

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL Monterey, California



THESIS

WHO WERE THE FIFTEEN SAUDIS?

by

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June 2003

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WHO WERE THE FIFTEEN SAUDIS?

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requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

On September 11, 2001, the al-Qa'ida terrorist network succeeded in an act of terror which the world will not soon forget. The 19 terrorists who hijacked the four airliners were all Muslims from Arab states, 15 of them were citizens of Saudi Arabia. This thesis addresses the question of who these hijackers were, and presents evidence to support the hypothesis that they were selected by al-Qa'ida because of their Saudi citizenship and/or connection to Saudi Arabia. The selection of these young men served certain specific political purposes for the al-Qa'ida terror network, even though these purposes were not known to some of the hijackers.

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I. INTRODUCTION

On September 11, 2001 (9/11), four hijacked airliners crashed into the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in a field southeast of Pittsburg. Among the 19 hijackers were 15 Saudi citizens, and at least 2 of the others had family ties to Saudi Arabia. This thesis will examine who the hijackers were, and present evidence to support the hypothesis that they were specifically selected by al-Qa'ida because of their Saudi citizenship and connection to Saudi Arabia. The selection of these young men served certain specific political purposes for the al-Qa'ida terror network, even though these purposes were not known to some of the hijackers.

The resulting conclusions are of particular importance, because they can contribute to the threat assessment analyses conducted by the United States. That is, the presence or absence of Saudi Arabia based terrorist activities has an effect on what the United States policy towards Saudi Arabia should be. The fact that the United States shares a special relationship with Saudi Arabia contributes to the significance of this examination. The U.S. - Saudi relationship is based on several common interests. Saudi Arabia provides an important portion of the world's oil and is the most influential member of OPEC. Saudi Arabia is needed as a coalition partner to ensure U.S. interests in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia is dependent on U.S. protection against external threats. In the war on terrorism, Saudi Arabia's monarchy faces the same threat as the United States.

Since the emergence of the Gulf War coalition (and even more so since 9/11), several sources of friction have been troubling the U.S – Saudi relations. Because it is a Sultanistic regime,¹ Saudi society lacks in political and civil rights, religious freedom and transparency in the justice system. The Saudis are abusing their influence in OPEC through the self-interested dictation of oil prices. There is a strong anti-Semitism within Saudi society, which contributes to the funding of Palestinian militancy by Saudi citizens. Saudi Arabia is attempting to

¹ Linz, J. J. (2002). *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

procure weapons of mass destruction. The Saudi cooperation in the 9/11 investigations is questionable. Guided by a strict Wahhabi-interpreted Islam, Saudis feel obligated to support efforts to protect the Muslim world. This obligation is an easy target to be exploited by extremists. These sources of friction lead to a discussion on the U.S. policy towards Saudi Arabia.

Therefore, U.S. politicians and the U.S. public critique Saudi Arabia's domestic policy. The critique is based on the "sources of friction" and reinforced by the "15-out-of-19" argument.

Walter Laqueur warns: "Terrorism is dangerous ground for *simplificateurs* and *generalisateurs*. To approach it, a cool head is probably more essential than any other intellectual quality."² Such warnings as given by Laqueur should also be applied when considering the term "Islamic fundamentalism." Similar to Laqueur's warning about how to approach terrorism and the danger of easily dismissing terrorists as psychopaths or fanatics, the term Islamic fundamentalism is equally problematic. Islamic fundamentalists are reduced to the militant Muslims, the so-called "bomb throwers". In reality, Islamic fundamentalism includes a whole spectrum of Muslims, from those who strictly practice a pure form of Islam over political Islam, therefore promoting Islam as a concept for all branches of a society; to those Muslims who believe that it is God's will to fight the enemies of Islam by any and all means, including the use of force and killing.³ It is amongst the later group, which represent only a small percentage of Islamic fundamentalists, where Islamic terrorists can be found. Thus, it is an error to treat Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism as synonyms. Often times, the term "radical Islam" in this context is used, but since this term is also easily misunderstood, it will be avoided in this paper.

Even after overcoming these difficulties in terminology, it nevertheless remains difficult to come to an agreement on the precise definition of "Islamic terrorism." This difficulty arises primarily because there is not a precise and

² Kegley, C. W. (2003). *The New Global Terrorism – Characteristics, Causes, Controls* (p. 1). New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.

³ Robinson, Glenn E. (2002, October). Lecture: *Islamic Fundamentalism: Theory and Practice*. United States Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA.

universally accepted definition of terrorism in general. After presenting various definitions of terrorism provided in the literature, this chapter will select a definition which best describes the form of international Islamic terrorism that the al-Qa'ida network is practicing and which had its peak in the attacks of 9/11.

The RAND Corporation defines terrorism as, "violence or the threat of violence calculated to create an atmosphere of fear and alarm, generally in support of political or systemic objectives."⁴ Analogous to how Rex Hudson defines a terrorist action, a terrorist is a clandestine member of a sub-national group or a clandestine agent, who executes the calculated use of unexpected, shocking, and unlawful violence against noncombatants (including, in addition to civilians, off-duty military and security personnel in peaceful situations) and other symbolic targets, for the psychological purpose of publicizing a political or religious cause and/or intimidating or coercing a government or civilian population into accepting demands on behalf of the terrorist's cause.⁵

The Federal Research Division defines terrorism as the calculated use of unexpected, shocking, and unlawful violence against noncombatants (including, in addition to civilians, off-duty military and security personnel in peaceful situations) and other symbolic targets perpetrated by a clandestine member(s) of a sub national group or a clandestine agent for the psychological purpose of publicizing a political or religious cause and/or intimidating or coercing a government(s) or civilian population into accepting demands on behalf of the cause.⁶

The U.S. Department of State (1998) defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."⁷

⁴ Lesser, I. O., & Hoffman, B., & Arquilla, J., & Ronfeldt, D., & Zanini, M (1999). *Countering the New Terrorism*, (p. 85). Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

⁵ Hudson, R. A. (2003). *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who becomes a Terrorist and Why?* (p. 10). Retrieved February 17, 2003, from Federal Research Division Web Site: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Sociology-Psychology%20of%20Terrorism.htm> .

⁶ Hudson, R. A., (p. 138).

⁷ Hudson, R. A., (p. 10).

Other definitions range from “terrorism consists of acts that in themselves may be classic forms of crime - murder, arson, the use of explosives – but that differ from classic crimes in that they are executed with the deliberate intention of causing panic, disorder, and terror within an organized society;”⁸ to “terrorism is war conducted outside the construct of nation-states; it is more than simple destructiveness, it creates fear and all its associated side effects”⁹.

The above definitions vary in their emphasis on certain characteristics of terrorism or terrorists. But they also have certain commonalities. Terrorism is not just violence against governments or people, but the way it is executed has a psychological dimension to it. It creates fear, it intimidates, and generally it has objectives beyond the obvious killing or destruction.

The Central Intelligence Agency distinguishes between international and transnational terrorism (international being terrorism carried out by individuals or groups controlled by a sovereign state and transnational terrorism being terrorism carried out by autonomous non-state actors). The term international terrorism is used here to refer to any act of terrorism affecting the national interests of more than one country. The WTC bombing, for example, was an act of international terrorism because its perpetrators included foreign nationals.¹⁰

Edward Mickolus, in *Trends in International Terrorism*, makes a similar distinction.¹¹ According to his categorization, the correct term for describing the form of terrorism which occurred on September 11, 2001, is “transnational terrorism”. Mickolus distinguishes according to whether nationals of more than one state are involved and whether terrorists’ activities are controlled or directed by governments. Four categories are described: a) international terrorism (different nationalities involved, government controlled); b) state terrorism (no different nationalities, government controlled); c) domestic terrorism (no different

⁸ Kegley, C. W., (p. 16).

⁹ Howell, L. D. (2003). *Is the New Global Terrorism a Clash of Civilization? Evaluating Terrorism’s Multiple Sources* (pp. 173 – 174). In: Kegley, C. W. (2003).

¹⁰ Hudson, R. A., (p. 136).

¹¹ Mickolus, E. (1978). *Trends in International Terrorism* (p. 45). In: Livingston, M.H., & Kress, L.B., & Wanek, M.G. (Eds.). (1978). *International Terrorism in the Contemporary World*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

nationalities, not government controlled); and d) transnational terrorism (different nationalities, not government controlled).¹² Mickolus' categorization uses correct and precise terms and the term "transnational terrorism" best describes the occurrences of 9/11. However, although the distinctions provided by Mickolus are very good in theory, in practice it is often times much more difficult to distinguish the difference. For example, in the Lockerbie airliner bombing, it was never really clear whether the attacks were government controlled or not. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, the commonly known term "international Islamic terrorism" will be used.

When the term *international Islamic terrorism* is used, the category of *global terrorism* will purposively be omitted. When the latter is used in the context of international Islamic terrorism, it is deceiving. It implies that this form of terrorism not only has global reach, but is a phenomenon of globalization, not directed specifically against certain targets. But reality shows that international Islamic terrorism is aimed against Western influence in Muslim lands and against those who support Western influence. Therefore, this paper will not refer to Islamic terrorism as global terrorism, even if it is carried out in a global theatre.

Characteristic differences between Islamic terrorism (or religiously motivated terrorism in general) and forms of secular terrorism are the value system, mechanisms of legitimization and justification, concepts of morality, and the Manichean world view¹³ of "holy terrorists".¹⁴ For religious terrorists, violence is a sacramental act or divine duty executed in direct response to a demand from

¹² Mickolus, E., (p. 45).

¹³ Manichean world view was named after the founder of an ancient Persian religion, Mani (about 216 – 276 AD). Its philosophy is that the universe was strictly divided into the "good" kingdom, which was ruled by God, and the "evil" kingdom, which was ruled by Satan. In a universal catastrophe, the two kingdoms became mixed and since that time have fought each other. Through this fight, man was created. His body consisted of matter and represented the evil kingdom and his soul was an image of God's light, which is captured inside the evil body. Freeing the soul from the body is mankind's highest goal. When the human soul overcomes temptation, it can enter God's kingdom.

¹⁴ Secular terrorists groups, like the Argentine Montoneros, the Italian Red Brigades, or the German Baader-Meinhof Gang, as described in Maria Jose Moyano's *Argentina's Lost Patrol*, (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), all had a Manichean world view. But in the case of Islamic terrorists groups, the Manichean idealism is adopted in a literal sense and therefore more extreme.

God.¹⁵ One major difference in terrorists' philosophies became obvious through the attacks of September 11, 2001. It seems that these terrorists wanted more than the attention gained from scores of people from around the world watching their deeds, and more than just the ability to coerce changes in the enemy's policy. These terrorists wanted, in addition, to kill as many enemies as possible.¹⁶ The pressure for the targeted government was no longer just an indirect pressure from public opinion or foreign governments to deal with terrorist's issues, but became more direct through an assault on thousands of people, a number which surpassed the number of casualties resulting from the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

There are many contrary explanations for who are the supporters of Islamic terrorism, and how Islamic terrorists are recruited. As for fundamental Islam in Middle Eastern states- it ranges from a religious minority with no chance of influencing the state's policy or gaining control over the state, to a broad development towards Islamic fundamentalism and a radical approach against the West and any Western influence and modernization in Middle East states. As for public support of Islamic terrorism- it ranges from devout support, coming from the handful of troubled individuals who, after experiencing personal disappointment with the West became devoutly religious and perhaps even terrorists, to the less extreme support, coming from the common Muslim, who happens to sympathize with bin Laden and his ideas. Even the later individual, since he often tends to agree with bin Laden's cause, can be recruited to support terrorism and terrorists or to become an Islamic terrorist himself.

The 19 hijackers of the 9/11 attacks were all Muslims from Arab states. 15 of those 19 were Saudi citizens. A question which needs to be addressed is, whether there is significance to this fact or whether it is simply a coincidence. In order to first provide a basis for the evaluation of the hijackers' motives and the context for the 9/11 attacks, in Chapter II, the conventional wisdom about Islamic terrorism will be laid out and in Chapter III, the events and the objectives of 9/11

¹⁵ Hoffman, B. (1993). *Holy Terror: The Implications of Terrorism Motivated by a Religious Imperative* (p. 2). Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

¹⁶ Kegley, C. W., (p. 2).

will be described. Also in Chapter III, the available biographical and sociological data of all of the 9/11 hijackers will be displayed and interpreted. Finally, the conclusion (Chapter IV) will present the argument that the terror acts, in which the 15 Saudis participated in, did not fit their original motives for joining militant Islam. Furthermore, these Saudi citizens were deliberately selected by al-Qa'ida for certain pragmatic and political reasons. That is, the selection of these Saudi citizens was not just random or haphazard but rather deliberate in order to fulfill secondary motives of the al-Qa'ida network.

