AMI made an aggressive grab for control of its major tabloid competitors. That year, AMI was bought by David Pecker and Evercore Partners, whose senior principal -- Roger C. Altman -- was a former vice-chairman of the Blackstone Group, co-founded by Peter Peterson, who is, incidentally, chairman of the influential Council On Foreign Relations (which establishes the mainstream media "consensus" on virtually all foreign policy issues). In October 2000, Blackstone purchased the mortgage on 7 World Trade Center. AIG, an insurer of the World Trade Center, announced -- on July 30, 1998 -- a long-term agreement with Blackstone valued at \$1.35 billion. That year, AIG -- which has had a long-standing strategic relationship with Blackstone -- acquired a 7% non-voting interest in Blackstone.

The above background in itself would not qualify as the "smoking gun" which necessarily *proves* AMI complicity in the events of 9/11 -- as that technique would merely be aping the specious "pattern of connections" employed by federal investigators to "prove" al-Qaida complicity for 9/11. Rather, it provides a plausible view as to how various interconnected corporate players may work in concert toward a common covert goal. Certainly, the inaugural anthrax attacks on the AMI offices would tend, at first glance, to absolve AMI of complicity -- though one could argue just as easily that it would also tend to divert suspicion from AMI as an obvious propaganda/covert front company. Since September 11, AMI has done its part in the War On Terror by publishing a series of one-shot glossy magazines which reflect the Official 9/11 legend in all its full-color glory.

In addition to AMI, MacDill Air Force base, and the Irishes, the state of Florida is host to a number of other eyewitnesses whose background -- and testimonies -- deserve far greater scrutiny than they have heretofore earned. For instance, witness Bert Rodriguez had specifically trained hijacker Ziad Jarrah in martial arts and close quarter fighting with knives. Perhaps Jarrah had a premonition that, on his designated flight -- United Flight 93 -- he would be facing off with a small coterie of rebellious passengers, in particular, martial arts champ Jeremy Glick.

Florida is also blessed with a profusion of flight schools. Yet of this rich aeronautical menu from which to choose, most of the September 11 hijackers were drawn to two flight schools practically next door to one another, both owned by Dutch nationals who purchased their respective schools within months of one another in 1998. The two owners, Rudi Dekkers and Arne Kruithof, also shared -- according to independent journalist Daniel Hopsicker -- a particularly troublesome post-9/11 fate, plagued by legal troubles and a pair of matching aviation accidents that nearly took both Dekkers and Kruithof out of the picture.

Kruithof also played a major part in one other crucial aspect of the 9/11 Legend. As FBI Director Mueller had taken pains to point out, Binalshibh was originally slated to be the "twentieth hijacker." Yet when his visa requests were repeatedly turned down, a decision was made to replace him with Moussaoui -- at least according to the "authorized" version -- and Binalshibh would thereafter play his part as the overall 9/11 coordinator in partnership with Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. As for Kruithof's part in all this, I reference a portion of the following exchange between Fouda and Abdallah Schleifer of the *Kamal Adham Center For Journalism* (where Fouda was a fellow):

Fouda: ". . . I also interviewed the owner of the flight school, Arne Kruithof, where Ziad Al-Jarrah (who flew the United Airlines plane which crashed in Pennsylvania) learned how to fly. And Kruithof confirmed that he had twice tried to get Ramzi [Binalshibh] an entry visa upon Ziad's urging . . . When Ziad asked Kruithof why the visa requests were turned down, the flight school owner said he didn't know. But American officials subsequently made no secret of it. They said Ramzi was turned down because he was implicated in the [October 2000]USS Cole attack."

Schleifer: "Your sources are presumably American intelligence sources?"

Fouda: "Yes."

Schleifer: "Now if I understand you correctly, American intelligence sources be it within the INS or some other agency the INS checked him out with, knew at the time they turned Ramzi down that he was implicated in the Cole attack. That's rather odd, because if they knew that and turned

him down for that reason, you'd think they would have wondered who else was at that flight school and why?"

Why, indeed. In Fouda's account, Kruithof "didn't know" at the time why the visa requests were turned down. Yet an October 24, 2001 *Los Angeles Times* article by Eric Lichtblau and Carol J. Williams apparently offers an alternative account:

" . . . FBI agents told officials of the Florida flight school that Binalshibh was rejected because of unspecified involvement 'with the bombing of the USS Cole,' according to Arne Kruithof, president of the school."

In other words, Kruithof here admits -- only six weeks after 9/11 -- that he was personally informed as to the reason for Binalshibh's visa rejection. What the *Times* article does not make clear is whether Kruithof came by this knowledge at the time of Binalshibh's last reported visa rejection -- May 2001 -- or *after* September 11. It is a crucial question, for it goes to the heart of Kruithof's -- and Fouda's -- credibility. In Fouda's account, Fouda had to glean the reason for Binalshibh's visa rejection through "American intelligence sources," though Fouda at the time could have easily learned of this from Kruithof, who had known this *at least* as early as October 24, 2001. In Fouda's account, his interview with Kruithof came *after* his historic interview with Binalshibh and Khalid -- that is, far into 2002. And thus do we come to the *Complicity v. Complacency* debate of 9/11. In Schleifer's exchange with Fouda concerning the above episode, Schleifer opines:

"Or, even more to the point they should have issued him [Binalshibh] a visa just to get him in to the United States and grabbed him for the Cole attack. If that's the case it fits right into a list of intelligence blunders by both the FBI and the CIA that have already surfaced in the press and in Congressional hearings."

Not so fast. Lost amid all this is the crucial fact that Kruithof was making the visa request at the *urging* of 9/11 hijacker Ziad Jarrah. Assuming that Kruithof was informed of the reason for the last visa rejection at the *time* he received the rejection, then logic dictates that Kruithof would have felt compelled to report *who* urged him to make that request. In other words, there would be no wiggle room here for a "complacency" explanation. Unfortunately, the open-ended phrasing of the above-mentioned *Los Angeles Times* article does leave room for a lawyerly caveat that the FBI agents confided in Kruithof *after* 9/11.

Even so, the *reason* for Binalshibh's rejection remains as a corroborated fact. Thus, if even this fact gets disputed, either Fouda and Kruithof were telling fibs or the FBI and "American intelligence sources" were feeding Fouda and Kruithof a load. If Fouda's credibility is at question, then so, too, is his crucial interview with Binalshibh and Khalid. On the other hand, if the FBI and "American intelligence sources" were feeding *both* Fouda and Kruithof the same erroneous factoid, then it raises the obvious question as to whether the powers-that-be have *fabricated* an Official 9/11 Legend -- the overall premise of this article. As regards Kruithof, a number of questions are raised by this episode. First, if he did in fact learn of the reason behind Binalshibh's visa rejection *before* 9/11, then one may only conclude that Kruithof was subsequently *protecting* his student, Ziad Jarrah, from exposure. On the other hand, if he learned of it after, then it raises the question as to why a major news organization (the *Los Angeles Times*) would have to come by this official information by way of a lowly flight school president. Either way, *someone* - Fouda, Kruithof, or the authorities -- comes out blackened by this episode, and the standard fig leaf of *complacency* will not cover the

naked thatch of *complicity*.

As we will see later in this article -- in the aforementioned exchange with Schleifer -- Fouda's credibility takes a substantial body blow as regards the reported timeframe for his interview with Binalshibh and Khalid. Moreover, the discrepancy arises out of the controversy surrounding Binalshibh's sudden capture on September 11, 2002. But before we get to Binalshibh's well-timed capture, we first must chronicle the attempt to further publicly elaborate the Binalshibh legend in the couple months leading up to his apprehension. As we have seen, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed's publicized legend received a substantial upgrade in the first week of June 2002, while Coleen Rowley played counterpoint with the *Moussaoui Tale* in the background. At the same time, Robert Mueller took the opportunity to incorporate Khalid into the *Money Trail Story* by way of the now "official" paymaster, Mustafa Ahmed al-Hisawi, who previously had made his own most indelible public impression as a fellow "unindicted co-conspirator" with Ramzi Binalshibh in the holy Moussaoui indictment.

Little more than a month later, on July 15, 2002, the original -- now unauthorized -- paymaster, Omar Saeed Sheikh, received a sentence of death in a Pakistani court for the kidnapping and murder of Daniel Pearl. Thus was Omar Saeed disposed of for the time being. Only one day before Omar Saeed's fate was sealed, Ramzi Binalshibh received his own upgrade in the finely calibrated telling of the Official 9/11 Legend. Binalshibh had made his public post-9/11 debut as early as September 15, 2001, when John Hooper of the *Guardian* reported that landlord Thorsten Albrecht had rented out a flat in Hamburg to Binalshibh, Atta, and Said Bahaji. Six days later, on September 21, chief German federal prosecutor Kay Nehm had issued a warrant for Binalshibh's arrest in relation to 9/11. Next, on November 14, 2001, Robert Mueller had announced to federal prosecutors that Binalshibh originally had been designated to be the twentieth hijacker. At the same time, Mueller had gone on record as discounting any link between Moussaoui and the 9/11 hijackers, thus seemingly contradicting the contents of the Moussaoui indictment that would be unsealed only one month later.

