The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus
In-depth critical analysis of the forces shaping the Asia-Pacific...and the world.

Launching the U.S. Terror War: the CIA, 9/11, Afghanistan, and Central Asia[1] Spanish translation available; French translation available; Portuguese translation available; Italian translation available; Russian translation available; German translation available.

Peter Dale Scott

The engineering of a series of provocations to justify military intervention is feasible and could be accomplished with the resources available. - Report of May 1963 to Joint Chiefs of Staff[1]

Bush's Terror War and the Fixing of Intelligence

On September 11, 2001, within hours of the murderous 9/11 attacks, Bush, Rumsfeld, and Cheney had committed America to what they later called the "War on Terror." It should more properly, I believe, be called the "Terror War," one in which terror has been directed repeatedly against civilians by all participants, both states and non-state actors. It should also be seen as part of a larger, indeed global, process in which terror has been used against civilians in interrelated campaigns by all major powers, including China in Xinjiang and Russia in Chechnya, as well as the United States.[2] Terror war in its global context should perhaps be seen as the latest stage of the age-long secular spread of transurban civilization into areas of mostly rural resistance -- areas where conventional forms of warfare, for either geographic or cultural reasons, prove inconclusive.

Terror War was formally declared by George W. Bush on the evening of September 11, 2001, with his statement to the American nation that "we will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them."[3] But the notion that Bush's terror war was in pursuit of actual terrorists lost credibility in 2003, when it was applied to Saddam Hussein's Iraq, a country known to have been targeted by terrorists but not to have harbored them.[4] It lost still more credibility with the 2005 publication in Britain of the so-called Downing Street memo, in which the head of the British intelligence service MI6 reported after a visit to Washington in 2002 that "Bush wanted to remove Saddam Hussein, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the *intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy*."[5] False stories followed in due course linking Iraq to WMD, anthrax, and Niger yellowcake (uranium).

This essay will demonstrate that before 9/11 a small element inside the CIA's Bin Laden Unit and related agencies, the so-called Alec Station Group, were also busy, "fixing" intelligence by suppressing it, in a way which, accidentally or deliberately, enabled the Terror War. They did so by withholding evidence from the FBI before 9/11 about two of the eventual alleged hijackers on 9/11, Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, thus ensuring that the FBI could not surveil the two men or their colleagues.

This failure to share was recognized in the 9/11 Commission Report, but treated as an accident that might not have occurred "if more resources had been applied."[6] This explanation, however, has since been refuted by 9/11 Commission Chairman Tom Kean. Asked recently by two filmmakers if the failure to deal appropriately with al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi could have been a simple mistake, Kean replied:

> Oh, it wasn't careless oversight. It was purposeful. No question about that .... The conclusion that we came to was that in the DNA of these organizations was secrecy. And secrecy to the point of ya don't share it with anybody.[7]

In 2011 an important book by Kevin Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, demonstrated conclusively that the withholding was purposive, and sustained over a period of eighteen months.[8] This interference and manipulation became particularly blatant and controversial in the days before 9/11; it led one FBI agent, Steve Bongardt, to predict accurately on August 29, less than two weeks before 9/11, that "someday someone will die."[9]

As will be seen, the motives for this withholding remain inscrutable. At one time I was satisfied with Lawrence Wright's speculations that the CIA may have wanted to recruit the two Saudis; and that "The CIA may also have been protecting an overseas operation [possibly in conjunction with Saudi Arabia] and was afraid that the F.B.I. would expose it."[10] The purpose of this essay is to suggest that the motives for the withholding may have had to do with the much larger neocon objective being imposed on American foreign policy at this same time: the consolidation of U.S. global hegemony by the establishment of U.S. forward-based bases around the oil fields of Central Asia.