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II. MILITANT ISLAM AND INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC TERRORISM

A. INTRODUCTION

All three monotheistic religions, Christendom, Judaism and Islam, have experienced violent forms or periods in their history. In recent history, all three have also experienced tendencies towards fundamentalism. It is within Islam, though, that this religious fundamentalism exhibits an especially violent form.¹⁷

An attempt to generalize characteristics of religious terrorism has been made by Waldmann.¹⁸ He describes characteristics which are relevant and common to religious terrorism. According to his analysis, religious terrorism is driven by an extraordinary motivation of remarkable strength, which can, in the extreme case, lead to a collective suicide. A connection between religious and political goals is often observed (especially in cases of quasi colonial situations). The terrorists will even strike against weak and moderate members of their own faith, those who are heretics or accused of betrayal. In addition, they deliberately violate religious rules and taboos, in order to draw attention of the people to the religious crisis situation. They target particular locations or times and use ritual weapons.¹⁹

In addition to the explanations of religious terrorism, the emergence of Islamism and the history of Islamic terrorism, the distinction must be made between Islamic terrorism and international Islamic terrorism. The classical Islamic terrorist directed his actions against his own government; for example, the terrorists in Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia, and thus, this terrorism was kept regional. International Islamic terrorism, on the other hand, is not only directed against the government of the terrorist group, but also has a global reach. Furthermore, because of the variety of forms and branches of Islamic

¹⁷ Waldmann, P. (1998). *Terrorismus – Provokation der Macht* (p. 99). Muenchen, Germany: Gerling-Akad.-Verlag.

¹⁸ Waldmann, P., (p. 103).

¹⁹ Waldmann, P., (p. 103).

terrorism and, its variety of goals and means, it is imprecise and unfavorable to generalize Islamic terrorism. In contrast, the younger phenomenon of international Islamic terrorism has certain commonalities in goals, targets, and means. Since the 9/11 attacks are a manifestation of this phenomenon, the concern of this paper is the new international Islamic terrorism.

B. BRIEF HISTORY OF MILITANT ISLAM

Militant Islam is not a “recent” phenomenon, but in its extreme form, has recently developed into a movement of international reach and goals, like punishment of “infidel oppressor states” and it strives for a global pure Islamic society.

After the end of colonialism, most Middle Eastern states moved through different political periods, ranging from Arab nationalism, through capitalism, communism/socialism, Westernization, or mixtures of the above. However, none of these political periods provided the desired betterment for Middle Eastern states, and therefore all failed. Islamic fundamentalism is offering another way to success. Nevertheless, the “artificially” drawn state borders in the Middle East and the resulting Arab nationalism have been, in some ways, beneficial developments. States have been formed and more or less national identities have emerged, which will make it unlikely that these borders will ever be drastically changed. Furthermore, the developed national identities are in stark contrast to Islamic ideology, which questions the legitimacy of national borders and governments.

The slogan of the Muslim Brotherhood²⁰, “Islam is the solution”, has become a philosophy for Islamic fundamentalists. Like the Iranian revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, Islamic fundamentalists also question the legitimacy

²⁰ The *Muslim Brotherhood* was founded in 1928 by Hasan Al-Bana, an Egyptian teacher. It was a secret religious organization, which was dedicated to the creation of an Islamic state in Egypt. During Nasser’s rule in Egypt in the 1950’s and 1960’s, the *Muslim Brotherhood* was banned, but it successively gained a quasi-legal status during the presidency of Nasser’s successor, Anwar Sadat, and was allowed to establish branches in schools and universities and to perform welfare services for the poor in Egypt’s slums. Today many members of the *Muslim Brotherhood* are jailed and the *Muslim Brotherhood* is still banned from direct political participation and officially not represented in Egypt’s parliament. However, several Egyptian opposition parties are infiltrated or even dominated by the *Muslim Brotherhood*.

of almost all contemporary Middle Eastern governments. The argument is made that no government in the Middle East, except the Iranian²¹, is legitimate, because their rule deviates from the Islamic political doctrine, which requires from the rulers authority and welfare for the people. Most Middle Eastern governments emphasize authority only and are known to be corrupt and practice nepotism. Especially in the case of cooperation with Western powers, these governments are accused of taking advantage of and exploiting the people. Therefore, Islamic terrorism is not only directed against the West, but also against Middle Eastern governments. Since in most Middle Eastern states, the security apparatus of the rulers is well developed, sophisticated and highly effective; terrorists have a greater chance of success when targeting the “infidel aids” and “foreign oppressors”, than their own regimes. In addition, such actions against foreign enemies are more likely to be perceived as just.

In the case of Islamic fundamentalism, there are two motives for religious terrorism. First, the defense against global modernization and secularism and second, the return to a society based solely on religious grounds, and the protection of such a society.²² Islamists view the time period of the prophet Mohammad and the first four caliphs as exemplary of the ideal society. Therefore, Muslims are encouraged to strive for the pure Islam of this time period.²³ The desired end state for any Muslim state should be the unity of politics and religion with the *Shari’ah* (Islamic law) as the legal body and guideline for the entire society.

C. INTERNATIONAL MILITANT ISLAM

Different from the state-sponsored (mainly by Egypt) emergence of the PLO as an ethno-nationalist terrorist organization in the 1950’s²⁴, the attacks of

²¹ The Iranian political system is accepted by the Iranian people and it represents the closest thing to a democracy in the Middle East (except Israel). The Sharia is implemented and dominates all factions of society. Although voices calling for reforms are becoming louder in Iran, the Islamic clerics are still in full control of the state.

²² Waldmann, P., (pp. 103 – 104).

²³ Waldmann, P., (p. 104).

²⁴ Hoffman, B. (1998). *Inside Terrorism* (pp. 75 – 79). New York: Columbia University Press.

9/11 were not sponsored by any state in order to fight another state, but carried out by Islamic fundamentalists, who oppose the ever-increasing presence of Western states in the Middle East and who oppose contemporary Arab regimes, whom they feel lack legitimacy. It was not another state which was fought, but the attacks were meant to be punishment for those people who are responsible for the misery of the Middle East²⁵, and they were supposed to enforce the end of the Western presence in the Middle East. In that way, Islamic states would be able to go back to the pure Islam as the solution for betterment.

Palestinian terrorism in the 1970's was meant to catch the world's attention.²⁶ The hostage-taking of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games by the Palestine "Black September" was not just meant to pressure the release of imprisoned comrades from Israeli prisons, but also aimed to acquire the world's attention for the Palestinian situation. Whereas the release of prisoners was not accomplished, the latter goal for attention worked perfectly, since the world's press was gathered at Munich for the Olympics. The hostage-taking drew the press's attention away from the Olympics to the Palestinian issue. The massive press apparatus already set up at the scene worked perfectly for the terrorists' cause.

Although the events of 9/11 received a level of attention greater than any other past terrorist action, contemporary Islamic international terrorism is generally not aimed to get attention for the terrorists' cause, but simply meant to put an end to infidel presence on Islamic lands (to gain "real" independence) and to punish those who are responsible for the miseries of Middle Eastern states, as announced in Osama bin Laden's *fatwa*²⁷ in 1998.²⁸

²⁵ This accusation is not limited to foreign (Western) powers. Contemporary regimes in the Middle East are as well responsible for the country's situation and, in many cases, lack legitimacy in the eyes of Islamic fundamentalists.

²⁶ Hoffman, B. (1998). *Inside Terrorism* (pp. 70 – 71).

²⁷ A fatwa is a legal opinion based on the holy texts of Islam, in answer to a question about a precise case. Among Islamic scholars, Osama bin Laden is not considered to be eligible to order fatwas. Nevertheless Osama bin Laden issued a fatwa, stating that it is every Muslim's duty to kill any American wherever the chance would permit.

²⁸ Bin Laden, O. (1998). *Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders*. Retrieved March 20, 2003, from Cornell University Library Web Site: <http://www.library.cornell.edu/collddev/mideast/wif.htm> .

Although probably not a primary objective, the 9/11 attacks did have a large propagandistic effect. Similar to how the Black September's hostage-taking at the Munich Olympics led to thousands of Palestinians joining terrorist organizations²⁹, the "heroic victory" over the "Great Satan" on September 11 has contributed to the popularity in Arab Middle Eastern states of Osama bin Laden and al-Qa'ida. About 95% of Saudi Arabia's male population between the ages of 25 and 41 have sympathy for Osama bin Laden³⁰.

There is one major difference between these two attacks. Munich 1972 caused the Palestinian issue to be noticed and acknowledged by the world community, resulting in such acts as the 1974 invitation to the PLO leader, Yassir Arafat, to address the United Nation's General Assembly and the granting of the special observer status of PLO in the General Assembly.³¹ In contrast, the 9/11 attacks, although they received a great amount of publicity, did not open a diplomatic forum for Islamists. The conversion of publicity into political achievement, like in the PLO's case, did not work for al-Qa'ida. In fact, 9/11 resulted in the opposite effect; because of the magnitude of the attacks and the large number of casualties, the attacks were world-wide condemned. Instead, it caused the war on Afghanistan, January 2002, which was also meant to send a clear signal to the world that anybody who supports terrorism will be fought, if necessary, by ultimate means.

The PLO was the first truly international terrorist organization and by training personnel of foreign terrorist organizations (groups which did not necessarily share common goals), it also embraced a far more international orientation than other terrorist organizations of the 1970's and 1980's.³² The PLO even accumulated funding by training terrorists from foreign organizations in camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and Yemen, among other places, for \$5,000 to

²⁹ Hoffman, B. (1998). *Inside Terrorism*, (p. 74).

³⁰ Woolsey, James; Figures cited by Woolsey in a testimony before the House International Relations Committee, May 22nd, 2002.

³¹ Hoffman, B. (1998). *Inside Terrorism*, (p. 75).

³² Hoffman, B. (1998). *Inside Terrorism*, (p. 74).

\$10,000, per participant.³³ Al-Qa'ida had its “real life” training camp in Afghanistan, fighting the Soviets, and later a safe haven in the Taliban Afghanistan.

Religious terrorism, and in particular, the new international Islamic terrorism, is exceptionally dangerous and more lethal for a variety of reasons. First is the creation of a radically different value system, with mechanisms of legitimization, justification, and morality, which is derived from fundamentalist ideologues or terrorist leaders’ interpretation of the faith. “For the religious terrorist, violence is a sacramental act or divine duty, executed in direct response to some theological demand or imperative and justified by scripture. Religion therefore functions as a legitimizing force, specially sanctioning wide-scale violence against an almost open-ended category of opponents.”³⁴ Waldmann interprets the influence of clerics in the doctrinal process of Islamic terrorism as a regulating factor, which limits this form of terrorism and makes it predictable.³⁵ However, the influence of clerics in this aspect is overstated. Although clerics do have the tools for and do participate in creating a broad support among common believers, the causal connection for the justification of terrorism does not exist. It is, rather, the radical Islamic fundamentalists who reinterpret the word of Allah in a way which justifies terrorist activities, but is still understandable and acceptable by the common Muslim. Therefore, clerics do not directly cause terrorism, but they can provide a broad basis for recruitment of Islamic terrorists, through their abilities to influence the mindset of believers, which then become more easily adaptable to militant Islam. But since clerics are not generally leaders of militant Islam, they have little, if any influence on the actual execution, or even on the prevention (regulation) of terror acts.

Hoffman feels that clerics have essentially no control over Islamic terrorism, which will become more and more lethal and less restricted. Terrorists

³³ Hoffman, B. (1998). *Inside Terrorism*, (p. 84).

³⁴ Hoffman, B. (1999). *Terrorism Trends and Prospects* (p. 20). In: Lesser, I. O., & Hoffman, B., & Arquilla, J., & Ronfeldt, D., & Zanini, M (1999). *Countering the New Terrorism* . Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

³⁵ Waldmann, P., (pp. 116 – 117).

see the need for more spectacular actions in order to get attention, which is best acquired through a high number of casualties. Terrorists profit from former experience, as well as better and more easily accessible weapons. Since Western powers become more and more dominant, the impotence of some Middle Eastern states tempts them to support terrorism in order to accomplish their political objectives. Unable to achieve their unrealistic goals by conventional/political means, international terrorists attempt to send an ideological or religious message by terrorizing the general public. Through the choice of their targets, which are often symbolic or representative of the targeted nation, terrorists attempt to create a high-profile impact on the public. In doing so, they hope to demonstrate various points, such as that the targeted government cannot protect its own citizens, or that by assassinating a specific victim, they can teach the general public a lesson about espousing viewpoints or policies antithetical to their own. For example, by assassinating Egyptian President Anwar Sadat on October 6, 1981, a year after his historic trip to Jerusalem, the al-Jihad terrorists had hoped to convey to the world, and especially to Muslims, the error that he represented.³⁶

Radical interpretations of religion and the demand of being the one and only religion create broad support, justification and motives for terrorism. The recent tendency of not claiming the credit for the terror acts also increases the lethality, because the terrorist does not have to openly admit to the responsibility for the death of the victims.³⁷ Today's terrorism is increasingly determined by two connected aspects: first, there are growing numbers of religiously-motivated amateurs, who seek heavenly rewards and express their grievance through terror acts; and second, there is the deliberate exploitation of these amateurs by professional terrorists³⁸ and/or state sponsors.