Mueller, in this instance, was employing the classic "hedge" strategy that he first used in raising uncertainty as to the hijackers' true identities, followed by his hedge on the January 2002 Calcutta incident involving Aftab Ansari, and followed thereafter by his disingenuous "no paper trail" declaration in April 2002. In all these instances, Mueller was giving the impression of a carefully considered investigation with no preconceived notions and coordinated set-ups. In short, he provided the official, obfuscating smokescreen for what was, in reality, a prefabricated, fully choreographed elaboration of the Legend of 9/11. If the whole Moussaoui episode seemed a little too pat on closer inspection, then the well-publicized Phoenix memo, the Rowley episode, and Mueller's various hedges worked to provide the necessary diversions, while serving the added purpose of marketing the need for a more efficient police state by way of the Patriot Act and the Office of Homeland Security.

By December 2001, Binalshibh had then received his first crucial public boost as one of two unindicted co-conspirators in the Moussaoui indictment, wherein it was alleged that Binalshibh served as paymaster to Moussaoui. Around that time, another "pole" of the legend was circulating that hijackers Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nayaf al-Hazmi had been

photographed at a meeting in Malaysia back in January 2000, accompanied by Tawfiq bin Atash, a man linked by authorities to the U.S.S. Cole attack of October 2000. Recall that, according to Arne Kruithof's testimony in the October 24, 2001 *Times* article, Binalshibh was by this time already being explicitly linked to the Cole attack, yet no further details had been supplied in relation to that alleged fact.

Thus, in the lead-up to Binalshibh's further July 14, 2002 promotion, there remained the question of linking the "Malaysian faction" represented by al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi with the all-important "Hamburg cell" represented by Atta, Binalshibh, al-Shehhi, and Jarrah -- also, as it happens, the very individuals who tended to outstrip most of their remaining fellow hijackers in the matter of laying incriminating trails. If, as the story goes, the remaining hijackers were merely "muscle" flown in from Saudi Arabia, then for the purposes of the *Official 9/11 Legend*, they were pretty much "filler." In other words, no need to stretch one's resources in setting up a full-bodied legend for the bit players when a stolen passport or two can pretty much do the job.

By July 14, 2002, the *Washington Post* linked the "Malaysian faction" up with the "Hamburg cell" by way of Ramzi Binalshibh. From start to finish, here's the story: after the failure of the planned millennium bombing, a terrorist "summit" was convened in Malaysia in January 2000, where the go-ahead was given for what would become the September 11 attack. A final meeting took place in Spain in July 2001, where the plan was finalized and ready to go. What follows is *Washington Post* reporter Peter Finn's unveiling of that next installment in the unfolding 9/11 Legend:

"Investigators said they believe that planning for the Sept. 11 attacks was punctuated at either end of the plot's trajectory by the two critical meetings. Binalshibh, who is believed to be alive, is the only person known to have attended both meetings, making him a key potential source of answers to the enduring questions about the plot, Western intelligence officials said."

Sure enough, those officials would get their answers a mere eight weeks later, once Binalshibh would fall into their hands. In the meantime, Binalshibh's legend was being built up for the big score. Now, with Binalshibh officially placed at the crucial January 2000 Malaysian "summit", it turned out that the authorities also had photographs of him at the summit -- in other words, from the same batch that had first garnered hijackers al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi their historic place in the Malaysian "pole" of this tale. Why it took authorities several months later to reveal Binalshibh's presence in that batch remains a mystery -- unless one goes with the hypothesis of a pre-fabricated, finely calibrated 9/11 Legend. Moreover, Finn likewise was raising the allegation of Binalshibh's link to the U.S.S. Cole attack. However, in Finn's version of Binalshibh's visa rejection, there could be absolutely *no* possibility that Binalshibh was rejected by reason of the Cole attack, which occurred in October 2000. Finn reports:

"After the meeting in Malaysia, Binalshibh planned to participate directly in the attacks as a pilot. Between May and October 2000, however, he failed four times in Germany and Yemen to obtain a U.S. visa.

'It was only by luck, really, he wasn't given a visa,' said one official. 'Otherwise, he'd have been on one of those planes that went down.'"

Perhaps it was also luck that, in this latest version, Binalshibh's last visa request would occur

before the Cole bombing and not as late as May 2001, as reported earlier in the *Los Angeles Times* by Lichtblau and Williams. In other words, Finn's version of the visa request directly contradicts both the *Times* version and Fouda's version. Moreover, the official version by this time was that Binalshibh tried "four times" to get an entry visa, whereas in Fouda's account with Schleifer, Fouda was quite explicit that only *two* attempts were made, citing Binalshibh and Kruithof's own words as support for this proposition:

Fouda: "He [Binalshibh] originally wanted to join the other 19 hijackers. But he was turned down twice when he tried to get an entry visa. When he failed I think he just focused on his role as a coordinator."

Schleifer: "This was by his own admission, that he tried twice and failed, or is this something you uncovered on your own?"

Fouda: "Yes, he mentioned it and I had that confirmed from other sources . . . And Kruithof confirmed that he had twice tried to get Ramzi an entry visa upon Ziad's urging . . ."

If a possible "smoking gun" of complicity or complacency could be ferreted out from Fouda and Kruithof, Finn's key installment here functioned to smother that contingency. Only weeks before his July 15, 2002 article on Binalshibh, Finn had played his part in structuring the news regarding the man who had allegedly recruited Binalshibh and other members of the "Hamburg cell" into the ranks of Islamic fundamentalism -- Mohammed Haydar Zammar. On June 12, 2002 -- that is, just a week after Khalid Shaikh Mohammed was introduced as the new 9/11 mastermind -- Finn introduced Zammar as the "charismatic advocate" who had cast his spell over Atta, Binalshibh, and their Hamburg-based colleagues -- in much the same way that Abu Hamza had worked his magic on his British charges.

And, like Abu Hamza, Zammar was likewise allowed to carry on freely in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 while the German and British authorities were rounding up suspects by the dozens. According to *Der Spiegel*, German intelligence agents had approached Zammar in 1996, offering to recruit him as an informer. Zammar reportedly declined the offer, and then -- as reported by Finn -- "around 1997, Atta and others in the Hamburg-based group, who already had anti-Western views, fell under Zammar's influence."

The \$64,000 question, however, is whether Zammar -- and British recruiter Abu Hamza -- did in fact fall under the influence of any intelligence service. Put simply, if one were to look for the fingerprints of a covert service lurking behind the "Hamburg cell", the most fruitful place to look would be in the vicinity of the man who supposedly forged this insular clique. However, the *Der Spiegel* item had perhaps the unintended effect of casting a thin veil of *plausible deniability* over this crucial question -- for in the event that someone *might* eventually blow the whistle on an intelligence contact with Zammar, so what? One could always employ the *Der Spiegel* item to concede that fact and then "spin" it as a failed approach. And if it became known that an intelligence presence was found in the vicinity of Atta and Binalshibh's apartment? -- they were conducting *surveillance*, naturally. Why no action, then? -- an oversight, a blunder, *complacency*. In two words -- *plausible deniability*.

In the first few months after September 11, the general public was given the impression that the September 11 attack was a hugely choreographed al-Qaida operation, with literally thousands of possible conspirators spread out from the Philippines, to Malaysia, to Afghanistan, to Saudi Arabia, and throughout the continent of Europe. Yet in the few months

between Khalid Shaikh Mohammed's public promotion and the capture of Ramzi Binalshibh, it became quite clear that September 11 was in fact a closely compartmentalized operation essentially involving a small clique in Hamburg coordinated by the Lennon-McCartney talents of Khalid and Binalshibh. In close support, the indoctrinated products of Abu Hamza's Finsbury Park mosque provided the Moussaouis and the shoe bombers who would later shore up the case against al-Qaida. To complete the picture, a mixed bag of Muslim militants would be rounded up -- in Spain, Italy, Belgium, Canada, Morocco, etc. -- and branded with the all-purpose *al-Qaida* trademark.

With all the billowing smoke and reflecting mirrors, the stage would then be set to obscure the dirt trail leading to Hamburg. Put simply, that all-important Hamburg recruiter, Zammar, needed to be dealt with cleanly and cautiously. If Zammar were in German custody, the spotlight -- and the inevitable questions -- would thereby fall on this absolutely crucial operative. The German authorities, however, would be able to avoid that headache if Zammar were simply to disappear right under their noses -- as he did. As reported by Finn in his June 12 2002 *Washington Post* article:

"After the Sept. 11 attacks, Zammar was questioned and released by German police who kept him under surveillance. German officials said they did not have enough evidence to charge Zammar, and he left Germany freely on Oct. 27, ostensibly to obtain a divorce from a Moroccan woman . . . German officials said they have confirmed that Zammar reached Morocco, but he subsequently disappeared."

Thus, Zammar was no longer a German problem. As reported by Finn, "Zammar's partner and six children", who were still in Hamburg, "filed an official missing persons report with German authorities." Finn also offers another reason why Zammar was -- and should be regarded as -- one of the more key operatives in the September 11 plot:

" At some point, probably in 1998 or early 1999, the Hamburg group decided to 'offer themselves' to al Qaeda, [a] U.S. counterterrorism official said, describing Zammar as a central player in that process."

One could, of course, put a different spin on it -- that Zammar, on the direction of his intelligence handlers, had placed his compartmentalized cell at the disposal of the larger al-Qaida network, which was in fact little more than a loosely affiliated collection of various Muslim militant cells acting independently of one another, with some genuine militant groupings mixed in with the pre-fabricated ones. As with all well-conceived legends, 90% of the true facts would eventually be put out in the open so as to inoculate against any unforeseen discoveries, thereby rendering the missing -- and potentially most toxic -- 10% as an implausible, conspiratorial view of the "facts."