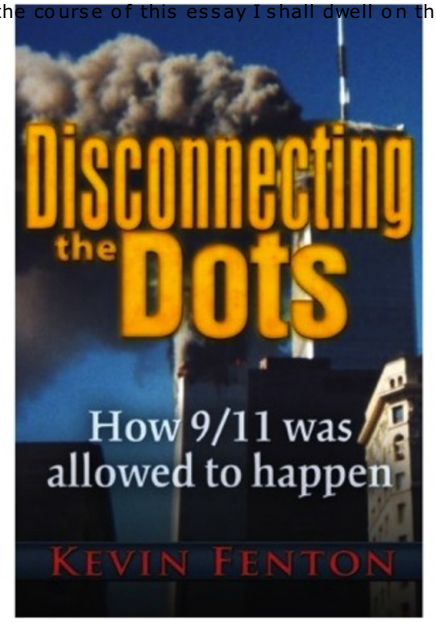
In short, the withholding of evidence should be seen as part of the larger ominous pattern of the time, including the malperformance of the U.S. government (USG) in response to the 9/11 attacks, and the murderous anthrax letters which helped secure the passage of the Patriot Act.

I am now persuaded by Fenton that Lawrence Wright's explanation, that the CIA was protecting a covert operation, may explain the beginnings of the withholding in January 2000, but cannot explain its renewal in the days just before 9/11. Fenton analyzes a list of thirty-five different occasions where the two alleged hijackers were protected in this fashion, from January 2000 to about September 5, 2001, less than a week before the hijackings.[11] We shall see that in his analysis, the incidents fall into two main groups. The motive he attributes to the earlier ones, was "to cover a CIA operation that was already in progress."[12] However after "the system was blinking red" in the summer of 2001, and the CIA expected an imminent attack, Fenton can see no other explanation than that "the purpose of withholding the information had become to allow the attacks to go forward."[13]

Fenton's second sentence would imply that a homicidal crime was committed by members of the Alec Station group, even if the crime was one of manslaughter (unintended homicide) rather than deliberate and premeditated murder. One can imagine benign reasons for withholding the information: for example, the CIA may have been tolerating the behavior of the two Saudis in order to track down their associates. In this case, we would be dealing with no more than a miscalculation – albeit a homicidal miscalculation.

The Terror War and the Rumsfeld-Cheney-Wolfowitz Project of Global Dominion

But in the course of this essay I shall dwell on the activities of the head of the CIA's Bin Laden Unit, Richard Blee, in Uzbekistan as well as Afghanistan. Uzbekistan was an area of concern not only to Blee and his superior Cofer Black; it was also in an area of major interest to Richard Cheney, whose corporation Halliburton had been active since 1997 or earlier in developing the petroleum reserves of Central Asia. Cheney himself said in a speech to oil industrialists in 1998, "I cannot think of a time when we have had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant as the Caspian."[14]



I shall suggest that the purpose as well as the result of protecting the two Saudis may have been to fulfill the objectives of Cheney, Rumsfeld, and the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) neocon group for establishing "forward-based forces" in Central Asia.[15] We shall see that a phone call on 9/11 from CIA Director Tenet to Stephen Cambone, a key PNAC figure in the Pentagon, apparently transmitted some of the privileged information that never reached the FBI.

This neocon agenda was partially to maintain American and Israeli domination of the region for security purposes, and (as we shall see) to create the conditions for future unilateral preemptive actions against unfriendly states like Iraq. In particular it was designed to establish new secure bases in the Middle East, anticipating Donald Rumsfeld's predictable announcement in 2003 that the U.S. would pull "virtually all of its troops, except some training personnel," out of Saudi Arabia.[16] But it was partly also to strengthen American influence in particular over the newly liberated states of Central Asia, with their sizable unproven oil and gas reserves.

Fenton's alarming conclusion about CIA actions leading up to the 9/11 attacks makes more sense in the context of this agenda, and also in the context of three other revealing anomalies about Bush's Terror War. The first is the paradox that this supposed pursuit of al Qaeda was conducted in alliance with the two nations, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, that were most actively *supporting* al Qaeda in other parts of the world. In this essay we shall see U.S. and Saudi intelligence cooperating in such a way as to *protect*, rather than neutralize, Saudi agents in al Qaeda.