Sayyid Qutb was one of the most influential ideologues of revolutionary Islam. In 1964 he published his work, "Milestones", in his homeland Egypt, in

³⁶ Hudson, R. A. (p. 10).

³⁷ Hoffman, B. (1999). *Terrorism Trends and Prospects*, (pp. 7 – 28).

³⁸ Hoffman, B. (1999). *Terrorism Trends and Prospects*, (pp. 37 – 38).

which he proposed radical demands (for which he was ultimately hanged, in 1966). Qutb proposed that Muslims have to free themselves from the clutches of *jahili*³⁹ society, *jahil* concepts, *jahili* traditions and *jahil* leadership.⁴⁰ Fundamentalists like Qutb rejected any compromise whatsoever. He also revealed one of the essential basics of Islamic fundamentalism - to accept the *Shari'ah* without any question and reject all other laws.⁴¹ The later is especially important to Islamic terrorism, because it provides justification for any terrorist action, as long as the terrorist is convinced that he executes Allah's will. Even failure of achievement or counterproductive terrorist actions will not lead to an end of Islamic terrorism, because ultimate victory is certain, since it is God's war, not the terrorists'.⁴²

But what makes Islamic terrorism so much more dangerous than forms of secular terrorism? According to Hoffman, there are basically three key differences, which more or less contribute to the higher menace of religious terrorism.⁴³ First, it rejects all contemporary ideologies, and therefore, does not have to compete with other ideologies or does not have to justify itself in front of other societal systems. Second, it is conceived from Allah and conducted according to Allah's will, and therefore, it will only end when total victory has been achieved. Third, it is the duty of every individual Muslim, as well as the collective task of the Muslim community, to fight the enemy of Allah. It is the enemy's choice, whether he will convert to Islam or be put to death.⁴⁴ These characteristics make Islamic terrorism more persistent and more consequent

³⁹ *Jahili*: pagan, barbaric. *Jahiliyya*: pagan or barbaric period prior to the revelation of Islam in Arabia; a period of ignorance and darkness.

⁴⁰ Qutb, S. (1990) *Milestones* (p. 16). Indianapolis: American Trust Publications. (Original work published 1964).

⁴¹ Qutb, S.,(p. 30).

⁴² Juergensmeyer, M. (2003) *The Religious Root of Contemporary Terrorism* (p. 192).In: Kegley, C. W. (2003). *The New Global Terrorism – Characteristics, Causes, Controls*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.

⁴³ Hoffman, B. (1993). *Holy Terror: The Implications of Terrorism Motivated by a Religious Imperative*, (pp. 3 – 4).

⁴⁴ Taheri, A. (1993). *Holy Terror: The Inside Story of Islamic Terrorism* (pp. 3 – 4). In: Hoffman, B. (1993). *Holy Terror: The Implications of Terrorism Motivated by a Religious Imperative*.

than secular terrorism, since its dogma does not allow any compromise, whereas in other forms of terrorism, compromise is, to a higher or lesser degree, an option.

The higher lethality of Islamic terrorism versus secular terrorism is another aspect which makes it more dangerous. In the history of terrorism, it has seldom been an objective to kill as many people as possible, because the rationale has always been that there is no need to kill many, if the objective can be reached by killing only a few.⁴⁵ This rationale is still pertinent to most secular terrorists, but, like the attacks of 9/11, and bin Laden's *fatwa*⁴⁶ prove, this rationale is missing from the new international Islamic terrorism.

The concept of suicide assassins has been a part of Islamic terrorism's doctrine since the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism. The Muslim Brotherhood's slogan "Allah is its goal, the Prophet is the model, the Qur'an its constitution, *jihad* its path, and death for the sake of Allah" its most sublime belief"⁴⁷ supports the concept of suicide assassins. Since fundamentalist interpret *jihad*, the holy war, as a personal struggle for Islam, in which the sacrifice of one's own life is the ultimate commitment a Muslim can give, Islamic terrorists can easily recruit suicide bombers for their missions. In particular, motivation for the potential suicide bomber comes from the conviction that, if successful, he will receive most desirable rewards in paradise. This motivates the terrorist for his personal sake, which can be an even higher incentive than the goals of his organization. A suicidal attack can be conducted in a most precise and efficient way, because the terrorist can solely concentrate on his mission, without having to worry about his own safety. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult

⁴⁵ Jenkins, B. M. (1993). *The Likelihood of Nuclear Terrorism* (p. 6). In: Hoffman, B. (1993). *Holy Terror: The Implications of Terrorism Motivated by a Religious Imperative*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

⁴⁶ On February 23, 1998, Osama bin Laden published *Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders*, in which he urged every Muslim to fulfill his duty: "The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies -- civilians and military -- is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque [Jerusalem] and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. Bin Laden, Osama (1998).

⁴⁷ Mishal, S., & Avraham, S. (2000). *The Palestinian Hamas – Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (p. 43). New York: Columbia University Press.

to prevent a suicide attack. In addition to the primary effect of the mission, namely destruction and killing, the secondary effect is a great deal of respect among fundamental Muslims resulting from the sacrifice of one's own life for the sake of Islam.⁴⁸

This latter effect, earning respect through making the ultimate sacrifice, is another major characteristic, which distinguishes Islamic terrorism from most other forms of terrorism outside the Islamic world. Martha Crenshaw states that terrorists can only trust each other, and that the nature of their commitment cuts them off from society.⁴⁹ However, being cut from society does not necessarily apply to the Islamic terrorist. Unlike secular terrorists, who may have a handful of admirers inside their societies, Islamic terrorists have the chance of receiving broader support, since in Arab societies, Islam is much more present and powerful than any religion in Western states. Understanding for Islamic terrorists might be present in a Muslim society, as people in this society might believe that the terrorist fights for the Muslim cause. In the Palestinian society, for example, suicide assassins are glorified and enjoy a great reputation. Rock bands sing about their heroic deeds and little children collect pictures of the suicide assassins (and the families of the deceased suicide assassin receive monetary aid).⁵⁰ Additional prominent examples are the 1993 World Trade Center bomber, Ramzi Yousef, who gained hero status among wide parts of Pakistani society, when he hid in Pakistan after the bombing; and Osama bin Laden, whose first name became the most popular for newborn males in the Arab world, and whom the majority of the male Saudi population has sympathy for.

Whereas the socialistic "religion" of the Rote Armee Fraktion, the Red Brigades, and other leftist terrorist organizations did not work for the majority of Europe's peoples, bin Laden's radical interpretation of Islam and the exploitation of what many see as their Muslim duties seems to work. And it only works in an environment of a religion, which demands unquestionable obedience of its

⁴⁸ Waldmann, P., (pp. 103 – 108).

⁴⁹ Crenshaw, M. (2003). *The Causes of Terrorism, Past and Present* (p. 101). In: Kegley, C. W.

⁵⁰ Waldmann, P., (p. 116).

believers and therefore creates a population, which is potentially adaptive to radical dogma. Therefore, although Juergensmeyer's contention that Osama bin Laden is not more representative of Islam than Timothy McVeigh is of Christianity, or Japan's Shoko Asahara is of Buddhism⁵¹ is still true; there is, nevertheless, a major difference in the level of acceptance of these individuals inside their communities compared to bin Laden. There exists very little sympathy for Timothy McVeigh among Americans, or for Shoko Asahara among Buddhists⁵², but in contrast, Osama bin Laden is well respected and his cause has a lot of sympathy among a much broader range of Arab Muslims.

Additionally, Islamic terrorism is seeking (successfully) its support from the economical frustration which exists in wide parts of the Middle East. Even for a rich state, like Saudi Arabia, it becomes more and more difficult to co-opt its people by basically a "state-provided life". This difficulty arises because oil revenues stagnate, while the population grows rapidly; which produces increasing socio-economic grievances. Like the Middle East suffered directly from Western influence during and shortly after colonial times, now the Middle East suffers from an indirect imperialism. Western economic and military intervention is widely understood as an "invasion" that undermines local and regional autonomy, divides and conquers people, generates massive political corruption, disrupts long-established patterns of social interaction, and bombards local communities with material and cultural imports that challenge traditional religious values and threatens people's core identities.⁵³ This situation fuels at least an understanding, if not support for the Islamic terrorist's causes. The Western influence, the domination of the Middle East by Western powers, and the resulting frustration of Middle Eastern societies over their inability to

⁵¹ Juergensmeyer, M. (2003). *The Religious Root of Contemporary Terrorism* (p. 185). In: Kegley, C. W.

⁵² Shoko Ashahara's sect, Aum Shinrikyo, claimed in 1995 to have 10,000 followers in Japan and 30,000 followers in Russia. According to a study of Rex Hudson, the sect really has only about 2000 followers. In: Hudson, R. A., (pp. 111 – 117).

⁵³ Rubenstein, R. E. (2003). *The Psycho-Political Sources of Terrorism* (p. 146). In: Kegley, C. W.

counteract the West, also explains why Islamic terrorism became international and of global reach.

The new Islamic terrorism can be interpreted as both a manifestation of the globalization process (like other phenomena, terrorism also becomes global) and a response to globalization of the world economy (which indeed means impacting the whole globe, but directed by the West) and widely perceived U.S. hegemony (which is mainly true for the world's economy, but entirely true politically and militarily).⁵⁴ Herein has Islamic terrorism a major justification, since it is beyond doubt evil and unacceptable that infidels dominate true believers⁵⁵. In fact, this is a concept which is crucial to the functioning of al-Qa'ida. In order to recruit operatives and fund money for operations, al-Qa'ida needs Islamic communities to share its fundamental vision; al-Qa'ida needs sympathetic governments or religious bodies to provide shelter and logistical support.⁵⁶ In this aspect, the attacks of 9/11 proved to be counterproductive, since the aftershock produced a lot of sympathy and support for the United States in their effort to fight terrorism.

However, the Islamic faith, the way it is practiced in many Arab states, provides a broad basis of believers, who are raised to absolute and strict obedience of Islamic rules. This effect provides a broad mass of individuals who, can easily be exploited by extremists. Therefore the struggle to fight Islamic terrorist organizations and governments which support terrorism seems futile, as long as the religious, ideological, and political propaganda of Islamic fundamentalism are not stopped. This requires not only a long time, but also major changes in the interpretation of the Islamic religion in order to make it resistant to the misinterpretations of extremists. The implementation of changes in the interpretation of Islam would stand in stark contrast to recent developments in the Muslim world. Rather than implementing reforms, in order to meet

⁵⁴ Wilkinson, P. (2003). *Why Modern Terrorism? Differentiating Types and Distinguishing Ideological Motivations* (p. 124). In: Kegley, C. W.

⁵⁵ Lewis, B. (2003). *The Roots of Muslim Rage* (p. 194). In: Kegley, C. W.

⁵⁶ Gurr, R. (2003). *Terrorism in Democracies: When it Occurs, Why it Fails* (p. 214). Kegley, C. W.

contemporary needs of the community, the tendency is backwards, to the “pure” Islam of the times of the prophet Mohammad. Therefore, it seems extremely unlikely, if not impossible, that Muslim communities will, in the near future, incorporate essential changes.

D. THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC TERRORIST

To provide a general profile of terrorists is difficult to accomplish and, facing the variety of different terrorist organizations and the variety of their motives and goals, a generalization can never be precise. Nevertheless, Charles A. Russell and Bowman H. Miller have attempted to draw a profile of the “average” terrorist. They examined data from 18 terrorist organizations of the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, and Japan and came to the conclusion that the majority of the examined terrorists fit the following profile: single male, between the ages of 22-24 with a university education (some held a university degree). Any female terrorists generally held only supporting functions (except in West Germany). The majority came from upper-middle-class families and grew up in urban environments. The older terrorists had professions in the medical or legal fields, were engineers or teachers, as were their parents. Independent of whether they became terrorists during university times or afterwards, their first contact to a terrorist organization was made during university times.⁵⁷

Although the Russell/Miller analysis tends to generalize, it nevertheless provides a few arguments, which can be useful in analyzing the Islamic terrorists groups, like the case of the 15 Saudis. For example, note that Russell and Miller found that initial contact is generally made with young people, immature adults who are in stages in their lives, where they have left the protection of their childhood environments, but are not yet quite independent or established in their professional lives. In this stage in life, young people are receptive to new ideas, new paths in life, or new opportunities for their further development. In this stage, young people may even be susceptible to being recruited by a terrorist organization.