So where was Zammar? Here was the probable set-up: Finn's June 12, 2002 item had raised the "speculative" prospect that Zammar was perhaps apprehended by U.S. authorities in Morocco, and secretly taken elsewhere for interrogation. Five days later, the *Associated Press* revealed that, yes, Zammar *had* been apprehended in Morocco, and was duly handed over to Syrian custody (as Zammar was Syrian-born). Two days later, Finn wrote a follow-up article in the *Washington Post*, speculating that it was, in fact, his own June 12 article that had prompted this long overdue and sudden announcement concerning Zammar's fate. Zammar was found -- and Finn had set it all in motion. In any case, we now knew he was in Syria -- being "interrogated" by American officials, one assumed -- which was pretty

much the equivalent of being in a black hole, as far as the public and press were concerned. Case closed on Zammar.

Returning to the other elements in Finn's pivotal June 12, 2002 opus, Finn referred to the Malaysia meeting as the "jumping off" point for the September 11 plot, in particular singling out hijacker al-Mihdhar as the attendee. As to the other bookend of the plot -- that final July 2001 meeting in Spain -- Finn quoted the ever-anonymous "U.S. counterterrorism official":

"The U.S. counterterrorism official said investigators believe that a trusted al Qaeda operative flew to Spain to meet Atta to discuss the operation and subsequently left. But he said investigators have not identified whom Atta met."

As we would conveniently learn from Finn later on July 14, Atta's mystery contact was Binalshibh. In retrospect, it is as if Finn's June 12 2002 article was meant *solely* to be read as a preparatory companion piece for his July 14 sequel. As a bit of foreshadowing for what one could expect from him on July 14, Finn made sure to include the following comment from an anonymous "Saudi analyst" in his June 12 piece:

"A Saudi analyst said the Saudis have confirmed a family tie between Binalshibh and one of the key hijackers, Khalid AlMihdhar . . ."

Just based on Finn's June 12 item, one could quite effectively draw the following logical syllogism: al-Mihdhar = Malaysia meeting ; Binalshibh = al-Mihdhar; therefore, Binalshibh = Malaysia meeting. The only mystery equation in Finn's June 12 piece would be: Atta + X = Spain meeting. On July 14, he would provide the mystery variable: X = Binalshibh. Set-up and payoff. Nicely done. In his concise, efficient work of June 12, Finn had done an admirable job in relaying the unfolding tale of Binalshibh and his recruiter, Zammar, setting them up for their subsequent chapter installments in the 9/11 Serial. Never was an information campaign more artfully produced -- with due acknowledgment, of course, to all those nameless "counterterrorism officials" and "analysts."

Several weeks later, on September 9, 2002, the die was cast. *Al-Jazeera* was broadcasting Part I of Fouda's historic interview with Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and Ramzi Binalshibh. For the first time, millions would hear -- from the planners themselves -- exactly how the September 11 plot was put in motion. It was *al-Jazeera's* version of *VH1's Behind The Music*, featuring guest commentaries from Vincent Cannistraro and Lyndon LaRouche. Unfortunately, viewers would only get the audio feed of Khalid and Binalshibh, as Binalshibh and Khalid purportedly had confiscated from Fouda his videotape of the proceedings before he had taken leave of them back in June.

In more ways than one, September 9 was an ideal launch date for the interview broadcast. By then, the mainstream media had the whole summer to feed the public -- and themselves -- with various leaks, revelations, and "official" comments concerning Khalid and Binalshibh's newfound place in the 9/11 pantheon. Set-up and payoff. Moreover, the interview was now being broadcast in the immediate lead-up to the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, thereby further raising the profile of this historic broadcast. And indeed, there was something in it for everyone. For the mainstream folks, there was of course the first-person, blow-by-blow, account of the September 11 preparations, which pretty much served to corroborate practically every single factoid offered over the past year by an army of nameless, faceless

counterterrorism officials and experts. For the headline writers, there was the throwaway nugget concerning one of the hijacked planes that was headed for Congress (perhaps a veiled warning of future mischief to be directed against our submissive lawmakers in the unlikely event they might sprout some vertebrae). And for the more conspiracy-minded, one could reference LaRouche's take on the widely marketed neo-con "cabal", as well as Cannistraro's sly references to those cheering Israelis atop the white van.

It was practically a seamless propaganda extravaganza, except for one small detail -- Fouda had gone on record as dating the interview to June of 2002, thereby raising the prospect of two plausible scenarios. ***Scenario One:** Khalid and Binalshibh's respective roles in the plot were first discovered solely due to Fouda's contact with them;* or ***Scenario Two:** The decision to send Fouda on his interview errand was made at the same time that a decision was made to market Khalid as the new 9/11 mastermind.* Of the two scenarios, the first one was far more palatable -- from a propaganda perspective -- as at least it could be kept within the borders of plausible deniability, and only Fouda would get burned by it. The second scenario, however, would raise the prospect of one of those uncomfortable coincidences that could conceivably expose the 9/11 Legend as a pre-fabricated set-up.

Only two days after the initial broadcast of Fouda's interview with Khalid and Binalshibh -- on the first anniversary commemorating the 9/11 attacks -- Pakistani forces, accompanied by FBI agents, raided an apartment complex in Karachi. After a "four hour" gun battle involving "hundreds" of Pakistani soldiers and policemen, the authorities captured, among a few others, Ramzi Binalshibh himself. Their original target, however, had been Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, whom they had been tracking for months throughout Karachi. While Khalid had just barely slipped away only a few hours before Pakistani forces had arrived at his door, the authorities were reportedly "surprised" to discover that they had netted Binalshibh in the process. At least that is now the official version of the day's events. As revealed by Syed Saleem Shahzad in an *Asia Times Online* article dated October 30, 2002, the shootout ended with the deaths of two al-Qaida fighters, one of them identified as Khalid. Here was Shahzad's report of the events:

"The FBI, still keen to take [Khalid] Shaikh Mohammed alive, teargassed the area, and a number of people were captured. However, despite instructions to the contrary, a few Pakistani Rangers entered the flat, where they found [Khalid] Shaikh Mohammed and another man, allegedly with their hands up. The Rangers nevertheless opened fire on the pair.

"Later, the Pakistani press carried pictures of a message scrawled in blood on the wall of the flat, proclaiming the Muslim refrain of Kalma, in Arabic: "There is no God except Allah, Mohammed is his messenger". An official who was present in the flat at the time of the shooting has told *Asia Times Online* that the message was written by Shaikh Mohammed with his own blood as his life drained away from him . . .

". . . But now it emerges that an Arab woman and a child were taken to an ISI safe house, where they identified the Shaikh Mohammed's body as their husband and father . . .

". . . The widow subsequently underwent exhaustive interrogation in the custody of FBI officials . . ."

According to Shahzad, Khalid's wife and child remained in FBI custody as of the date of the report -- that is, six weeks after the raid. It is fair game, though, to question the authenticity of his information, though his sources were "close to Pakistani intelligence agents." Yet, as

we shall see, authorities eventually *did* confirm one crucial portion in Shahzad's account: Khalid's wife and two young sons -- aged 9 and 7 -- were apprehended in the raid, and immediately handed over (in the later, official version) to Pakistani custody. Yet this information *officially* would not be revealed until one week after Khalid's later "official" capture on March 1, 2003. In the meantime, other reports were circulating that Khalid had, in fact, been captured alive in the September 11, 2002 raid. According to a *Fox News* report on September 16, 2002:

"[U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza] Rice could not confirm speculation that another Al Qaeda suspect arrested last week was Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, one of Usama bin Laden's chief lieutenants.

'I wouldn't rule anything out here, but I think that we'll just wait and see how this unfolds,' she said."

Whatever the truth of the matter, something strange, indeed, was unfolding just below the surface of the "official" events. A week before the Sept. 11 2002 raid, this author had first posted an article entitled *Daniel Pearl and The Paymaster of 9/11*, an analysis of the controversy surrounding the 9/11 paymaster role and its essential connection with the Pearl kidnapping. Days earlier, researcher Paul Thompson of the *Center For Cooperative Research* had posted his own analysis of this anomaly. Now, within a week after the raid, the Pearl killing was being woven anew into the 9/11 Legend. As reported in the same September 16 *Fox News* item:

"Earlier Monday, another government official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said police were investigating whether suspects arrested with Binalshibh were involved in the murder of American reporter Daniel Pearl.

If a link were established, it would be the first evidence that Al Qaeda may have been involved in Pearl's abduction and killing."

The evidence of an al-Qaida connection with the Pearl killing -- as exhaustively documented by this author and Thompson -- was all over the place, as, unfortunately, was the evidence of a massively choreographed disinformation campaign. Now, within weeks of Binalshibh's Sept. 11, 2002 arrest, the disinformation apparatus was revisiting the Daniel Pearl thread of the 9/11 Legend, this time with a bombshell *UPI* exclusive from Richard Sale and Anwar Iqbal, dated September 30, 2002:

"Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl was investigating the man who allegedly planned the Sept. 11 airplane hijackings and attacks on New York and Washington when he was kidnapped and murdered in Pakistan, according to two Central Intelligence Agency officials.

"Bob Baer, a former case officer in the agency's Directorate of Operations, said he provided Pearl with unpublished information about Khalid Shaikh Mohammed . . .