The second anomaly is that although the CIA may have been focused on crushing al Qaeda, Rumsfeld and Cheney were intent from the outset on a much wider war. In September 2001 there was no intelligence on 9/11 linking the attacks to Iraq, yet Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, supported by his deputy Paul Wolfowitz, was already observing on September 12 "that there were no decent targets for bombing in Afghanistan and that we should consider bombing Iraq, which, he said, had better targets."[17] Rumsfeld's argument was supported by a Defense Department paper prepared for the ensuing Camp David meetings of September 15-16, which "proposed that 'the immediate priority targets for initial action' should be al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Iraq."[18]

Iraq had been a target for Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz since at least 1998, when the two men co-signed a PNAC letter to President Clinton, calling for "the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power."[19] But Iraq was not the only target in the Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz agenda, which since at least 1992 had been nothing less than global U.S. dominance, or what former U.S. Colonel Andrew Bacevich called "permanent American global hegemony."[20] It was a high priority for the neocons. Even before Bush had been elected by the Supreme Court in December 2000, Cheney was at work securing key posts for the 1998 letter's cosigners (including Richard Armitage, John Bolton, Richard Perle, along with other PNAC personnel like Stephen Cambone) in the White House, State, and Defense.

The terror war from its outset was designed as an instrument to implement this objective. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice on September 24 "raised the issue of state sponsorship of terrorism: 'What is our strategy with respect to countries that support terrorism like Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Sudan?'"[21] In his memoir, General Wesley Clark reports that the question had evolved by November into a Pentagon five-year plan:

> As I went back through the Pentagon in November 2001, one of the senior military staff officers had time for a chat. Yes, we were still on track for going against Iraq, he said. But there was more. This was being discussed as part of a five-year campaign plan, he said, and there were a total of seven countries, beginning with Iraq, then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia and Sudan.[22]

At about this time, former CIA officer Reuel Marc Gerecht published an article in *The Weekly Standard* about the need for a change of regime in Iran and Syria.[23] (Gerecht continues to warn in *The Weekly Standard* about the menace of both nations today.)

In the Clinton era Gerecht, like Cheney and Rumsfeld, had been part of the Project for the New American Century, a hawkish group calling both for action against Iraq in particular and also more generally for an expanded defense budget that would "increase defense spending significantly" in "the cause of American leadership." The PNAC report of September 2000 – *Rebuilding America's Defenses* had much to say about Gulf oil and the importance of retaining and strengthening "forward-based forces in the region."[24]

It is relevant that by the end of 2001, in the wake of 9/11 and the Terror War, the United States had already established new bases in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, and was thus better positioned to influence the behavior of the newly liberated governments in the huge oil and gas region east of the Caspian. In the course of this essay we shall see that the 2001 agreement to use the first and one of the most important of these bases, Karshi-Khanabad or K-2 in Uzbekistan, grew out of an earlier Pentagon arrangement, supplemented by a CIA liaison agreement negotiated in 1999 by Richard Blee of the Alec Station Group, a central figure in this essay. Most Americans are unaware that on 9/11 U.S. Special Forces were already at K-2 on an Uzbek training mission, and that by September 22, two weeks before a formal U.S.-Uzbek military agreement, "the CIA was already flying its teams into the massive Karshi-Khanabad, or K2, air base in southern Uzbekistan, where U.S. army engineers were repairing the runway."[25]

A third anomaly is that the Terror War led to a dramatic increase in the resort to terror, and even torture, by America itself, including against its own citizens. In this context it is relevant that Cheney and Rumsfeld, through their participation in the Defense Department's super-secret Doomsday Project, had also been part of Continuity of Government (COG) planning for undermining the U.S. Bill of Rights by the warrantless surveillance and detention of dissenters.[26] These plans, dating back to the fear of Communists in the McCarthyite 1950s, have been the underpinnings for the elaborate plans in the Pentagon and elsewhere for dealing with antiwar protests against the Pentagon's plans for global domination.

Map showing US bases including Karshi-Khanabad

As I have argued elsewhere, the U.S. is now spending billions every year on Homeland Security in no small part because of the belief, articulated by Marine Colonel Oliver North, that the Vietnam War was lost in the streets of America, and that this deterrent to U.S. military operations needed to be dealt with.[27] Cheney and Rumsfeld, as part of the so-called Doomsday Project for Continuity of Government (COG) planning, had been part of this effort also.[28] In short, 9/11 fulfilled agendas long contemplated by a small group of officials for radical new policies both in Central Asia and also inside America.