⁵⁷ Russell, C. A., & Miller, B. H. (1977). Profile of a Terrorist. *Terrorism*, 1, No. 1, 17.

For Islamic terror organizations, there are several possibilities for recruitment of new operatives and there is no stereotypical social background, which matches all Islamic terrorists. There is also a distinction between the terrorist elite (masterminds and leaders, the “brains”), and the supporters, fighters, and suicide (or potential suicide) attackers (operatives, “foot-soldiers”, the “muscle”). Generally, Islamic terrorists at one point in their lives have been exposed to oppression by the occupation power (e.g., in the Israel-Palestine case) or have experienced and participated in some kind of grievance against the “enemies” of Islam. Waldmann describes a possible stereotypical path from childhood to terrorist recruit in which, in many cases, the future Palestinian terrorist already as a child had expressed a grievance towards the occupiers, for example, by throwing rocks at Israeli military vehicles. The potential terrorist participated in fights with Israeli settlers; carried out militant action (including assassination) against any Palestinians who were believed to collaborate with the Israelis; and made trips to training camps in Sudan, Syria, Jordan, or Lebanon to be prepared for terrorist activities, in order to return and build-up terrorist cells in Palestine.⁵⁸

Among terrorists, suicide assassins play a special role. They are naturally never the masterminds, because these individuals are simply too valuable. Suicide attackers are “foot-soldiers”, generally solely recruited for their deadly mission. Therefore, these terrorists need a different psychological preparation.

Ariel Merari argues that religious terrorist groups appeal to recruits' religious piety or patriotic sentiments, but neither fanaticism nor nationalism alone are "necessary or sufficient" to foment suicide terrorism. He thinks that the key ingredient may be susceptibility to indoctrination. In a recent study of 32 suicide bombers, Merari found no significant common socioeconomic factors or personality traits, such as social dysfunction or suicidal symptoms. But almost all

⁵⁸ Waldmann, P., (p. 114).

the subjects were young, unattached males. This represents a group which is vulnerable to violent organizations in any society.⁵⁹

Scott Atran argues that suicide attackers are seldom educationally or financially deprived. They are religious, but not fanatic; they have a stable environment (fathers, friends, jobs) and, generally do not stick out from the masses.⁶⁰ In a way, suicide attackers are often victims themselves, who are selected by organizations or charismatic leaders, trained and sent on a mission. The preparation and training is carried out through psychological manipulation and drills, which often end in the taping of a “commitment”-video, as a type of contract between the potential suicide attacker and the terrorist organization.⁶¹

In the case of a suicide assassin, religious belief plays a much larger role than with the “common” Islamic terrorist. According to Islamic belief, suicide is a sin, and therefore banned. But what in Western terms is described as “suicide assassin”, is, in an Islamist’s mind, someone who is willing to commit himself in an ultimate way, hence, to sacrifice his own life to the execution of Allah’s will; and therefore, this individual is not committing suicide. According to scholars of Muslim culture, so-called suicide bombings are seen by Islamists as instances of martyrdom, and should be understood as such. The Arabic term used is *istishad*, a religious term meaning to give one’s life in the name of Allah, as opposed to *intihar*, which refers to suicide resulting from personal distress and which is not condoned in Islamic teachings.⁶²

These terrorists are generally young people who are often in a stage of life where they have left their parents’ home, but have not yet started their own families. V.J. Hoffman-Ladd has suggested that they are frequently advanced students and university graduates in the physical sciences, although often with

⁵⁹ Merari, A. (2003, March). In: Perina, Kaja; *Suicide Terrorism*. Retrieved March 10, 2003, from Dr. Ellen Rudolph Web Site:

<http://www.drellenrudolph.com/tnccl/readings/SuicideTerrorism.html> .

⁶⁰ Atran, S. (2003, March 7). Selbismord-Attentäter fallen nicht aus der Reihe. *Der Spiegel*. Retrieved March 8, 2003, from Der Spiegel Web Site:

<http://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/mensch/0,1518,239078,00.html> .

⁶¹ Atran, S.

⁶² Hudson, R. A., (p. 29).

rural or traditional religious backgrounds.⁶³ They have finished their school education (or in some cases, they started but not completed university education), finished job training, but have not yet established themselves professionally. According to Waldmann, many suicide terrorists studied religion⁶⁴; whereas the general conventional wisdom says that Islamic terrorists are generally trained in law, the medical field, science, or engineering, with the later dominating.

In his view of Hoffman-Ladd, Islamic fundamentalism is more of a revolt of young people caught between a traditional past and a secular Western education.⁶⁵ R. Euben and Bernard Lewis both argue that there is a cognitive collision between Western and fundamentalist worldviews.⁶⁶ Focusing on Sunni fundamentalists, Euben / Lewis suggest that their goals are perceived not as self-interests but rather as moral imperatives, and that their worldviews differ in critical ways from Western worldviews.⁶⁷

Although some generalizations can be made about the profile of a terrorist, unfortunately, the consensus among terrorism psychologists as well as political scientists and sociologists is that there does not appear to be a single type of terrorist personality. The personalities of terrorists may be as diverse as the personalities of people in any lawful profession. There does not appear to be any visibly detectable personality traits that would allow authorities to identify a terrorist. Another finding is that the terrorist is not medically diagnosed as psychopathic or mentally sick. Contrary to the stereotype that the terrorist is a psychopath or otherwise mentally disturbed individual, in reality he is actually quite sane, although deluded by an ideological or religious way of viewing the world.⁶⁸

⁶³ Hudson, R. A., (p. 38).

⁶⁴ Waldmann, P., (p. 115).

⁶⁵ Hudson, R. A., (p. 38).

⁶⁶ Hudson, R. A., (p. 37).

⁶⁷ Hudson, R. A., (p. 37).

⁶⁸ Hudson, R. A., (p. 51).

What is true for religious terrorists in general, is particularly true for Islamic terrorists. The Islamic terrorist sees himself as an individual outside of the society, value system, or dogma that he fights against. He rejects and despises the system that he fights. This disgust that he feels enables him to conduct terrorist operations which are far more destructive and bloody than those of the average secular terrorist organization.⁶⁹ In order to justify his acts of terror, the Islamic terrorist does not need the legitimization of his spiritual leaders or his religious community. Although his deeds are also motivated by religious ideology, ultimately the motivation is self-gratification; as the terrorist (in his eyes), benefits from his actions, through his personal salvation and rise to paradise.

Even if one accepts the notion that a strong belief can motivate an individual to overcome the fear of losing his life, it nevertheless remains difficult to comprehend how it is that a young person, with his whole life ahead of him, can sacrifice himself. The following example, which shows how Mohammed Mansour Jabarah was recruited by al-Qa'ida for the 9/11 attacks, may help to illustrate this point, as well as point out the difficulty involved in predicting the type of person who has the potential to become an Islamic terrorist. The case of Jabarah reveals details on how al-Qa'ida recruits and deploys young operatives. Inspired by his older brother and by a boyhood friend who both went to Afghanistan in 1999 in order to train to fight in Chechnya, Jabarah resolved to become an activist himself. He collected more than \$3500 for the Chechen rebels from his home in Canada. In the summer of 2000, he visited Kuwait and never returned to Canada. Instead, he flew to Pakistan, where he traveled to the town of Peshawar. From there, together with a couple of young Saudis (perhaps even some of the later hijackers of 9/11), he was escorted to the Afghan town of Torkham, where Jabarah met with his older brother, Abdul Rahman Jabarah. From Torkham, al-Qa'ida operatives took the brothers to Camp Sheikh Shaheed Abu Yahya, an al-Qa'ida training camp about 20 miles north of Kabul. Together with other recruits, they attended a tough training program and participated for two weeks in fighting against Northern Alliance soldiers who opposed

⁶⁹ Hoffman, B. (1993). *Holy Terror: The Implications of Terrorism Motivated by a Religious Imperative*, (p. 12).

Afghanistan's Taliban rulers. At this point, Jabarah was not chosen to fight in Chechnya, but rather to become a bodyguard for Osama bin Laden. He met bin Laden four times and also met several senior al-Qa'ida officials and two of the 9/11 hijackers.⁷⁰ The path Jabarah took shows how a man, with ambitions to contribute to the cause of fellow Muslims in Chechnya, was manipulated by al-Qa'ida to serve another cause. His mindset and willingness to fight for what was in his eyes a just cause, was recognized by al-Qa'ida operatives, who then recruited him for an al-Qa'ida training camp. Once in al-Qa'ida training, he was no longer self-determined, but subject to further al-Qa'ida manipulation and committed to al-Qa'ida tasking, which could have included ultimately a suicide mission. The case of Jabarah illustrates how easy it was for a common young man, who had, in his mind, good intentions to serve the Muslim cause, could be manipulated into committing acts of terror, acts which had nothing in common with his original intentions.

⁷⁰ Hookway, J., & Soloman, J. (2003, January 21). Before Bali, an al Qaeda Agent Traversed Asia Plotting Attacks. *The Wall Street Journal*, pp. 1, A6.

III. THE ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

The following chapter first provides information relevant to the understanding of the attacks of September 11, 2001; followed by a detailed study on the individual hijackers who were responsible for the attacks. Section A. presents the man, Osama bin Laden, his al-Qa'ida network, and the objectives of the 9/11 attacks. This is followed, in Section B., by a brief description of the actual sequence of events which occurred on that fatal day. Section C. consists of a collection of biographical data on each of the participating hijackers; organized according to which flight each terrorist was on. In Section D., an attempt is made to interpret the biographical data, with the intent of finding commonalities in their profiles. Particular emphasis is given to the 15 Saudis-- Who were they? What were their backgrounds? What were their motives? Finally, Section E. will discuss how these hijackers will fit into the general concept of Islamic terrorism.

A. OSAMA BIN LADEN, AL-QA'IDA, AND THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ATTACKS

Osama bin Laden's story begins on July 30, 1957, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where he was born, the seventeenth son of Mohammad bin Laden, the wealthiest construction contractor in Saudi Arabia. Mohammad bin Laden left his 65 children a financial empire that today is worth an estimated \$10 billion. Osama was raised in the Hijaz in western Saudi Arabia. He studied management and economics in Jiddah. At that time, he was not a fundamental Muslim, but rather affiliated with Western lifestyle, which he enjoyed frequently in nightclubs, casinos, and bars in Beirut, Lebanon.

In the early seventies, when his father's construction company rebuilt the holy mosques in Mecca and Medina, he developed a passion for Islam and a strong belief in Islamic law. At that time, he adopted the idea of worldwide monotheism and the necessity for armed struggle; and in December of 1979,

when the Soviet Union invaded Muslim Afghanistan, he dedicated himself to the armed struggle against the enemies of Islam. He funded, recruited, transported, and trained a volunteer force of Arab nationals to fight Afghan mujahideen. He co-founded the Mujahideen Services Bureau and transformed it into an international network that recruited Islamic fundamentalists with special knowledge, including engineers, medical doctors, terrorists, and drug smugglers. In 1989, when the Soviet troops pulled out of Afghanistan, bin Laden commanded a fighting force of between 10,000 and 20,000 troops known as "Afghan Arabs".⁷¹

After having been successful as a commander of the "Afghan Arabs" in the defeat of the Soviet Union as a occupying power in Afghanistan, bin Laden was convinced that he and the "Afghan Arabs" (and later the al-Qa'ida network) could take on any enemy standing between them and their goal, the creation of a single Islamic state for all Muslims, governed by the Islamic law.

It was very disappointing for bin Laden, when in 1991, his offer to the Saudi monarchs to help free Kuwait from the invading Iraqi forces was rejected, and instead coalition forces, led by the United States, were offered bases in Saudi Arabia in order to conduct the war against Iraq. Let down, he moved to Sudan, where he established terrorists' training camps and started supporting terrorist groups in various countries. At the same time, many other terrorists resided in Sudan; a fact which later helped bin Laden to turn al-Qa'ida into a global umbrella organization for Islamic terrorists.⁷² Even more offensive to bin Laden was the fact that U.S. troops stayed in Saudi Arabia, the land of the two holiest places of Islam. By 1993, he actively supported Saudi Islamic extremists opposing the House of Saud, an action for which, in 1994, he was stripped of his Saudi citizenship and by 1996, had to leave Sudan.