". . . 'I was working with Pearl,' said Baer, who had written a book about his time as a CIA official and has acted as a consultant and source for numerous media outlets. 'We had a joint project. Mohammed was the story he was working on, not Richard Reid.'"

There appeared to be a strategy underlying Baer's timely admission, conveyed several months after he published his best-selling book, *See No Evil*, which made him the media "go-to guy" concerning CIA weaknesses and blind spots leading up to 9/11. To confirm Baer's stunning admission about Pearl, *UPI* had conferred with the spokesman of Pakistan's

military government, as well as "Pakistani intelligence sources," all of whom who were likewise suggesting that Pearl was more likely tracking down Khalid.

Then what of Omar Saeed Sheikh, the supposed official mastermind of the Pearl kidnapping (and unofficial 9/11 paymaster), now facing a sentence of death? As revealed in the same September 30, 2002 *UPI* article:

". . . there were reports that four other men had also been arrested by Pakistani police in connection with the [Pearl] murder. But Pakistani security officials told UPI that in order for the new suspects to be put on trial, the four convicted men would also have to be tried again, because evidence against the new suspects undermined the case against Omar and his accomplices."

It wasn't hard to guess what was going on here. Quite simply, Omar Saeed -- after having been definitively edged out of the 9/11 paymaster role by way of the possibly fictitious Mustafa Ahmed al-Hisawi -- was now being edged out of the less incendiary Pearl kidnap mastermind role by way of al-Hisawi's alleged money trail accomplice, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. In other words, Omar Saeed was well on his way to becoming an obscure historical footnote in both of these instances, disappearing down the black hole of the Pakistani justice system as others were being set up to take his place in the spotlight "for the record." More significantly, the official record was now effectively muddying Omar Saeed's prior roles by conflating a new "paymaster" (al-Hisawi) with the new "9/11 mastermind" (Khalid), who was now also explicitly tagged as the mastermind behind the Pearl killing. Thus, a new *9/11/Paymaster/Pearl* thread could be officially generated without any noticeable mention of Omar Saeed.

On September 26, 2002, only days before Baer's bombshell admission, John Lumpkin of the *Associated Press* presented his update on the 9/11 paymaster role. Recall that it was Lumpkin who had written, back in early June 2002, the definitive article introducing Khalid as the 9/11 mastermind, including references to the now-official paymaster Mustafa Ahmed al-Hisawi (a.k.a. Shaikh Saiid *al-Sharif*) and Ramzi Binalshibh. Now, Lumpkin was reporting the contents of Robert Mueller's formerly secret testimony before the Joint Senate-House Committee, made back in early June 2002, around the time of Lumpkin's key article on Khalid. Referencing Mueller's information, Lumpkin was now naming *three* official 9/11 paymasters: Mustafa Ahmed al-Hisawi (still a.k.a. Shaikh Saiid *al-Sharif*), a new character named Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, and Ramzi Binalshibh. In this latest version, Mohammed Atta was demoted from his formerly well-publicized role as the hijackers' purse-holder: "Among the hijackers, Marwan Al-Shehhi has emerged as the moneyman, [Mueller] said." Omar Saeed, the \$100,000 transaction, and Atta's Florida bank account were now distant memories, obscured by a profusion of money trails leading any number of ways to their respective paymasters.

Lumpkin also took the opportunity now to publicly link up Omar Saeed's replacement, al-Hisawi, with Khalid Shaikh Mohammed by way of Mueller's June 2002 secret testimony, revealing that al-Hisawi's bank accounts in the UAE connected him to an alias used by Khalid. And, as if to lay the groundwork for Khalid and al-Hisawi's eventual simultaneous capture, Lumpkin wrote, "Both al-Hisawi and Mohammed are at large and are among the most wanted al-Qaida figures remaining." He might also have mentioned Osama bin Laden and his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri, but then that wasn't the point of the article. As I have argued, the time was fast approaching for al-Hisawi, Binalshibh, and Khalid (in conjunction

with the Moussaoui indictment) to wrap up this segment of the 9/11 Legend and to take their indelible places in the official history books.

As for Baer, it was a bit difficult -- though not impossible -- to reconcile his version of the Pearl story with *Fox News* analyst (and counterterrorism expert) Mansoor Ijaz's version. Recall that Ijaz had personally claimed that *he* was the one who had set up Pearl with his leads and appointments. In Ijaz's account -- referenced by Robert Sam Anson in the August 2002 issue of *Vanity Fair* - there was no sign of Baer. As reported by Anson, Pearl's Indian intelligence contacts directed him to Ijaz, who then proceeded to set up Pearl's leads in Pakistan. In Baer's version, it was Baer himself who had initiated contact with Pearl, calling him up with a "hot story on terrorism." Baer's "hot story" begins in December 1997, when, after having "officially" left the C.I.A. to become a terrorism consultant, he met a former Qatari police chief. The ex-police chief informed Baer that, some time in 1996, the FBI had learned that Khalid and an accomplice were hiding out in Qatar. I quote the abovementioned Sept. 30 2002 *UPI* article as to what happened next:

"While pretending to help, elements in the Qatari government stalled U.S. agents and supplied the two suspects, [Khalid Shaikh] Mohammed and [Shawqui]Islambuli with passports in fake names and spirited them out of the country."

Nice story. Did it happen? As of Baer's admission, it apparently is now part of Khalid's "official" legend, taking its place alongside the factoid detailing Khalid's "secret" indictment in 1996. In Baer's book, *See No Evil*, Khalid is mentioned briefly as an expert in hijacking planes, but precious little detail is offered. One must be extremely cautious in assimilating any "official" details about Khalid offered after June 2002, as one cannot be sure as to which biographical details were fabricated solely to buttress Khalid's early June 2002 legend as the 9/11 mastermind. Interestingly, while Baer's brief reference to Khalid in his book is one of the very few public characterizations of him offered between September 2001 and June 2002, one must wonder why Baer chose to wait a good eight months after the Pearl kidnapping before revealing this new chapter about Khalid. Even more so, one must wonder why, back in June 2002, when Khalid was making the headlines as the newly marketed 9/11 mastermind -- and at a time when the red-hot Baer was doing the post-9/11 media circuit -- he apparently did not find it newsworthy to reveal the Khalid angle to the Pearl story. Or perhaps he had forgotten it altogether, and it had taken as long as three weeks after the Binalshibh arrest to jog his memory.

But with his memory now firmly jogged, apparently he would set out to discover what happened to his "joint project" partner, Daniel Pearl. Perhaps to his horror, he discovered that Pearl might have been disposed of by their joint research subject. "I have heard from (intelligence) people who follow this closely that it was people close to [Khalid Shaikh] Mohammed that killed him [Pearl], if it wasn't Mohammed himself," Baer revealed to *UPI*.

Backing up Baer's contention was Yosef Bodansky, the director of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, who "told *UPI* emphatically, '[Khalid Shaikh] Mohammed was Pearl's killer.'"

In case there was any further doubt as to Baer's credibility, *UPI* informed its readers that "another former 30-year veteran of CIA confirmed Baer's account. He asked that his name not be used but he endorsed Baer: 'I'm surprised Baer is on the record, but he really knows

his stuff on this.'" Under the circumstances, would it be a stretch to surmise that this anonymous "former" C.I.A. veteran might possibly be Vincent Cannistraro? Certainly, it is more than likely that they would know one another, as both Baer and Cannistraro had worked on the Pan Am 103 investigation in Lockerbie, Scotland. Moreover, the *UPI* writer of the September 30 article, Richard Sale, would later go on to cite *both* Baer and Cannistraro (on record here) for their views of the neo-con clique in Washington -- the one that was widely marketed as pushing for war in Iraq. Sale's February 11, 2003 *UPI* article quoted Cannistraro thusly:

"'Clearly Iraq is not the last phase of what the administration tends to do in the Middle East.' According to the neo-con theory, [Cannistraro] said, 'Syria is to be the next target.' He concurred with another view in Washington that holds that part of the Bush plan was to 'wean the Jewish lobby away from the Democrats' and that 'it's already pretty much happened.'"

As for Baer's own assessment of the neo-cons:

"Former CIA official Robert Baer, when asked about the master plan for the Middle East, told *UPI* last fall that Bush's team allegedly wanted 'to divide up Syria, give part of Iraq to Turkey, overthrow the monarchy in Saudi Arabia, [and] restore the Hashemites to the Hijaz,' a very center of Saudi Arabian culture.

"'The underlying motivation' for this, Baer said, 'is Israel'"

Recall that previously I had argued that both the "Jewish" neo-cons and the state of Israel were to be set up as second tier proxy/patsies for the events of 9/11. And while 9/11 was not at issue in the above-referenced article, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that the article was meant to be read on two levels. On the "mainstream" level, Baer and Cannistraro were pushing the view that the approaching war in Iraq was a project of an insular group of neo-cons acting on behalf of the state of Israel, allied with the Jewish lobby. No indication here of a 9/11 conspiracy. Elsewhere, Cannistraro and Baer had repeatedly gone on record as adhering to the main contours of the *Official 9/11 Legend* -- that al-Qaida was the key perpetrator of the 9/11 attacks, perhaps with a bit of help from Saudi elements. On the "alternative", more "conspiracy-minded" level, Cannistraro and Baer were reinforcing suspicions that this powerful neo-con clique was perhaps responsible for plots more sinister than a push toward Iraq. In this respect, perhaps it was not just a matter of happenstance that Yosri Fouda had chosen to pair Cannistraro's commentary about the cheering Israelis on the white van with Lyndon LaRouche's well-circulated theory of a "rogue", self-contained, "cabal" of largely Jewish neo-cons behind 9/11. Again, something for everyone.