The homicidal crime suggested by Fenton's meticulous research is one both difficult and painful to contemplate. America is in a crisis today because of the activities of the Banks Too Big to Fail, which, as has been pointed out, were also Banks Too Big to Jail – for to punish them as criminals would endanger America's already threatened financial structure.[29] This essay, though detailed, is dealing with something analogous, what may have been a Crime Too Big to Punish.

9/11, as will be developed in this essay, has other points in common with the John F. Kennedy assassination.

The Cover-Up of 9/11 and of the CIA's Role in Letting It Happen

After ten years it is important to reassess what we know and do not know about the events that culminated in 9/11, particularly the actions of the CIA and the FBI and the denial of critical information to the 9/11 Commission.

Today, we can confidently say:

1) the most important truths still remain unknown, in large part because many of the most important documents are still either unreleased or heavily redacted;
2) the efforts at cover-up continue, if anything more aggressively than before;
3) In addition to the cover-up, there has been what former 9/11 Commission staffer John Farmer has called either "unprecedented administrative incompetence or organized mendacity" on the part of key figures in Washington.[30] These figures include President Bush, Vice-President Cheney, NORAD General Richard Myers, and CIA Director George Tenet. They include also President Clinton's National Security Advisor, Samuel Berger, who prior to testifying on these matters, went to the National Archives and removed, and presumably destroyed, key relevant documentation.[31] In his book, Farmer has in effect endorsed both of these alternatives.

President Bush awarding National Medal of Honor to George Tenet, Dec. 14, 200

Farmer's first alternative, of "unprecedented administrative incompetence," is in effect the explanation offered by the 9/11 Commission Report, to deal with a) striking anomalies both on 9/11 itself, and b) the preceding twenty months during which important information was withheld from the FBI by key personnel in the CIA's Bin Laden Unit (the so-called Alec Station). But thanks to the groundbreaking new book by Kevin Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, we can no longer attribute the anomalous CIA behavior to "systemic problems," or what Tony Summers rashly calls "bureaucratic confusion."[32]

Building on earlier important books by James Bamford, Lawrence Wright, Peter Lance, and Philip Shenon, Fenton demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt that there was a systematic CIA pattern of withholding important information from the FBI, even when the FBI would normally be entitled to it. Even more brilliantly, he shows that the withholding pattern has been systematically sustained through four successive post-9/11 investigations: those of the Congressional Inquiry chaired by Senators Bob Graham and Richard Shelby (still partly withheld), the 9/11 Commission, the Department of Justice inspector general, and the CIA inspector general.

Most importantly of all, he shows that the numerous withholdings, both pre- and post 9/11, were the work of relatively few people. The withholding of information from the FBI was principally the work of the so-called "Alec Station group" – a group within but not identical with the CIA's Osama Bin Laden Unit or "Alec Station," consisting largely of CIA personnel, though including a few FBI as well. Key figures in this group were CIA officer Tom Wilshire (discussed in the 9/11 Commission Report as "John"), and his immediate superior at Alec Station, Richard Blee.

The post-9/11 cover-up of Wilshire's behavior was principally the work of one person, Barbara Grewe, who worked first on the Justice Department Inspector General's investigation of Wilshire's behavior, then was transferred to two successive positions with the 9/11 Commission's staff, where, under the leadership of Executive Director Philip Zelikow, she was able to transfer the focus of investigative attention from the performance of the CIA to that of the FBI.[33] Whether or not Grewe conducted the interviews of Wilshire and other relevant personnel, she "certainly drew on them when drafting her sections of the Commission's and Justice Department inspector general's reports."[34]

Grewe's repositioning from post to post is a sign of an intended cover-up at a higher level. So, as we shall see, is Wilshire's transfer in May 2001 from CIA's Alec Station (the Osama Bin Laden Unit) to the FBI, where he began a new phase of interference with the normal flow of intelligence, obstructing the FBI from within it.[35]

The pattern begins with intelligence obtained from surveillance of an important al Qaeda summit meeting of January 2000 in

Malaysia, perhaps the only such summit before 9/11. The meeting drew instant and high-level US attention because of indirect links to a support element (a key telephone in Yemen used by al Qaeda) suspected of acting as a communications center in the 1998 bombings of US Embassies. As Fenton notes, "The CIA realized that the summit was so important that information about it was briefed to CIA and FBI leaders [Louis Freeh and Dale Watson], National Security Adviser Samuel Berger and other top officials."[36]