In February of 1998, Osama bin Laden announced the formation of an umbrella organization called *The Islamic World Front for the Struggle against the Jews and the Crusaders (Al-Jabhah al-Islamiyyah al-'Alamiyyah li-Qital al-Yahud*

⁷¹ Hudson, R. A., (p. 96 – 101).

⁷² Emerson, S. (2002). *American Jihad – The Terrorists Living Among Us* (p. 145). New York: The Free Press.

wal-Salibiyyin). Among the announced members of this terrorist organization were the Egyptian Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyyah, the Egyptian Al-Jihad, the Egyptian Armed Group, the Pakistan Scholars Society, the Partisan Movement for Kashmir, the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh, and bin Laden's Afghan military wing of the Advice and Reform Commission. Al-Qa'ida is not strictly organized, like most other terrorists' organizations, but rather best described as a financier of terrorists' activities and a loose network of participating Islamic groups. Prior to the U.S. invasion, bin Laden, al-Qa'ida leadership and operatives were given shelter by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, where al-Qa'ida established training camps for their operatives. In turn, bin Laden provided financial support for the Taliban and reconstructed Afghan infrastructure.

One operational goal of al-Qa'ida's was the liberation of Muslim lands from infidels. Although al-Qa'ida carried out a variety of terror acts against "infidel" regimes in Muslim states, against their aids, and against infidels who occupied Muslim lands; they were never particularly successful in achieving their goals. Therefore, the attacks of September 11, 2001, can be interpreted as a "desperate attempt to rejuvenate their failing cause, by triggering indiscriminate American reactions"⁷³. In addition, the act fulfilled another objective from bin Laden's *fatwa*, namely to kill as many Americans as possible, wherever it is possible⁷⁴. In his extreme Manichean worldview, bin Laden never did need a logical reason for his demands and objectives, because he believed that he had a mandate from Allah to punish the "Great Satan."⁷⁵ In this context, it seems to be ironic that the al-Qa'ida network emerged out of the "Afghan Arabs", the *mujahideen*, who fought the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, and who were supported both financially and with weapons by the United States.

Although this twisted view of bin Laden and his followers falls short of explaining the actual attacks of 9/11, it at least it provides an explanation as to the willingness of the planners of 9/11 to accept responsibility for the deaths of

⁷³ Rapoport, D. C. (2003). *The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11* (p. 45). In: Kegley, C. W.

⁷⁴ Bin Laden, Osama (1998)

⁷⁵ Hudson, R. A., (p. 7).

thousands of people. One conclusion, quickly drawn after the attacks, was that the world will never be the same. Sparing the philosophy on whether or not this conclusion is indeed true and if so, for whom it may be true; it cannot be denied that certain occurrences which happened (and which are still happening) as a result of the attacks would not have occurred, had there never been a 9/11 attack. First, Afghanistan would not have been invaded and the Taliban regime would most likely still be in place. Second, the war on terrorism, as is presently being conducted by the United States (with the support of most of the states of the world), would not have begun. And lastly, public life in the United States would not have been impacted to such a degree as it is now, by the issues surrounding terrorism and the protection from future attacks.

Since September 11, 2001, the threat of terrorism has become far more serious than it has ever before been in the history of the United States. Furthermore, it is no longer just a marginal problem for other countries; that is, the attacks were an assault on the principles and the political culture not only of the United States, but also her allies.⁷⁶ This was the real target of the 9/11 attacks, and the objective was the defeat of an infidel system in order to pave the way for a worldwide Islamic monotheism.

B. THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

On September 11, 2001, four airliners- American Airlines Flights 11 and 77, and United Airlines Flights 93 and 175- were hijacked shortly after taking-off from U.S. east coast airports. The hijackers consisted of two United Emirates citizens, one man from Lebanon, one from Egypt, and fifteen Saudi citizens.

At 08:45 Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), United Airlines Flight 11, (a Boeing 767-200), with 92 people on board, crashed into the north tower of New York's World Trade Center. Eighteen minutes later, another Boeing 767-200, United Airlines Flight 175, crashed into the south tower, with 65 people on board. Both planes had been fueled for a coast-to-coast flight. The huge amount of fuel set both towers quickly on fire. The energy stored in the jet fuel of both planes was

⁷⁶ Kegley, C. W., (p. 2).

the equivalent of 240 tons of dynamite.⁷⁷ Since this amount of destructive power compares to a tactical nuclear weapon (1/4 kiloton), the categorization of the airplanes used as weapons of mass destruction is a legitimate one. On an average working day, about 50,000 people would have been working inside the World Trade Center and about 100,000 tourists would have been visiting. At 09:20 EDT, firefighters and rescue crew started to fight the fire and evacuate the buildings.

At 09:40 EDT, American Airlines Flight 77, a Boeing 757 carrying 64 people, crashed into the Pentagon's west wing in Washington D.C. and caused one side of the building to collapse. Immediately after, the White House and the Capitol were evacuated and all airports were closed nationwide.

At 09:50 EDT, the WTC south tower collapsed, 39 minutes later, the north tower collapsed as well.

The fourth hijacked plane, a Boeing 757 United Airlines Flight 93, did not make it to its target, either the White House or the Capitol, and crashed at 10:00 EDT, about 80 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. It is believed that some of the 45 people on board became aware of the hijackers' plans and rose up against the terrorists in order to prevent them from accomplishing their mission.

The attacks cost the lives of more than 3000 people, an incalculable amount of emotional trauma, and an unimaginable amount of material damage.

C. THE HIJACKERS

Timothy Garton Ash proposes four criteria, which can be used to classify a terrorist: biography, goals, methods, and context.⁷⁸ The goals, methods and context in which al-Qa'ida operates, have all been widely examined and are fairly well understood. Classifications such as these have been used by the media to analyze the particular case of the 9/11 attacks. What is also of high interest and what remains to date to be essentially unexplored are the biographical facts surrounding the terrorists themselves. Who were these people? What made them

⁷⁷ Benjamin, D., & Simon, S. (2002). *The Age of Sacred Terror* (pp. 33 – 34). New York: Random House.

⁷⁸ Ash, T. G (2003). *Is there a Good Terrorist?* (p. 62). In: Kegley, C. W.

become terrorists? Why were 15 out of 19 hijackers Saudi citizens? What significance, if any, stands behind this fact?

Prior to 9/11, the general profile of an Islamic suicide bomber was that of an uneducated, poor, psychologically troubled, young male.⁷⁹ The intelligence collected after 9/11 suggested a possible different profile of some of the attackers. Most information was learned about the al-Qa'ida's Hamburg cell in Germany and its head, Mohammad Atta. Atta was an Egyptian citizen who was born in 1968 and grew up in a religious, middle-class family in Cairo. He moved to Germany in 1992, where he lived for more than seven years and studied urban planning and preservation at the Fachhochschule Hamburg-Bergedorf. He was described as a serious student, a precise thinker, and one of the best students of the institute.⁸⁰ In 2000, Atta moved to the United States to attend flight school. Atta, at the time of the attack, was a 33 year-old university graduate, holding a pilot's license for single and twin-engine aircraft. He obviously did not exactly match the profile collected on previous suicide bombers, which was mostly drawn from Palestinian suicide bombers. However, it should be kept in mind that Atta was not representative of the majority of the 9/11 attackers, beginning with the fact that he was not a Saudi citizen.

The following section will focus on the available biographical data of the hijackers. Data have been collected from a number of sources, some of which are more reliable than others. Most of the data have been retrieved from publicly accessible CIA sources.⁸¹ Obviously, the fact that none of the hijackers' bodies were identifiable after the attacks makes a positive identification difficult and contributes to the problem of data reliability. In this section, the hijackers are grouped according to their particular flights (e.g., American Airlines Flight 11), and the age of the hijacker (on September 11, 2001) is given in parentheses. Names of the 9/11 attackers written in *italic font* indicate that the individual was a

⁷⁹ Stohl, M. (2003). *The Mystery of the New Global Terrorism: Old Myths, New Realities* (p. 84). In: Kegley, C. W.

⁸⁰ Bergen, P. L. (2002). *Holy War Inc. – Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (p. 36). New York: Simon & Schuster.

⁸¹ Central Intelligence Agency. Retrieved December 5, 2003 from CIA Web Site: <http://www.cia.gov> .

non-Saudi citizen. After giving the available biographical data, the next sections will analyze the information, with the goal of identifying particular patterns.

American Airlines Flight 11

1. Al-Shehri, Wail (28)

Wail al-Shehri was a Saudi citizen. The date of birth he used was July 31, 1973. Wail belonged to the Seqeley family, part of the respected southwestern Saudi Arabian al-Shehri tribe. He was the older brother of Waleed al-Shehri (also a 9/11 terrorist). The family lives in the town of Khamis Mushayt, which is located in Saudi Arabia's southwest, app. 70 miles north of the Yemeni border. The al-Shehris are a military family; three brothers are officers at a nearby Air Force base; the uncle, Faez al-Shehri is Major General and is the Logistical Director of the Royal Saudi Armed Forces. The al-Shehri family is a long-time and prominent merchant family with branches in Jeddah and other major cities in the kingdom.⁸² His father, Mohammed Seqeley al-Shehri, owns a construction firm and did business with Mohammed bin Laden (father of Osama), as bin Laden's company built the highway in southwestern Saudi Arabia. Wail's father is a devout Wahhabi Muslim, who built the Seqeley mosque (named after his family) in Khamis Mushayt. He is said to be tough and uncompromising and refused his 17 sons from four wives any link to modernity- like satellite TV, Internet, music, and girls (until they were old enough for an arranged marriage).

Wail worked as a gym teacher in Khamis Mushayt. Although Wail was devout, he nevertheless smoked Marlboros, cruised the Internet in a local Internet Café, and liked pop music. In 1999, Wail became depressive to a suicidal degree, and was forced to take a leave of absence from his job. He and his brother, Waleed, then went to a faith healer in Mecca. Here, they met a militant Islamic cleric, who counseled them to read the Qur'an, to fast and to take up *jihad*. In the spring of 2000, he was believed to have taken a solemn oath to

⁸² Franke, Stephen H.; in interview on April 1, 2003; (Stephen H. Franke is a retired LtCol, U.S. Army (1994). He worked as an Army foreign area officer and is considered a Saudi Arabia specialist. Presently, Mr. Franke does field research on Saudi Arabia and works as a consultant for the U.S. government.).

carry out *jihad*. Wail al-Shehri adapted the name “Abu Mossaeb al-Janubi”, who was a close friend of the prophet Mohammed and who gave up everything to follow Mohammed’s teaching.⁸³

In 2000, Wail al-Shehri and his brother Waleed are believed to have spent time in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where they were trained in hand-to-hand combat and small arms.

Wail traveled to the United States from Saudi Arabia two weeks before the attacks. He was a member of Osama bin Laden's al-Qa'ida terrorist network. Although his father claims that Wail, in December 2000, left home and work in order to go to the U.S. for medical treatment.

The FBI raided a hotel in Newton, a Boston suburb, where Wail al-Shehri and his brother Waleed were believed to have stayed the night before the 9/11 attacks. Possible residences in the U.S. prior to 9/11 were Hollywood, Boynton Beach, FL and Newton, MS. The FBI has obtained the phone records from his mobile phone.⁸⁴

Some believe that Wail was one of the pilots of the hijacked American Airlines Flight 11. However, no records exist to indicate that he ever owned a pilot license, attempted to acquire one, or ever even took any flying lessons at all. Although he was significantly older than most of the hijackers and made obvious attempts to become a more valuable asset to al-Qa'ida, Wail's role in the 9/11 attacks was probably one of a foot soldier.

⁸³ Sennott, C. M. (2003, March 3). Driving a Wedge – Bin Laden, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. *The Boston Globe*, p. 25.

⁸⁴ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?* Retrieved January 6, 2003, from ABC News Web Site: http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/WTC_suspects.html .

Wail al-Shehri has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui⁸⁵.

2. Al-Shehri, Waleed (22)

Waleed was the younger brother of Wail M. al-Shehri and also a Saudi citizen. Waleed had used various dates of birth. The assumed age of 22 seems reliable, since this is in agreement with the information taken from interviews with his family. More questionable are the reports that he had studied at a Saudi Arabian teacher's college and that he had been a former airline pilot.

Waleed al-Shehri was described by his older brother, Abdel Rahman, as "drifting in life". Waleed and Wail were not Islamists and did not live "pure" Islam. Both were bored with life and not particularly bright individuals. Particularly interesting is that their brother, Abdel Rahman, suspects that they probably had been unaware of what would happen to them, when they were recruited by a militant Islamic cleric during their trip to Mecca. Through the Seqeley mosque, the al-Shehri brothers became friends with Ahmed al-Nami and Saeed al-Ghamdi (two hijackers of United Airlines Flight 93), from the nearby town of Abha.⁸⁶

His possible residence in the U.S. is believed to have been Hollywood, Orlando, and/or Daytona Beach, FL.⁸⁷

Waleed al-Shehri has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.⁸⁸ His role in the 9/11 attacks can be categorized as one of a foot soldier.