Cannistraro and Baer -- who both have gone on record as criticizing the neo-cons and their spurious evidentiary claims of an Iraqi connection to 9/11 -- also share a common journalistic connection with Seymour Hersh, the investigative journalist who has played his own part in discrediting the neo-cons and the state of Israel. Hersh, in fact, wrote the foreword to Baer's *See No Evil* - a recommended book for those wedded to the *complacency* theory of 9/11, to be read in conjunction with Brisard and Dasquie's *The Forbidden Truth* and Coleen Rowley's congressional testimony.

Hersh, a classic "access" reporter who first made his reputation in an expose of the Mai Lai Massacre in Vietnam, was playing the neo-con angle for all it was worth. In the Spring of 2003, in the midst of global hysteria over Iraq, Hersh raised allegations that arch-neo-con

Richard Perle had peddled his influence with the Defense Policy Board for financial gain, thereby forcing Perle to resign his position as Chairman. Thereafter, Hersh revealed -- in a May 12, 2003 article in *The New Yorker* - the intellectual influence behind the scheming, insular neo-cons: the late Leo Strauss, a professor at the University of Chicago. In Hersh's telling, the Bush Administration was in the grip of the influential Office of Special Plans at the Pentagon, dominated by the neo-cons, who were now branded as "Straussians." In nailing down his point, Hersh quoted Cannistraro, who claimed to have intimate knowledge of this Straussian clique:

"The group's members, Cannistraro said, 'reinforce each other because they're the only friends they have, and they all work together. This has been going on since the nineteen-eighties, but they've never been able to coalesce as they have now. September 11th gave them the opportunity, and now they're in heaven."

Again, Cannistraro here can be -- and probably was intended to be -- read on two levels. On the "mainstream" level, the charge consists of nothing more sinister than that of an "opportunistic" post-9/11 grab at the foreign policy agenda. Yet on the "alternative" level, Cannistraro was providing a powerful ready-made quote for use by the "9/11 conspiracy crowd." Indeed, the Lyndon LaRouche apparatus at *Executive Intelligence Review* was once more playing counterpoint to Cannistraro's melody -- for, whether coincidental or otherwise, LaRouche's unveiling of Leo Strauss as the intellectual godfather of the neo-cons (whom he dubbed as the *Children of Satan*) had in fact just *preceded* Hersh's more "mainstream" take on the neo-con Strauss crowd. And now that Cannistraro had furnished his "smoking gun" quote, the LaRouchites at *Executive Intelligence Review* were subsequently quoting Cannistraro in order to burnish their contention that 9/11 was likely the work of the insular neo-con "Perle/Wolfowitz cabal".

Meanwhile, both Baer and Cannistraro were lending their growing reputations as critics of the War on Iraq in order to bolster the legitimacy of the case for the War on Terror. At least that was the inevitable effect. Like Brisard and Dasquie, Baer and Cannistraro seemed to be informational Zeligs, showing up all over the media map, structuring perceptions in a very definite direction, offering legends and counter-legends intended for various audiences, both mainstream and alternative. On the broadest level, Cannistraro and, especially, Baer were advocating the *complacency* theory behind 9/11, posing as mainstream "critics" of their "former" CIA employers while at the same time keeping the general contours of the *Official 9/11 Legend* in place. In lockstep with the neo-cons, they were also raising suspicions of possible Saudi perfidy, primarily for the Saudi role as financial and political enablers of al-Qaida. A sub-set of the Saudi thread also connected with the *Cheney/ Halliburton / Enron /Big Oil* theory behind 9/11. This theory had a dual use -- one, for an *opportunistic complacency* theory behind 9/11, and the other for an *opportunistic complicity* theory. In any case, the ailing Cheney had already been pre-packaged as a self-contained, potentially "rogueish", power behind the Bush throne, while the dead husk of Enron was marketed as the self-contained, rogue manifestation of "Big Oil". If "Big Oil" and Cheney seemed to be taking a large dose of bad publicity in the first several months following 9/11 and the War in Afghanistan, the storyline -- and the villain role -- gradually shifted over to the Perle/Wolfowitz neo-cons in the year-long lead-up to the War In Iraq. And here, too, a dual use was made of the neo-cons - one, to raise suspicions of *premeditated complicity*, and alternatively, to raise the allegation of *post-facto opportunism*.

As for Iraq, Cannistraro seemed to be playing it both ways -- casting aspersions on the Iraqis for the Oklahoma bombing, yet giving them a clean bill of health with regard to the alleged evidence linking them to 9/11. And, as stated before, Cannistraro and Baer's criticisms of the War In Iraq only served to bolster the credibility of their opinions concerning the War On Terror -- and, by extension, to lend credibility to the *Official 9/11 Legend*. If, during the whole War In Iraq episode, the Bush and Blair regimes' sputtering efforts at propaganda and disinformation were being repeatedly exposed as amateurish and ill-considered, then surely -- the reasoning goes -- any attempts at information management concerning 9/11 would likewise have been exposed as fraudulent.

Yet it is a curious fact that, in the aftermath of the War In Iraq -- at a time when more Americans do *not* trust *CNN* - the structural pivots of the *Official 9/11 Legend* appear more sturdy and unassailable than ever before. For surely if all those British and American intelligence operatives were heaping scorn on the "evidence" linking Iraq to 9/11, then why not repose our trust in them when they tell us exactly who *was* behind September 11? And surely if the German and French governments were so diametrically opposed to the geopolitical designs of the Americans (or their neo-con controllers), then why would they support an imperialistic American foreign policy when conducted under the cover of a specious "war" on "terror?" Quite simply, they wouldn't -- unless, as I have argued, this War On Terror is being spearheaded by, and on behalf of, a global political and corporate elite with mutual financial interests and perhaps a psychopathological bent toward corruption and bribery.

In this context -- and in light of the foregoing evidence -- it would be reasonable to surmise that some of the now-official C.I.A. "outsider" critics like Cannistraro and Baer were in fact deeply inside the loop, while the widely marketed "insiders" like Perle and Wolfowitz could now be looked upon as useful idiots, in the same manner that Richard Mellon Scaife had played the useful idiot in keeping Bill Clinton on a very short leash. Here, too, even a consummate insider like George W. Bush himself would have a leash placed around his neck -- just in case. As I stated before, one way to pull off a tightly compartmentalized conspiracy is to ensure that all key parties are potentially open to blackmail, thereby ensuring that no one individual player may grab the upper hand by unilaterally incriminating the others. In this respect, we may see that bin Laden was set up to play his headliner role in the Official 9/11 Legend *precisely* due to his family connections with the Bushes and the Saudi royal family. Recall that, similarly, the Bushes had family connections with the Hinckleys. Thus, if Vice-President Bush had ascended to the Presidency in the aftermath of a Reagan assassination, he, too, would have been kept on a very short leash - by reason of his obvious connection with the lone gunman, if for no other.

Perhaps, then, it is not so surprising that one of the major *Democrat* contenders for the 2004 Presidential election was (until recently) Senator -- and former Florida Governor -- Bob Graham, the congressional 9/11 Inquiry co-chair who just happens to be one of the most potentially compromised post-9/11 politicians by virtue of his well-timed September 11 breakfast meeting with Omar Saeed's reported "handler," ISI General Mahmud Ahmad. Curiously, it was Graham who made waves over the past year by publicly "fighting" to declassify several pages of his 9/11 congressional inquiry report, cryptically suggesting that a "foreign power" was involved. Was he alluding to Pakistan by way of the ISI? Or Israel by way of its art student ring? As it turned out, Graham was playing the Saudi thread, and -- like

Cannistraro and Baer -- was doing double duty as a critic of the War In Iraq while posing as a champion of the War On Terror. But more significantly, Graham's red herring crusade for the declassification of a couple dozen pages also served to cast an imprimatur of "independence" on the remaining 400+ pages in a report that covered all the nooks and crannies of the *Official 9/11 Legend*.

As of this writing, the key Democrat candidate for the 2004 Presidential election is retired General Wesley Clark, a so-called "spurned" former Republican who has been marketed as a critic of the War In Iraq -- though only months after he first gained mass notice as a *CNN* commentator helping to "spin" that very war by "walking" viewers through the battlefield scenarios concocted by the U.S. General Staff in Iraq. General Clark had left a lucrative position as a managing director of the *Stephens Group* in order to take up his duties at *CNN*. Incidentally, the founding principal of the Arkansas-based *Stephens Group*, Jackson Stephens, was a major financial benefactor of *both* George W. Bush and William J. Clinton. Stephens -- once a roommate of former President Jimmy Carter -- also reportedly had played a key role as a go-between and broker for *BCCI's* aborted venture into American banking.

Judging by the record of the past thirty years, it is a safe bet to say that whoever is on the menu as a leading Presidential contender for 2004 (particularly if he is a Democrat), he will meet with the approval of the Stephens camp -- and its affiliated cliques.

End Game: Arresting The Paymaster(s)

With the well-timed arrest of Ramzi Binalshibh in September 2002, journalist Yosri Fouda was in a bind. Only days before, he had gone on record -- repeatedly -- as dating his interview with Khalid and Binalshibh to June 2002. Up to the time of Binalshibh's arrest, the official legend had it that Khalid's pivotal role as 9/11 mastermind was revealed to U.S. authorities through their interrogation of Abu Zubaydah, who was captured in March 2002. Now, in the aftermath of Binalshibh's capture, word was circulating that perhaps authorities had learned of Khalid's true role by way of Fouda. That contention, of course, would remain most plausible if Fouda's interview could definitively be *back-dated* to a time before early June 2002 -- that is, to a time *before* Khalid was first publicly announced as 9/11 paymaster. The alternative scenario quite simply pointed to a conclusion that would have to be denied at all costs -- that the decision to out Khalid publicly as the 9/11 mastermind was coordinated with the decision to send Fouda on his interview errand with Khalid. Had Fouda erred, then, by initially claiming that his historic interview had taken place in June 2002? Had he possibly exposed a seam pointing the way to a coordinated set-up?

Soon after the Binalshibh arrest, Fouda took the opportunity to revise the date of his interview for the record, revealing to Abdallah Schleifer of the *Kamal Adham Center For Journalism*:

Fouda: "Actually, this question of dates is very important for another reason. All of these Islamist websites that were denouncing me alluded to my interview as taking place in June. That's what I mentioned both in my article in *The Sunday Times Magazine* and in my documentary -- that I met them in June."

Schleifer: "So?"

Fouda: "I lied."

Schleifer: "Really?"

Fouda: "Yeah."

Schleifer: "But you're going to come clean with [us], right?"

Fouda (laughter) : "Yes, of course. I lied because I needed to lie. I'll tell you why. Because I thought, maybe even expected, that if something when wrong and I needed to get in touch with them through a website or a statement or a fax . . . they would be the only ones who would know that I had met them one month earlier than I let on, and so I'd know I was talking to the right people.

So after the first wave of denunciations a pro-Qa'ida website "jihad.net" put up a statement online in the name of Al-Qa'ida clearing me of any blame or connection with Ramzi's arrest and I knew this was an authentic communique because it alluded to the interview taking place in May."

Apparently, Fouda had lied again, for on March 4, 2003 (i.e. a few days after Khalid's eventual arrest), Fouda offered up this newest version of his 48-hour encounter to *The Guardian*:

"It was late afternoon, Sunday 21 April 2002, when I packed my bags before joining Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Ramzi bin al-shibh for a last prayer before saying goodbye."

That, as they say in legal parlance, is a very *definite recollection*. In short, Fouda had impeached his own testimony through these two explicitly detailed, contradictory dates. Fouda, through this compounded lie, was now calling into question the very credibility of his entire interview with Khalid and Binalshibh. Perhaps the authorities had requested that Fouda should back-date his interview further, overlooking the fact that Fouda had already back-dated his 48-hour encounter to the month of May. Or, quite simply, Fouda had -- by the time of his final revision -- forgotten the first draft account he had stated for the record in Schleifer's presence only months before.

In any case, perhaps this earlier date made it easier to countenance a plausible scenario whereby Fouda's interview with Khalid would seem to *lead* to the conclusion by authorities that Khalid was the 9/11 mastermind. In other words, they would have had a lead time of several weeks before making the inaugural public announcement about Khalid in June 2002. That would plausibly explain why Fouda had subsequently chosen to go on record as back-dating the previously reported timeframe for his interview, thereby further refuting any possible suspicions that Khalid's sudden desire for an historic interview could in any way have been coordinated with the decision by authorities to market Khalid as the new 9/11 mastermind. Recall that, back in June 2002, the "official" legend at the time had it that it was Abu Zubaydah, back in March 2002, who had spilled the goods on Khalid. Yet with Khalid's March 2003 apprehension, this one aspect of the legend was duly revised. As revealed by Keith Olbermann in a March 3, 2003 *MSNBC.com* item: "Ironically, it would be [Fouda's] interview that would point out, to U.S. intelligence, that [Khalid Shaikh] Mohammed and Binalshibh were the brains behind the 9/11 attacks."

But taking Fouda at his latest -- albeit revised -- word, if April 21, 2002 was indeed the date on which he had taken leave of Khalid and Binalshibh, it is instructive to note that April 21,

2002 was also the date on which Fouda's colleague and co-author, Nick Fielding, took the opportunity to re-acquaint *Sunday Times* readers with Omar Saeed, the original 9/11 paymaster. Thus do we come full circle -- for it was Nick Fielding who had, in fact, written the September 23, 2001 *Sunday Times* article that served as Omar Saeed's post-9/11 public debut. In the aftermath of the simultaneous arrest of Khalid and Mustafa Ahmed al-Hisawi (the now-official 9/11 paymaster), Fielding would go on to co-author a book with Fouda entitled *Masterminds of Terror*, regaling readers with a definitive blow-by-blow account of Fouda's historic interview, as well as providing up-to-date information on Khalid's link to -- what else? -- the Pearl killing.

In Fielding's April 21, 2002 piece, he chronicles his "discovery" of Omar Saeed:

"Like most people in Britain I had never heard of [Omar Saeed Sheikh] until last September, just after the attack on the World Trade Center, when I received a call from a journalist in India. Did I know, the caller asked, that the British were asking India for legal assistance to try to find a man called Omar Sheikh for questioning?"

Fielding goes on to note:

"Gradually, after that first tip-off, the story of the making of this top terrorist emerged, much of it in his own words."

Indeed, there was something about Omar, and Fielding had come by a definitive first-person account "in October last year [i.e. in the same month when Omar Saeed was first outed as the 9/11 paymaster] when I found that Sheikh's diary had been discovered among forgotten legal papers in a courthouse near Delhi." A conveniently timed discovery. The 35-page diary, "written in neat longhand after he was shot in an attempted kidnapping in India in 1994," chronicled Omar Saeed's entree into the terrorist milieu, providing a new official legend for Saeed from out of the dusty archives of an Indian courthouse.

According to Fielding's April 21 article, upon first learning of Daniel Pearl's disappearance, Fielding had an immediate hunch as to who the real culprit was, based on his recent readings of a diary fortuitously discovered only a few months before:

"The incident looked similar to the [1994] kidnappings in India. I felt sure [Omar Saeed] was involved. Within days I was in Pakistan, staying in the same guesthouse used by Pearl and, like every other journalist in the region, trying to report this terrible story while looking over my shoulder to avoid a similar fate.

Confirmation came within a few days . . ."

Fielding further alluded to "unsubstantiated Indian reports" linking Omar Saeed to ISI General Ahmad by way of the \$100,000 money trail -- practically the only journalist at the time who touched upon Saeed's links to the ISI, General Ahmad, al-Qaida, and the incriminating money trail. Clearly, he knew his subject. As of April 21, 2002, Fielding was playing the *Pakistani ISI* thread to 9/11. Little more than a year later, he would be playing, alongside Fouda, the final version of the official *9/11/Paymaster/Pearl* thread.

Approaching the end of 2002, with Binalshibh secretly stashed away in U.S. custody -- and with most people focused on the emerging War In Iraq -- the time was now ripe to bring this part of the *Official 9/11 Legend* to its neat and tidy conclusion. For the record, the

aforementioned John J. Lumpkin of the *Associated Press* (who had written the definitive June 2002 article introducing Khalid as the new 9/11 mastermind) took the opportunity -- on December 27, 2002 -- to clarify the true identity of the official 9/11 paymaster, this time providing the very first explicit acknowledgment of those troublesome contradictions previously conveyed through the pages of the *Associated Press*:

"[9/11 paymaster Mustafa Ahmed] Al-Hisawi previously had been reported to be an al-Qaida figure known as Shaikh Saiid al-Sharif, whom counterterrorism officials now say is probably three different people: Al-Hisawi; Shaikh Saiid al-Masri, al-Qaida's finance chief, and Saad al-Sharif, bin Laden's brother-in-law and a midlevel al-Qaida financier."

Not that many people noticed -- or cared. Still, all that prior nasty confusion concerning the 9/11 paymaster alias had to be qualified and clarified in time for al-Hisawi's approaching "official" arrest. Where previously the 9/11 paymaster was reported to be bin Laden's "financial chief" or "bin Laden's brother-in-law/financial chief", now these two characterizations were taken to be two separate *individuals*, with the added clarification that this little-known brother-in-law wasn't in fact anything close to a "financial chief" -- just a "midlevel al-Qaida financier," in the words of Lumpkin. As for al-Hisawi: "He isn't thought to be a senior al-Qaida leader." In Lumpkin's latest take on the subject, this "key financier of the attacks" had been demoted in the al-Qaida ranks. Moreover, he was now sharing his 9/11 "paymaster" billing with Binalshibh and some guy named Ali Abdul Aziz Ali (introduced by Lumpkin through Mueller just a few months before). Game, set, match.

And what of that nasty rumor concerning Khalid's death back in September 2002? That, too, needed to be definitively dispelled in time for Khalid's March 2003 "apprehension." For that leg of the legend, *TIME* did the honors, courtesy of Tim McGirk, in an article posted on January 20, 2003:

"After a four-hour gunfight, one al-Qaeda member, Ramzi Binalshibh, was in handcuffs and two other terrorists lay dead on the floor. A female FBI agent crouched down to examine the blood-smearred bodies. Suddenly, she smiled and, to the surprise of the Pakistani cop, bounded over and gave him a kiss. 'Do you know who you've got?' she asked. 'You've killed Khalid Shaikh Mohammed' . . .