⁸⁵ Zacarias Moussaoui was born in France on May 30, 1968, and is of Moroccan descent. Before 2001, he was a resident of the United Kingdom. Moussaoui held a masters degree from Southbank University, U.K., and traveled widely. On December 1, 2001, he was charged by the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria, with (1) conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism transcending national boundaries, (2) conspiracy to commit aircraft piracy, (3) conspiracy to destroy aircraft, (4) conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction, (5) conspiracy to murder United States employees, and (6) conspiracy to destroy property. For details see: The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*. Criminal No: 01-455-A; Retrieved May 2, 2003, from United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia Web Site: <http://notablecases.vaed.uscourts.gov/1:01-cr-00455/docs/64329/0.pft> .

⁸⁶ Sennott, C. M., (p. 25).

⁸⁷ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

⁸⁸ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

3. Al-Omari, Abdulaziz (22)

Abdulaziz al-Omari was a Saudi citizen. He used varying dates of birth, but is believed to have been 22 years old at the time of the attacks.

Abdulaziz al-Omari's identity is questionable, since a Saudi man has reported to authorities that he is the real Abdulaziz al-Omari, and claims his passport was stolen in 1995, while he was studying electrical engineering at the University of Denver. Al-Omari says he informed police of the theft. "The name [listed by the FBI] is my name and the birth date is the same as mine, but I am not the one who bombed the World Trade Center in New York," Abdulaziz al-Omari told the London-based *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper.⁸⁹ Therefore, it is also questionable, whether al-Omari was the real identity of the hijacker pilots of American Airlines Flight 11, as it was reported by ABC News⁹⁰.

Al-Omari (or the individual carrying his identification) flew from Portland, ME, to Boston, MA (where the two flights that struck the World Trade Center towers originated) with Mohamed Atta, the presumed leader of the 9/11 hijackers. A possible residence of al-Omari was Hollywood, FL.

Abdulaziz al-Omari was listed on American Airlines Flight 11 in seat 8G.

He has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.⁹¹ His role in the 9/11 attacks can be categorized as one of a foot soldier.

4. Al-Sugami, Satam (25)

Except for the fact that Satam al-Sugami was a Saudi citizen, not much else is known about him. His identity was confirmed, because his Saudi Arabian passport was recovered in the rubble of the World Trade Center. The date of birth was June 28, 1976.

⁸⁹ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

⁹⁰ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

⁹¹ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

On American Airlines Flight 11, al-Sugami was listed as a passenger in seat 10B.

The address on his Florida driver's license in Boynton Beach, FL, is the same as the one found on Wail al-Shehri, another hijacker on the same flight.⁹²

Satam al-Sugami has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.⁹³ His role in the 9/11 attacks can be categorized as one of a foot soldier.

5. Atta, Mohammad (33)

Mohammad Atta, an Egyptian citizen, is suspected to have been the primary U.S. operative overseeing and directing the 9/11 attacks. He was born on Sept. 1, 1968, and grew up in Cairo, Egypt. When he was in his twenties, Atta spent most of his time in Germany, where he was a student at the technical university in Hamburg-Bergedorf.

Atta did not exhibit any signs of extremism before leaving for Germany, but he was open with his German acquaintances about his dissatisfaction over Egypt's increasing Westernization, and with what he perceived as the Egyptian government's corruption and persecution of the Muslim Brotherhood. Also, he made no attempt to hide his antipathy toward Israel.

Atta became increasingly devout during his time in Germany and friends have also reported that Atta became increasingly pessimistic about his prospects for employment and the lack of freedom to express his religious and political beliefs back in Egypt. By 1997, Atta appeared to have lost contact with most of his German friends and was associating almost exclusively with other Muslims. Atta is believed to have traveled to Afghanistan for the first time in early 1998, when he told his roommate he would be gone for two months on a pilgrimage. During a trip to Egypt in June, Atta applied for a new passport, even

⁹² ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

⁹³ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

though his old one had not yet expired, suggesting that he might have been trying to hide evidence of travel to Afghanistan.

Atta founded the so called "Hamburg-cell", which included Ziad Jarrad (a Lebanese citizen, believed to have been the hijacker pilot of United Airlines Flight 93) and Marwn alShehhi (a United Arab Emirates citizen who has been suspected to have been the hijacker pilot of United Airlines Flight 175). These three men shared an apartment in Hamburg. They were part of a group of young Muslim men living in Hamburg, who came from different countries and backgrounds, but attended the same mosques, shared common acquaintances, and were drawn together by their increasingly extreme Islamist views and disenchantment with the West. They were intelligent, English-speaking, and familiar with Western society. These were traits crucial to carrying out the 9/11 plot. They were well-suited, educated (including in technical subjects), and proficient in several languages-- masters at skills which would be required in order to pilot three of the four planes on September 11.

The general manager of a crop-dusting airfield in Florida told the FBI that Atta and other men visited the facility as recently as the Saturday before the attacks, asking questions about crop-dusting planes, including how big of a load of chemicals they could carry.

In January of 2001, Atta was stopped by authorities upon re-entering the US from Spain, because of questions regarding his application for a change in visa status and in April, he was issued a court summons for driving without a license. Neither incident caused him to panic.

Atta and al-Shehhi earned their private pilot licenses at an airfield in Venice, FL; and in December, 2000, spent thousands of dollars on jet training and flight simulator lessons for large commercial jets at a private flight school at Opa Locka, FL.

It has been suggested that he was the same Mohamed Atta who had received U.S. military training (intended for members of foreign military services) at Norfolk Naval Air Station, VA in how to use E-2 Hawkeye radar aircraft.

Although Atta's father claims his son had nothing to do with the attacks, that he in fact hated bin Laden, and that Mohammad Atta made contact with the family days after the attacks; it is nevertheless fairly evident that Atta was the leader of the 19 hijackers and the pilot of American Airlines Flight 11, on which he was a passenger on seat 8D, close to Abdulaziz al-Omari.

The FBI has obtained the phone records from his mobile phone.

Atta's car was found abandoned at Boston's Logan Airport.

His possible residences in the United States were Hollywood, Coral Springs, Venice and Nokomis, FL.

Mohammad Atta has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.⁹⁴

United Airlines Flight 175

6. Al-Ghamdi, Ahmed (22)

Ahmed al-Ghamdi was a Saudi citizen from Abha, in Saudi Arabia's southwest, nearby Khamis Mushayt (the home town of the al-Shehri brothers). Since Abha is also the home town of Hamza al-Ghamdi and Saeed al-Ghamdi, it is evident that they are from the same tribe. They might all be brothers, cousins, or cousins and brothers, although a connection has not been proven. Since Saeed al-Ghamdi met Wail and Waleed al-Shehri at the Seqeley mosque in the nearby town of Khamis Mushayt, it is very likely that all five had been friends or at least knew each other. Another 9/11 hijacker, Ahmed al-Nami, was also from the town of Abha.

Authorities claim that al-Ghamdi was linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qa'ida terrorist network. He studied engineering in Mecca before moving to Chechnya in 1999.⁹⁵

Ahmed al-Ghamdi's possible residences in the U.S. were Daytona Beach and Pensacola, FL.

⁹⁴ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*

⁹⁵ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

Ahmed al-Ghamdi has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.⁹⁶ His role in the 9/11 attacks can be categorized as one of a foot soldier.

7. Al-Ghamdi, Hamza (20)

Like Ahmed, 20 year-old Hamza al-Shehri (date of birth used: Nov. 18, 1980) was a Saudi citizen from Abha.

He prayed at the same mosques as Ahmed and had the same social environment. He also was linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qa'ida terrorist network.⁹⁷

When he came to the United States prior to the 9/11 attacks, his possible residence was Delray Beach, FL.

Hamza al-Ghamdi has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.⁹⁸ His role in the 9/11 attacks can be categorized as one of a foot soldier.

8. Al-Shehri, Mohand (22)

Little is known about 22 year-old Saudi citizen Mohand al-Shehri. *The Guardian* of London reports that, like his cousin Marwan Al-Shehhi, he took flight training classes in Florida with Mohamed Atta.⁹⁹

His name shows that he is a member of the al-Shehri tribe, located in southwestern Saudi Arabia. Therefore, he probably is related and associated with Wail and Waleed al-Shehri from the town of Khamis Mushayt.

Mohand Al-Shehri, who graduated from a religious high school and dropped out of Imam Muhammed bin Saud University, was facile enough with

⁹⁶ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

⁹⁷ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

⁹⁸ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

⁹⁹ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

computers that he could use the Internet at a Delray Beach public library.¹⁰⁰ Like Hamza al-Ghamdi, Mohand al-Shehri possibly resided in Delray Beach, FL prior to the attacks.

Mohand al-Shehri has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.¹⁰¹ His role in the 9/11 attacks can be categorized as one of a foot soldier.

9. Al-Shehhi, Marwan (23)

Twenty-three year-old Marwan al-Shehhi (date of birth used: May 9, 1978), a United Arab Emirates citizen, was a cousin of Mohand al-Shehri. Therefore, a family or tribal connection to the brothers Wail and Waleed al-Shehri is highly likely.

Marwan al-Shehhi was a roommate of Mohammad Atta's, and Ziad Jarrah's in Hamburg and a member of the "Hamburg-cell" as described earlier.

He came to the United States from Saudi Arabia about two weeks before the attacks. Al-Shehhi was trained in Afghanistan in hand-to-hand combat. He lived as a student in Hamburg, Germany, with Mohamed Atta until the summer of 2001, when the two moved to Florida. Investigators believe that he, along with Atta, paid thousands of dollars for flight-training classes in Florida, where his possible residence was Hollywood, FL.

Marwan left a suicide note with his family.

Marwan al-Shehhi has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.¹⁰² He was the hijacker pilot of United Airlines Flight 175.

¹⁰⁰ Goldstein, A. (September 30, 2001). Hijackers Led by Core Group. in: *Washington Post*, p. A01. Retrieved March 8, 2003 from Washington Post Web Site: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A46892-2001Sep29¬Found=true> .

¹⁰¹ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

¹⁰² The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

10. Banihammad, Fayiz (24)

Fayiz Banihammad was also a United Arab Emirates citizen. His possible residence in the U.S. was Delray Beach, FL. There has been no record of him having traveled to Afghanistan. However, it is very unlikely that he was assigned to the 9/11 operation without first having had an extensive hand-to-hand combat training.

The address on his pilot's license was that of residence in a flight school in Tulsa, OK, but the school has no record of his attendance. A person with that name attended the Lackland Air Force Base Defense Language Institute in San Antonio, TX. Ahmed reportedly took flight-training classes in Florida with Mohamed Atta.

Ahmed was named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.¹⁰³ It remains unclear as to whether his role in the 9/11 attacks was as the pilot of the hijacked United Airlines Flight 175, or whether he was just a foot soldier.

American Airlines Flight 77

11. Al-Mihdhar, Khalid (26)

Since the end of the year 2000, the CIA had been aware of a man called Tawifiq bin Atash, known throughout bin Laden's network by his alias 'Khallad'. Khallad was born in Yemen and had fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union, going on to become bin Laden's bodyguard and a crucial lieutenant in the al-Qa'ida structure: deemed too precious to die.

According to US intelligence and federal investigators on bin Laden's trail, 'Khallad' was the pivotal figure behind the attack on the Cole. Late in January of 2000, he was captured on a video shot in a hotel in Malaysia, along with a group of men known to be part of the al-Qa'ida network. One of these men was Fahad al-Quso, who was assigned to shoot a film of the suicide attack on the Cole.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

¹⁰⁴ Helmore, E., & Vulliamy, E. (2001, October). 2001 Saudi hijacker 'was key link to bin Laden'. *The Observer*. Retrieved October. 7, 2001, from The Observer Web Site: <http://www.observer.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,564741,00.html>.

Khalid al-Mihdhar, together with Nawaf al-Hazmi, were the only Saudi hijackers whom the CIA knew to have been al-Qa'ida members. Khalid al-Mihdhar is believed to have played an important role as a planner of the attacks. He and Nawaf al-Hazmi had been together in Afghanistan for al-Qa'ida training.

In November of 1999, two Saudi Arabian men moved into a ground-floor apartment at the Parkwood Apartments, a town house complex near a busy commercial strip in San Diego, CA. Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi struck their neighbors as odd. They had no furniture, often carried briefcases, and seemed to be on their cell phones a lot. Two months later, investigators believe, al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi traveled to Malaysia, where they met with bin Laden operatives (who were later linked to the bombing of the destroyer USS Cole).