". . . But a fingerprint check later revealed that the dead man on the floor of the Karachi apartment wasn't Mohammed."

Well, if the dead man on the floor wasn't Khalid, then what of the widow and child who reportedly said otherwise -- at least according to the aforementioned October 30, 2002 *Asia Times* article by Syed Saleem Shahzad? In Shahzad's account, an "Arab woman and a child were taken to an ISI safe house, where they identified the Shaikh Mohammed's body as their husband and father." Thereafter, "the widow subsequently underwent exhaustive interrogation in the custody of FBI officials . . ." while "news of the death of [Khalid] was intentionally suppressed . . ."

The above account might have easily been shrugged off as an outlandish rumor . . . but for the revelation of one curious fact, reported little more than a week after Khalid's later, "official," arrest. As revealed by Olga Craig on March 10, 2003 in the *Sunday Telegraph*:

"Two young sons of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the suspected mastermind of the September 11 attacks, are being used by the CIA to force their father to talk.

Yousef al-Khalid, 9, and his brother, Abed al-Khalid, 7, were taken into custody in Pakistan in September [i.e. at the time of the Binalshibh arrest] when intelligence officers raided a flat in Karachi where their father had been hiding."

According to the *Telegraph* article, the boys were flown over the weekend of March 10 to a "secret address" in the United States, "where they were being encouraged to talk about their father's activities." What a 9-year old and a 7-year old could possibly reveal in the way of the al-Qaida operational itinerary is beyond the ken of this writer. Nevertheless, the *Telegraph* was able to secure the cheery assurances of a duly anonymous "official":

"'We are handling them with kid gloves,' said one official. 'After all, they are only little children, but we need to know as much about their father's recent activities as possible.'"

That was the absurdly innocuous, official explanation. Might there have been a more sinister motive for keeping Khalid's sons in custody? Had they, perhaps, witnessed the accidental killing of their father back in September 2002, and were they thereby kept in indefinite isolation so as to conceal that fact? And what of the mother of the boys? As of this writing, these questions have yet to be answered.

In any case, the main story points of the *Official 9/11 Legend* were fully elaborated and resolved with the simultaneous capture of Khalid and the official paymaster, Mustafa Ahmed al-Hisawi, in March 2003. Only weeks later, however, with the War In Iraq in full sway, these presumably senior operatives in the 9/11 plot drew negligible scrutiny from the media and the public at large. Both men were reportedly stashed away in secret locations, presumably sharing the fruits of their interrogations with anonymous officials, who would duly pass off the requisite "scoops" to writers with a curious penchant for special intelligence access (Gerald Posner, for example).

Meanwhile, the -- perhaps choreographed? -- farce of the Moussaoui trial would drag on, with Moussaoui reportedly insistent on calling Khalid and Binalshibh as witnesses for the defense. At this point, one would be cautioned as to drawing any firm conclusions about the ongoing events of the Moussaoui trial. The important fact to keep in mind is that Moussaoui all along was likely set up as the convenient vessel through which the Justice Department and Mueller's FBI -- cunningly obscured by Mueller's hedges -- would gradually elaborate the main contours of the *Official 9/11 Legend* in that crucial first year following 9/11. In other words, by way of the lone Moussaoui indictment, the authorities were able to provide the illusion of a massive legal investigation covering literally thousands of pages, spanning continents in order to ferret out the full depth of Moussaoui's nefarious associations. In this respect, one might surmise that once Moussaoui has fully served his purpose as an investigative/propaganda vessel (as he likely already has), the authorities will then proceed to demonstrate that the Moussaoui case was never particularly relevant after all -- thereby successfully concealing the all-important function that his case *did* serve in the finely calibrated public dissemination of the *Official 9/11 Legend*.

Given the foregoing, it remains to be seen how the authorities will conclusively deal with the festering anomalies surrounding their three prize catches -- the elusive Binalshibh, the perhaps dead Khalid, and the perhaps fictitious Mustafa Ahmed al-Hisawi. Nevertheless, it is a safe bet that in the meantime, the authorities will continue to weave ever more complex and murky tapestries around the personalities of these operatives, employing the mercenary

talents of writers like Gerald Posner to add to the crumbling sediment of "facts."

As for Omar Saeed, he is perhaps the biggest anomaly of them all. In his earliest post-9/11 incarnation, he was tagged as a suspected "trainer" of the 9/11 hijackers, and then subsequently was cast in the role of the 9/11 paymaster. By the time he resurfaced a few months later as the alleged mastermind behind the Pearl kidnapping, the media was mainly casting him as a terrorist leader involved in the Kashmir conflict, aided by "rogue" elements within the ISI. Among all the major al-Qaida players -- bin Laden, Atta, Binalshibh, Khalid -- it was mostly through Omar Saeed that one could gain a full perspective of all the interconnected anomalies, that one could most easily detect the mainstream media as active -- and, in some sense, passive -- agents of a wide-ranging disinformation apparatus.

Most ironically of all, Omar Saeed *personally* had very little to do with any of it. Rather, his importance lay in what *others* would allege about him: a brief October 9 article about Saeed that would, by implication, incriminate the future senior joint authors of the "official" 9/11 Report; that would set in motion a massive cover-up which would reverberate through the piecemeal elaboration of the 9/11 money trail; and which would continue through the Pearl kidnapping; and which would finally sputter to an anti-climactic resolution with the publicized apprehension of the alleged 9/11 mastermind (and his phantom paymaster). Another brief January 22 item about Omar Saeed would serve to personally incriminate FBI Director Mueller only one day before the Pearl kidnapping, and would serve to expose that episode as a sinister timed set-up. It is as if fate had cast Omar Saeed as the human Rosetta Stone by which the riddle of 9/11 could be dissected and explained.

There was, indeed, something about Omar -- a troublesome seam woven into the otherwise fine fabric of the *Official 9/11 Legend*.

Post-Script

The arguments set out in this paper rest on one general theory -- that the events leading up to, and arising from, the September 11 attack on the United States may best be understood as unfolding in the context of a pre-fabricated, professionally coordinated *legend*, the elements of which were gradually acted out and disseminated in a finely calibrated disinformation campaign spanning more than a decade. Like any theory, its validity largely rests on the strength of its explanatory power in accounting for the number of synchronicities and anomalies that are so much a part of these events, as well as presenting an *integrated* picture of many of the main (i.e. most public) players and operatives.

In presenting my arguments, if some of my conclusions appear less soundly grounded by the facts than others, that perhaps is due to the murkiness that one inevitably butts up against in attempting to reconstruct certain elements of the 9/11 Legend. For the sake of clarity, I have blatantly woven in my conclusions, speculations, and analyses with the facts as recited in order that the reader would be able to see how I have integrated and accounted for many of the events within the abovementioned interpretive framework. Nevertheless, it is my hope that I have made it possible for the reader to distinguish between the facts as reported and my *interpretation* of those facts. Toward that end, I have sought wherever possible to list the sources for my information -- leaving it, in the end, for the reader to evaluate the relative merits of my various conclusions and speculations .

Moreover, I do not expect the *general* validity of my hypothesis to rise or fall by the truth or falsity of any one *specific* conclusion. Like any theory, some elements will inevitably need to be refined or modified so as to make it a more valuable tool as an interpretive framework for a contextual, integrated reading of all the relevant facts. And context is the key word here. Many of the more popular theories concerning September 11 rest on a selective reading of the facts. In other words, they focus on *certain* elements of the story -- failing, in the end, to account for a wide-ranging number of facts and anomalies that cannot be adequately accounted for by such theories. As one prime example, the *complacency* theory for 9/11 only works so long as one studiously and consistently ignores the compelling circumstantial evidence for all the various well-timed coincidences that stubbornly recur in practically every rudimentary recitation of the facts. However, a well-grounded *complicity* theory would have to account for not only individual coincidences, but would also have to *integrate* a large number of these coincidences within a coherent overall explanatory framework.

In view of such an aim, one would be hard-pressed to advance a compelling *complicity* theory with either the Saudis, Pakistanis, neo-cons, or Israelis acting as the main, self-contained operative instigators. For one, such theories would have to posit each of these entities as rogue players operating outside -- and in opposition to -- the global political infrastructure as it presently exists. Moreover, one would have to account for all the evidence and "spin" offered by the main players at the head of that infrastructure -- that is, the authorities within the U.S., U.K., and E.U. -- who have played the instrumental role of publicly disseminating the *Official 9/11 Legend*.

Fortunately, one need not re-invent the proverbial wheel in constructing a list of the main suspects -- for if the *Official 9/11 Legend* can most coherently be interpreted as a global project, then surely it would be reasonable to posit a globally connected network acting behind the scenes, one that would consist of a supra-national grouping of intelligence operatives acting in conjunction with a globally interconnected network of political, corporate, and media elites. In short, one would need to look at the global political/corporate infrastructure as it presently exists.