In May of 2000, Khalid arrived at Sorbi's Flying Club, a small school 20 miles north of San Diego, that trains about four dozen pilots a year, and announced that he wanted to learn to fly Boeing airliners. An instructor at Sorbi's Flying Club in San Diego said that al-Mihdhar was interested in flying large planes, particularly Boeings.¹⁰⁵ At Sorbi's, he tried to learn to fly, but quickly had to abandon his efforts because of his poor technical and English-language skills.

According to a law enforcement source, the CIA transmitted the information about al-Mihdhar to the FBI and the Immigration and Naturalization Service and his name was placed on the INS watch list. However, he had already entered the United States by the time his name was placed on the list, Aug. 24, 2001. The FBI has obtained the phone records from his mobile phone.

Newsweek reported that the FBI had begun searching for al-Mihdhar before the attacks. The INS reportedly checked its databases and realized that he, and associate Salem al-Hazmi, had entered the United States earlier in the year on business visas, giving a Marriott Hotel in New York as their address. The INS also learned the two men had entered the country in 2000 and had listed a Los Angeles hotel chain as their address.

Khalid worked out at Gold's Gym in Greenbelt, MD, together with Hani Hanjur and Majet Moget, for a few days in September 2001.

¹⁰⁵ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

Al-Mihdhar, like al-Hazmi, was considered part of the al-Qa'ida advance guard.¹⁰⁶

Khalid al-Mihdhar was listed as a passenger on American Airlines Flight 77 in seat 12B.

He has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.¹⁰⁷

12. Al-Hazmi, Nawaf (25)

Nawaf al-Hazmi was a brother of Salem al-Hazmi.

Like in the case of Khalid al-Mihdhar, Nawaf al-Hazmi had been in Afghanistan for al-Qa'ida training and the CIA knew that he was an al-Qa'ida member. Together with his brother, Salem, he spent time in Chechnya.

Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar are believed to have traveled to Malaysia, where they met with bin Laden operatives who were later linked to the bombing of the destroyer USS Cole.

As previously mentioned for Khalid al-Mihdhar, in November of 1999, Nawaf al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar moved into a ground-floor apartment at the Parkwood Apartments, a town house complex near a busy commercial strip in San Diego, CA. Neighbors reported their behavior as odd (although they had no furniture, they nevertheless were seen to always be carrying briefcases and to be constantly on their cell phones).

After trying to learn to fly in May of 2000, Nawaf al-Hazmi, like Khalid al-Mihdhar, had to abandon his efforts because of his poor technical and English-language skills. A flight instructor at Sorbi's Flying Club in San Diego said that al-Hazmi trained in a twin-engine Cessna with Khalid al-Mihdhar. A car dealer in Wayne, NJ confirmed that the FBI had confiscated his records on cars which Nawaf al-Hazmi had rented.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Goldstein, A. (2001).

¹⁰⁷ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

¹⁰⁸ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

Nawaf al-Hazmi is considered to have been part of the al-Qa'ida advance guard.¹⁰⁹

His possible residences in the U.S. were Fort Lee and Wayne, NJ and San Diego, CA.

Nawaf al-Hazmi has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.¹¹⁰

13. Al-Hazmi, Salem (20)

Salem was a brother of Nawaf al-Hazmi.

It seems obvious that he was inspired and/or recruited by his older brother Nawaf, with whom he spent time in Chechnya.

Probably, because of his brother having been a known al-Qa'ida member, Salem was on a U.S. government watch list, along with Khalid al-Mihdhar, before the attacks. *Newsweek* reported that the Immigration and Naturalization Service checked its databases and realized that he and Al-Mihdhar entered the United States earlier that year (2001) on business visas, giving a Marriott Hotel in New York as their address. The INS also learned that the two men had entered the country in 2001, listing a Los Angeles hotel chain as their address.¹¹¹ Other possible residences of Salem al Hazmi were Fort Lee and Wayne, NJ.

Salem was listed as a passenger of American Airlines Flight 77 in seat 5F.

Salem al-Hazmi has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.¹¹² His role in the 9/11 attacks can be categorized as one of a foot soldier.

14. Hanjur, Hani (29)

Hani Hanjur was a Saudi Arabian national who went to live in the United Arab Emirates in 1999.

¹⁰⁹ Goldstein, A. (2001).

¹¹⁰ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

¹¹¹ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

¹¹² The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

According to an instructor pilot at CRM Flight School in Scottsdale, AZ, Hanjur received training there from September through November of 1996. Hanjur returned again in December of 1997. He was trying for his private pilot's license but, the instructor says, was a very poor student who skipped homework and missed flights. Nevertheless, Federal Aviation Administration records show that someone named Hani Hanjur received a commercial pilot's license in 1999, listing a P.O. Box in Saudi Arabia as his address.

Hanjur flew three times in August of 2001 from a flight school at Freeway Airport in Bowie, MD.

He worked out with Khalid al-Mihdhar and Hani Hanjur at Gold's Gym in Greenbelt, MD, for a few days in September 2001.¹¹³

His possible residences in the U.S. were Phoenix, AZ, San Diego, CA, and New York, NY.

Hanjur Hani has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.¹¹⁴ Hani Hanjur is the suspected hijacker pilot of American Airlines Flight 77.

15. Moget, Majed (24)

Majet Moget was a Saudi citizen. He worked out with Khalid al-Mihdhar and Hani Hanjur at Gold's Gym in Greenbelt, MD, for a few days in September 2001. The FBI has obtained the phone records from his mobile phone.¹¹⁵ Other than this, not much more is known about his personal records.

He was listed as a passenger of American Airlines Flight 77 and occupied seat 12A, next to Khalid al-Mihdhar.

¹¹³ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

¹¹⁴ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

¹¹⁵ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

Moget Majet has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.¹¹⁶ His role in the 9/11 attacks can be categorized as one of a foot soldier.

United Airlines Flight 93

16. Al-Ghamdi, Saeed (20)

Saeed al-Ghamdi was a 20 year-old Saudi citizen (date of birth listed: Dec. 19, 1980).

He grew up and lived in the southwestern Saudi town of Abha (home town of Ahmed and Hamza al-Ghamdi), where he was friends with Ahmed al-Nami (a hijacker of the same airliner). Both became friends with Wail and Waleed al-Shehri, from the neighboring town of Khamis Mushayt. Saeed al-Ghamdi and his friends met and prayed at Seqeley mosque in Khamis Mushayt.

In the spring of 2000, Saeed al-Ghamdi is believed to have taken the oath for carrying out *jihad* together with his friends, Wail, Waleed al-Shehri and Ahmed al-Nami.¹¹⁷

In the United States, his possible residences were Daytona Beach and Pensacola, FL.¹¹⁸

Saeed al-Ghamdi has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.¹¹⁹ His role in the 9/11 attacks can be categorized as one of a foot soldier.

17. Al-Haznawi, Ahmed (20)

Little is known about the 20 year-old (date of birth used: Oct. 11, 1980) Saudi citizen Ahmed al-Haznawi. His possible residence in the United States was Delray Beach, FL.

¹¹⁶ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

¹¹⁷ Sennott, C. M., (p. 25).

¹¹⁸ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

¹¹⁹ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

Ahmed al-Haznawi has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.¹²⁰ His role in the 9/11 attacks can be categorized as one of a foot soldier.

18. Al-Nami, Ahmed (23)

Twenty-three year-old (date of birth used: December 1977) Ahmed al-Nami, a Saudi citizen from the southwestern town of Abha (the home town of Ahmed, Hamza, and Saeed al-Ghamdi) grew up in a distinctly middle-class family. His deceased father had been an employee of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowment. Ahmed al-Nami was the youngest of six siblings. During his high school years, he was a social type, who would spend time with his friends playing guitar, singing at bonfires, and smoking apple tobacco from a water pipe. His behavior as a school kid was viewed by his family as being un-Islamic.

Ahmed al-Nami dramatically changed during a state-sponsored religious summer camp in 1999. He grew a beard, distanced himself from his friends, stopped playing music, and changed to a degree that his family had suspected bipolar disorder. He usually prayed at al-Basra mosque in Abha, but he also attended Seqeley mosque in Khamis Mushayt, where he met Wail and Waleed al-Shehri. He entered King Khalid University's School of Islamic Law, where he was suspected to have been drawn into militant Islamic circles.¹²¹

His efforts to stop his high school friends' evil practices and to convince them of the true path of Islam indicated that by that time, he considered himself being on a "mission".

In 2000, Ahmed al-Nami made his oath to commit to *jihad* together with his friends Wail, Waleed al-Shehri and Saeed al-Ghamdi.¹²²

His possible residence in the United States was Delray Beach, FL.¹²³

¹²⁰ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

¹²¹ Sennott, C. M., (p. 25).

¹²² Sennott, C. M., (p. 25).

¹²³ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

Ahmed al-Nami has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.¹²⁴ His role in the 9/11 attacks can be categorized as one of a foot soldier.

19. Jarrah, Ziad (26)

Twenty-six year-old Ziad Jarrah was a Lebanese citizen.

From 1996 to 2000, he studied aeronautical engineering in Hamburg, Germany. Jarrah shared an apartment in Hamburg with Mohammad Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi and was a member of the “Hamburg-cell”, which has been described earlier.

Jarrah left Germany for the first time in June of 2000, traveling to the United States briefly to attend an aviation seminar sponsored by Boeing. He returned to the United States again about six months before the attacks. About 10 days before the attacks, he called his father asking for \$2,000, and then called back two days later to thank him. Jarrah's father and uncle both said he was not a religious man and denied a CNN report stating that he had been to Afghanistan.¹²⁵ He was listed as having a valid pilot's license. Hours after the attacks, the FBI searched an apartment in Hollywood, FL, in which he was thought to have lived.

Ziad Jarrah has been named an unindicted co-conspirator in the indictment against Zacarias Moussaoui.¹²⁶ It is obvious that he was the hijacker pilot of United Airlines Flight 93.

The next section will consist of an analysis of this biographical data, with the hope of identifying commonalities in the profiles of these men.

¹²⁴ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacarias Moussaoui*.

¹²⁵ ABC News.Com. *Who did it?*

¹²⁶ The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2001, December 1). *United States versus Zacaria Moussaoui*.

D. INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA ON THE 15 SAUDIS

Although there is a scarcity of biographical data and what is available may be, in some cases, not entirely reliable, certain patterns can be seen in the profiles, and similar characteristics which are shared by the various hijackers can be observed. Some of the individual points may, at first glance, appear to be trivial; however, when the data is pooled and looked at as a whole, it leads to certain assumptions which will later be used to support the conclusions.

First of all, it is clear that, on at least three of the four planes, only a single hijacker knew how to fly a plane. Three of the hijacker pilots, Mohammad Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi, and Ziad Jarrah, were non-Saudi nationals. The only Saudi hijacker pilot was Hani Hanjur. Just two of the other hijackers, Wail al-Shehri and Mohand al-Shehri, made serious attempts to learn how to fly a commercial airliner. Two others, Khalid al-Mhihdar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, also made brief attempts at flying lessons, but had to quit due to lack of personal capabilities.

The 15 Saudi hijackers were all relatively young. Their ages ranged between 20 and 26 years (with the exception of two, Wail al-Shehri, 28, and Hani Hanjur, 29). They were all Sunni Muslims. All of them were in a stage of life, where they had finished their school education and were either starting professional careers or in universities. Although a few attended local universities, most of the Saudi hijackers can be described as having been less educated. Those who entered the “work force”¹²⁷ were not very ambitious; neither did they have prestigious jobs or professional successes. Some even suffered from depression or were described as “drifting in life”, one was described by others as having a “suicidal mood”. They were still looking for their “mission” in life.

Those whose origins are known came from tribes of Saudi Arabia’s southwestern region between the Red Sea and Yemen, called Tihama. This region is one of the poorest and least developed regions in Saudi Arabia. The tribes of this region are traditionally known to be not very loyal to the House of Saud. The local clerics are not part of the Wahhabi clerics’ establishment, which is strongly connected to the House of Saud (leading clerics are appointed by the

¹²⁷ Working Saudi citizens are mainly employed by the government (about 85%). Manual work or service-related labor is overwhelmingly done by foreign workers.

king). The local “second-line” clerics are known to be more fundamental and proclaim an even more pure form of Islam. Therefore, these are the clerics who most often critique the Saudi monarchs.

There is no common pattern in the social background of the 15 Saudis. The al-Shehri brothers came from a very rich and well-respected family. Ahmed al-Nami came from a middle-class family. Others, with tribe names of the Saudi southwestern region, probably came from poorer families.

However, coming from “normal” families, i.e.; those with no obvious connections to radical or dissident groups, the men blended easily into the stream of thousands of Saudi visa applicants who pass through the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh or the Jiddah consulate each year.