It is not within the scope of this paper to map out comprehensively the full contours of this global network -- nor, admittedly, could it properly be done with the available evidence at hand (despite the claims of those researchers who give the impression that the so-called *New World Order* is a fully exposed agenda with a ready-made membership list available for viewing). Rather, there is *circumstantial* evidence of a covert global network working in concert to choreograph a wide-ranging 9/11 disinformation campaign. Whether this network operates specifically through global entities like the World Bank, the United Nations, or the Bilderberg Group -- or instead is comprised of an insular group of global elites who happen to be influential within these institutions -- is a question that can not be definitively answered at this point. And whether the 9/11 disinformation campaign has been conducted for the purposes of a truly new world order, or simply for oil, geopolitical stability, monopolization of utilities, water, food, or population control by way of viral threats -- any one *specific* agenda at this time cannot be *proven* beyond a reasonable doubt (in the fullest legal sense). Perhaps an intended new order encompasses all of the above, involving an intersection of a number of common interests.

What I am suggesting, then, is the existence of a covert global political network operating

through an increasingly sophisticated corporate and media infrastructure. This allegation is nothing new, of course. As far back as the 1970's, during a turf battle between the C.I.A.'s William Colby and James Angleton, a great deal of evidence attesting to the existence of this covert infrastructure was partially unveiled during a number of congressional investigations. Officially, we learned of a covert project to infiltrate the American media with C.I.A. assets, code-named *Project Mockingbird*. In *Rolling Stone* magazine, one of the poster boys of "mainstream" investigative journalism, Carl Bernstein (of Watergate fame), estimated that there were as many as 500 journalists in the United States on the C.I.A. payroll. Moreover, former C.I.A. Director William Colby had gone on record as revealing, "The Central Intelligence Agency owns everyone of any major significance in the major media." Congressional House investigator Gaeton Fonzi has gone on record as demonstrating how the political and covert structure has operated to obstruct and obscure certain investigations when they had threatened to expose politically unpleasant facts. Director Colby's good friend, former Senator John De Camp -- who believes that Colby was later murdered -- has documented cover-ups involving child prostitute rings, many of which have been used to compromise various political figures and expose them to bribery. Put simply, a surprisingly large number of "mainstream" sources have attested to aspects of what we can reasonably conjecture as a widespread covert infrastructure of control and information. As I have conjectured elsewhere in this paper, we can see how certain corrupt networks like *BCCI* have served as the model for taking this infrastructure global.

Further, we have seen how the *Official 9/11 Legend* has been overlain with a number of equally plausible cover stories and counter-legends, involving various neo-cons, Saudis, Pakistanis, Israelis, or even Iraqis. Again, we have seen a precedent for this type of information campaign, as it has heretofore most successfully been used in obfuscating the facts behind the J.F.K. investigation. Indeed, it is as if the J.F.K. Assassination Legend has served as the textbook model for framing the 9/11 Legend and its off-shoots. As with the 9/11 Legend, the J.F.K. Assassination Legend also had its various equally plausible offshoots, each with their own proponents.

Thus, while most of the mainstream media -- and, most famously, Gerald Posner, who authored *Case Closed* -- have mostly ignored the last official congressional investigation in 1979, which deemed the assassination a "probable conspiracy", figures as high as Lyndon Johnson had voiced suspicions of a "foreign" conspiracy, while C.I.A. bigwig James Angleton had mischievously pushed a Soviet conspiracy. Others, like House Chief Counsel Robert Blakey, have pushed a mob conspiracy, while still others have attempted to build a case implicating *pro*-Castro Cubans, *anti*-Castro Cubans, right-wing John Birchers (the forerunners of the recent militia threat), or Texas oil barons. Certainly, evidence can be marshaled to show each and every one of these elements percolating along the edges of the "Official" lone-gunner theory. But my main point is that, like the *Official 9/11 Legend*, these counter-legends exist -- and indeed were built in -- so as to furnish a number of false leads, thereby obscuring the most essential fact that a long-standing covert *infrastructure* has stage-managed both the crimes and the cover-ups, while parceling out the information to various witting -- and unwitting -- operatives. It is the classic case of not seeing the forest for the trees.

As for the existence of this infrastructure, it, too, has been obscured by various false leads and counter-legends -- most perniciously, through super-natural, extra-terrestrial, or

anti-Semitic theories, all of which share in common a tendency to discredit mainstream discussion of elite covert networks. Whether these theories come by way of long-exposed hoaxes like *The Report From Iron Mountain* or *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*; whether the U.F.O. tales are stoked by individual military/intelligence disinformation operatives unveiling "secret" groups like *MJ-12*; or whether we get a "unified field theory" of all these theories by way of authors like David Icke (who claims to have psychically "channeled" the revelation that our world leaders are, in truth, reptilian shape-shifters) -- the main effect, if not intent, is to distract *truly* interested observers from the more dry (and potentially more damaging) writings of researchers like Peter Dale Scott, Greg Palast, Lisa Pease, Donald Gibson, John De Camp, and others who have credibly documented real evidence of political and corporate corruption.

In positing the existence of such a covert infrastructure, I do not mean to imply that all elements of this infrastructure are necessarily "in the loop." Indeed, a great many influential journalists -- like Bob Woodward, Evan Thomas, Vernon Loeb, Judith Miller, Seymour Hersh, etc. -- have built their careers on special access to an insular clique of politically connected intelligence operatives. And while it is in their interests to market themselves as hands-on "investigators," in many cases they serve as nothing more than passive mouthpieces for their anonymous informants, nursing the treasured informational threads that keep their by-lines on the front pages. Likewise, we can not be sure as to which political players are kept in line through financial or sexual bribery, and which of those have come on board for purely ideological reasons. Yet as regards the Legend of 9/11, we *can* make a circumstantial case against certain individuals who likely can be placed in the so-called "loop" -- for the very reason that they have been so instrumental, and particularly well-placed, in establishing what we know and *how* we know it. Individuals like James Woolsey, Robert Mueller, Jerry Hauer, Richard Clarke, Yosri Fouda, Vincent Cannistraro, Robert Baer, and Bob Graham -- though some are likely not among the most senior masterminds, the scope of their hands-on involvement here, along with the foregoing information which most *directly* connects them to a possible conspiracy, should suffice at least to trigger a truly independent investigation involving a far more incisive look into the background and activities of these highly influential operatives.

The intention of this article has not been to *prove* beyond a reasonable doubt that there exists a conspiracy to fabricate an official 9/11 Legend. Without the benefit of subpoena power in order to obtain the relevant documents and witness testimonies, that would indeed be legally impossible. However, it has been my intention to amass enough *circumstantial* evidence in order to compel a truly thorough investigation along these lines. In this respect, all one need do is to ultimately establish, on a less stringent balance of probabilities, that it is more likely than not that the "official" legend of 9/11 was in fact a covertly choreographed cover story spanning many years, involving many of the above-named individuals.

Yet in the light of past failed attempts to unearth the existence of systemic corruption, it would be naive to expect that one could employ the "establishment" infrastructure itself so as to expose its seedier contours. Rather, citizens need to establish a *parallel* infrastructure, one that involves a collective partnership between various law enforcement officers, military personnel, lawyers, politicians, business people, and journalists -- in other words, among the very classes of people who essentially establish and reinforce our "mainstream" perceptions. We need to counter the psychological herd mentality which compels the masses among these

groups to follow the designs of those higher up in authority. There are, at present, likely *thousands* of decent law-abiding Americans who have witnessed many aspects of the anomalies described herein, yet they have been intimidated or discouraged from revealing what they know. Without a powerful countervailing *elite* group to harvest their testimonies and "mainstream" the incriminating evidence, they are left with no recourse but to remain silent.

In the end, the American justice system may provide the best solution for getting at the truth. With a powerful, interconnected group of elites who are outside the present framework, we can indeed ensure that thousands of powerless bureaucrats, air traffic controllers, and any number of other well-placed witnesses have a venue to deposit their valuable testimonies, forcing previously taboo subjects onto the mainstream agenda. It has been my intention with this paper to present, as much as possible, a reasonably comprehensive case for the existence of a huge and sophisticated disinformation apparatus that has carefully structured our perceptions as regards the events of September 11. Moreover, I have sought to supply a theoretical framework in order to demonstrate *how* such an operation plausibly could be pulled off, marshaling a great deal of evidence from mostly mainstream sources, and building a circumstantial case against those above-named individuals who likely had the motive, means, and opportunity to partake in fomenting this historic criminal fraud upon the American -- and indeed, global -- populace.

Propaganda is most effectively countered by truth. In the aftermath of September 11, there is, in fact, a relatively compact group of individuals who have both the means and the personal interest to "mainstream" the circumstantial evidence provided herein -- namely, the families of the victims of September 11. At present, many of these families are cynically being used in order to present a *complacency* theory behind 9/11, thereby unwittingly lending their imprimatur to the establishment of an over-arching police state apparatus -- the manifestation of the "homeland security" blueprint which had actually *preceded* September 11 by several months. Yet it is my contention that if these families were made aware of the full extent of the various anomalies, coincidences, and well-timed set-ups -- and that the *interaction* of these elements may only be explained within a *complicity* paradigm -- then they may use their moral suasion and political capital in order to tear the veil off the herd mentality which keeps the truth well-hidden from the masses.

And we will get to that truth once we fully expose the garland of lies which decorates the *Official Legend of 9/11*.

Other Writings By Chaim Kupferberg:

- "The Propaganda Preparation For 9/11", Centre for Research on Globalization, June 2002.
- "Daniel Pearl and The Paymaster of 9/11", Centre for Research on Globalization, September 2002

Chaim Kupferberg's articles were also published in print form in *Global Outlook Magazine*. Chaim Kupferberg is a freelance researcher, writer and frequent CRG contributor. © Copyright Chaim Kupferberg 2003.

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