None of the 15 Saudis were known to have been long-term Islamic fundamentalists or even very religious. It was only within the year (or two) prior to the attacks, that they became religious, adopting the idea of militant Islam. They wanted to contribute to the Muslim cause and developed the desire to participate in *jihad*.

Many of the 15 Saudis had family relations with each other. Even more knew each other prior to becoming al-Qa’ida operatives, from praying in the same mosque (Seqeley mosque in Khamis Mushayt, or the mosque in Abha). At least eight of the hijackers (Ahmed al-Ghamdi, Hamza al-Ghamdi, Saeed al-Ghamdi, Ahmed al-Nami, Marwan al-Shehhi, Mohand al-Shehri Wail al-Shehri, and Waleed al-Shehri) had family ties, and/or had been friends with each other.

These initial contacts were the starting point which led to the spiral of events in which the group of young, bored, ambitionless, and unsuccessful Saudi youths found new goals and fulfillment in life. Through their newly-developed religious beliefs, they came into contact with militant Islamic clerics. This led to their being recruited for Islamic *jihad* in Chechnya, their departure to Afghanistan in order to acquire training for *jihad*, and finally to their selection for carrying out the 9/11 attacks. These developments occurred rapidly and resulted in separation from their families. This radicalization developed, in most cases, within a time frame of two years or less.

The young Saudis (with the exception of Khalid al-Mihdhar and Hani Hanjur) first became involved with al-Qa'ida only in the late 1990's. Most went to Afghanistan for the first time in 1999 or 2000. The CIA believes that they did not become involved in the 9/11 plot until late 2000.¹²⁸ It is further believed that al-Qa'ida leadership did not want them to know anything about the attacks earlier than necessary. They may not even have known the overall nature of the mission at all. They left only minimal traces in U.S. public records and seem, for the most part, to have arrived in the U.S. only a few months prior to the attacks.¹²⁹

Only two of them, Hani Hanjur (29) and Khalid al-Mihdhar (26), can be considered as core al-Qa'ida members and are suspected of having been planners of the operation. Hanjur was a presumed pilot of American Airlines' Flight 77. Khalid al-Mihdhar was a known al-Qa'ida operative, who had been involved in previous al-Qa'ida operations.

E. HOW WELL DO THE YOUNG SAUDIS MATCH THE CONCEPT OF THE ISLAMIC TERRORIST?

With the exception of Hani Hanjur and Khalid al-Mihdhar, the other Saudi hijackers were all short-term al-Qa'ida members and can be considered as the foot soldiers of the operation. As foot soldiers, they were responsible for carrying out the orders, but were not involved in the planning or provided with operational details. In fact, it is highly likely that they might not have even been aware of the intentions to deliberately crash the planes.

When we compare the characteristics of the 15 Saudis to those models of militant Islam and the Islamic terrorist (as described in chapter II), it becomes evident that although the 15 Saudis fit in some ways the model of an Islamic terrorist, they also deviate significantly in certain ways from that model.

For example, a theme which they had in common with Islamic terrorism was their desire to defend Islam from global modernization and secularism and

¹²⁸ Tenet, George J. (June 18, 2002). *Unclassified Version of Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet's Testimony before the Joint Inquiry into Terrorist Attacks Against the United States*. Retrieved December 5, 2002, from Central Intelligence Agency Web Site: http://www.cia.gov/cia/public_affairs/speeches/dci_testimony_06182002.html .

¹²⁹ Goldstein, A. (2001).

return to a society based only on religious grounds. They interpreted Islam in a fundamental way and became familiar with the idea of militant Islam. Ideologies like Sayyid Qutb's radical interpretation of Islam created a mindset that allowed them to reject all other laws except the law of God, and indoctrinated them to unconditionally accept "God's word". Therefore, it was easy for an Islamic terrorist organization like al-Qa'ida to manipulate these young men, who saw no problem with breaking the laws of others, since all that counted was that they obeyed the laws of God.

In addition, the 15 Saudis were similar to the general picture painted of other Islamic terrorists in their age and stage of life. They were young adults, not yet established in their careers or families.

The situation of the 15 Saudis differs from the "norm" of Islamic terrorism in the degree of access to Western education. That is, whereas the Islamic terrorist is generally one who has been educated in the West, this was not true for the 15 Saudis. Most Islamic terrorists become caught between the values gained from their secular Western education and traditional Islamic values. The 15 Saudis, on the other hand, were not educated in the West and had all been raised as Sunni Muslim and only shortly prior to the attacks developed a strong desire to return to the pure Islam. They were, in their personal lives, in situations of indifference, they lacked rewarding career opportunities and had not found a "mission" or goal in life. The Muslim cause seemed to be something worth dedicating to. They had known men, either through family ties or through friends, who fought for the Muslim cause; and this served to encourage the young Saudis to do the same. Once they became convinced that *jihad* meant a violent fight against the enemies of Islam, the wish to fight in Chechnya in order to liberate their Muslim brothers from infidel oppression was the next logical step.

From this point, the 15 Saudis shared additional characteristics with other Islamic terrorists in that they prepared for "their" *jihad* by finding the "true", "pure" Islam. They left behind their social environments and concentrated solely on becoming better Muslims. The second step in their preparation was a physical one; they went to Afghanistan in order to acquire the necessary skills for fighting

the liberation war in Chechnya. Here in Afghanistan, they joined training camps run by al-Qa'ida.

At this point, they became caught up in the machinery of al-Qa'ida and (as supported by the example of the recruitment of Mohammed Mansour Jabarah) were manipulated into fighting for al-Qa'ida's objectives instead of fighting for their own cause of contributing to the liberation of their Muslim brothers from Russian oppression in Chechnya. Although al-Qa'ida certainly supported the fight of Chechen Muslims against Russia, the 15 Saudis were tasked on a mission, which ideologically fitted Osama bin Laden's *fatwa* from 1998¹³⁰, in which he proclaimed that to kill Americans wherever there is a chance is every Muslim's duty. This certainly did not fit the original motives of the 15 Saudis to join militant Islam. Therefore, the 15 Saudis ended up as being political pawns for al-Qa'ida's objectives.

And finally, a last way in which the case of the 15 Saudis differs from the concept of Islamic terrorism is in the degree of dedication. Whereas most Islamic terrorists are fully aware of the potential consequences to their lives when they dedicate to *jihad*, there is good reason to think this may have not been the case for the 15 Saudis. Palestinian Hamas or Hezbollah suicide attackers often leave behind a video-taped statement on their intentions to sacrifice their lives in the name of Allah. This was not done by the 9/11 attackers (it should be noted however, that this does not necessarily prove that they were not aware of the suicidal nature of their missions, as it is also possible that videos were made but later covered up by al-Qa'ida operatives). It is certainly questionable, whether the Saudis possessed dedication over and beyond their commitments to *jihad*, whether or not they were indeed committed to sacrificing their lives in the name of Allah.

In summary, the first section of this chapter provided a profile on Osama bin Laden and an introduction into the workings of his terrorist network, al-Qa'ida. The picture presented is that of a man who came from a very wealthy family and, as a young adult, enjoyed many of the "sins" of Western societies. Later in life,

¹³⁰ Bin Laden, Osama (1998)

he became disenchanted with the continual presence of the West in the Middle East, and began to use Islamic fundamentalism as a tool for recruiting individuals willing to perform acts of terror to accomplish their goal of ridding the Middle East of all Western presences. The al-Qa'ida network grew out of this, and although the network had never been particularly successful in accomplishing their goal; on September 11, 2001, they carried out an attack of such atrocity that it got the attention of the entire world. The sequence of events that occurred on this fatal day was then described in the next section (Section B.). In Section C., a closer examination of each of the hijackers was conducted, with a profile listing available biographical data on each man. This was followed by an analysis of the data in which commonalities were identified (Section D.), which were then compared and contrasted to themes of Islamic terrorism (Section E.).

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IV. CONCLUSION

Although the case of the 15 Saudis shares common themes with the concept of Islamic terrorism (as discussed in Chapters II and III); the young Saudis do not fit all of the characteristics of an Islamic suicide terrorist. Like many other Islamic terrorists, they all committed themselves to *jihad* and wanted to fight for the Muslim cause in Chechnya. However, after being recruited by al-Qa'ida, they unknowingly became martyrs for a completely different cause. Most of them were too young and inexperienced, too instable, and too lacking in self confidence to counteract the process by which their religious ideals were transformed into militancy. The majority (except Khalid al-Mihdhar and Hani Hanjur) cannot be considered as having been hard-line, ideological, steadfast al-Qa'ida members, but rather as young Muslims, who had recently found the path of pure Islam and who were caught and drawn into militant Islam in order to function as the so called "muscle" of terror acts. In short, they were political pawns for al-Qa'ida's objectives.

There were a few pragmatic considerations that were likely taken into consideration by al-Qa'ida when they decided to focus on the recruitment of Saudis for the 9/11 attacks. First of all, since the mission would require traveling between the Middle East and the U.S, it made sense to select Saudis. That is, it is not uncommon for wealthy Saudis to travel to the U.S. (often on shopping sprees) and therefore, Saudis who travel are considered less suspicious than citizens from most of the other Middle Eastern states. Secondly, the fact that the southwestern region of Saudi Arabia is poor, remote and close to Yemen makes it a spot in which it is easy to recruit.

Besides these pragmatic considerations, it is also likely that al-Qa'ida had even more sinister secondary motives when they selectively chose Saudis to carry out their acts. One possible motive is that they wished to increase the internal tensions inside Saudi Arabia. The tribes of the poor Saudi Southwest near the Yemeni border are traditionally critical over the House of Saud. Therefore, the selection of recruits from these particular tribes from this region

would be likely to spur up additional opposition to the monarchs, help to raise internal tensions, and ultimately rid the al Saud monarchs.

In addition to punishing the U.S. for her policy towards the Middle East, a second motive behind the 9/11 attacks is likely to have been to drive a wedge between the U.S.-Saudi relations. Al-Qa'ida probably had calculated that the selection of Saudi citizens as hijackers would lead to U.S. suspicion that Saudi Arabia is a breeding ground for terrorists and therefore, damage the U.S. – Saudi relations. Already long before September 11, 2001, there had been several sources of friction which troubled the U.S.-Saudi relation. The U.S. was concerned over the lack of political and civil rights, religious freedom, and transparency in the Saudi justice system; as well as her self-interested dictation of oil prizes, the inadequate position towards Taliban, her attempts to procure WMD, and the widespread and governmental-supported anti-Semitism. These points of critique were all tolerated since Saudi Arabia proved to be a reliable ally during the first Gulf War in 1991. If this was one of the goals of the 9/11 attacks, then it should be noted that al Qa'ida was indeed partially successful. Since the attack, there have been strong critiques of Saudi Arabia's cooperation and discussions about Saudi Arabia's reliability as an ally in the war on terrorism¹³¹. There is no doubt that the 15-out-of-19-fact has stressed U.S. tolerance and caused increased tensions in the relations with Saudi Arabia. After the recent Riyadh bombings in May 2003,¹³² the discussion about Saudi Arabia's credibility was stirred up once again.

However, the evidence provided in this paper, which has been derived from a closer examination into the backgrounds of the Saudi hijackers, does not support the theory that Saudi Arabia is a breeding ground for terrorists. In fact, it can even be argued that it contradicts this thesis. That is, each of the Saudi hijackers left his social environment and entered an environment of militant Islam only once he was outside of Saudi society, and most of the men were even

¹³¹ A further example can be found in the testimonies before the House International Relations Committee, May 22, 2002.

¹³² On May 12, 2003, Islamic terrorists stormed a living compound for foreigners in Riyadh, causing the deaths of 34 people, including 7 Saudis, 8 Americans and 19 other foreigners.

further indoctrinated outside of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's society is a religiously homogeneous society (100% of Saudi citizens are Muslim) and the Wahhabi branch of Islam dominates the society. Since the Wahhabi sect, on the spectrum of all branches of Islam, promotes a very pure, and in a way, extreme form of Islam, this certainly facilitates the recruitment of young men for militant Islam, but does not necessarily promote militant Islam. Islamic terrorist organizations do have a broad range of immature believers to choose from for their operatives and the strong beliefs of the immature believers can be exploited to serve the terrorists' cause. But it is not the society itself which should be blamed for creating the terrorist or for promoting Islamic terrorism.

The 15 Saudis which committed the atrocious acts of 9/11 had been essentially caught up in a machinery, one which exploited their willingness to participate in *jihad* in order to support the liberation of their fellow Muslims in Chechnya. These men who were committed to *jihad* were exploited for the accomplishment of al-Qa'ida's political objectives.

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