Yet inside Alec Station Tom Wilshire and his CIA subordinate (known only as "Michelle") [37] blocked the effort of an FBI agent detailed there (Doug Miller) to notify the FBI that one of the participants (Khalid al-Mihdhar) had a US visa in his passport.[38] Worse, Michelle then sent a cable to other CIA stations falsely stating that al-Mihdhar's "travel documents, including a multiple entry US visa, had been copied and passed 'to the FBI for further investigation.'"[39] Alec Station also failed to watchlist the participants in the meeting, as was called for by CIA guidelines.[40]

This was just the beginning of a systematic, sometimes lying pattern, where NSA and CIA information about al-Mihdhar and his traveling companion, Nawaf al-Hazmi, was systematically withheld from the FBI, lied about, or manipulated or distorted in such a way as to inhibit an FBI investigation of the two Saudis and their associates. This is a major component of the 9/11 story; because the behavior of these two would-be hijackers was so unprofessional that, without this CIA protection provided by the Alec Station Group, they would almost certainly have been detected and detained or deported, long before they prepared to board Flight 77 in Washington.[41]

Fenton concludes with a list of thirty-five different occasions where the two alleged hijackers were protected in this fashion, from January 2000 to about September 5, 2001, less than a week before the hijackings. In his analysis, the incidents fall into two main groups. The motive he attributes to the earlier ones, such as the blocking of Doug Miller's cable, was "to cover a CIA operation that was already in progress."[43] However after "the system was blinking red" in the summer of 2001, and the CIA expected an imminent attack, Fenton can see no other plausible explanation than that "the purpose of withholding the information had become to allow the attacks to go forward."[44]

Wilshire's pattern of interference changed markedly after his move to the Bureau. When in CIA he had moved to block transmittal of intelligence to the FBI. Now, in contrast, he initiated FBI reviews of the same material, but in such a way that the reviews were conducted in too leisurely a fashion to bear fruit before 9/11. Fenton suspects that Wilshire anticipated a future review of his files; and was laying a false trail of documentation to neutralize his embarrassing earlier performance.[45]

I believe we must now accept Fenton's finding of fact: "It is clear that this information was not withheld through a series of bizarre accidents, but intentionally."[46] However, I suggest a different explanation as to what those intentions originally were, one which is superficially much simpler, more benign, and also more explicative of other parts, apparently unrelated, of the 9/11 mystery.

The Liaison Agreements with Other Intelligence Agencies

Initially, I believe, al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi may have been protected because they had been sent to America by the Saudi GID intelligence service, which would explain why after their arrival they were apparently bankrolled indirectly by the Saudi embassy in Washington. The facts are well summarized by Paul Church in Asia Times Online (February 11, 2012):

> [B]etween 1998 and 2002, up to US$73,000 in cashier cheques was funneled by [Saudi Ambassador Prince] Bandar's wife Haifa - who once described the elder Bushes as like "my mother and father" - to two Californian families known to have bankrolled al-Midhar and al-Hazmi. … Princess Haifa sent regular monthly payments of between $2,000 and $3,500 to Majeda Dweikat, wife of Osama Basnan, believed by various investigators to be a spy for the Saudi government. Many of the cheques were signed over to Manal Bajadr, wife of Omar al-Bayoumi, himself suspected of covertly working for the kingdom. The Basnans, the al-Bayoumis and the two 9/11 hijackers once shared the same apartment block in San Diego. It was al-Bayoumi who greeted the killers when they first arrived in America, and provided them, among other assistance, with an apartment and social security cards. He even helped the men enroll at flight schools in Florida."[47]

If the two Saudis were in fact sent by the GID, they would almost certainly have been admitted to the U.S. under the terms of the liaison agreement between the GID and the CIA.[48] Prince Turki al-Faisal, former head of the GID, has said that he shared his al Qaeda information with the CIA, and that in 1997 the Saudis "established a joint intelligence committee with the United States to share information on terrorism in general and on…al Qaeda in particular."[49] The 9/11 Commission Report adds that after a post-millennium review, the Counterterrorism Center (which included Alec Station, the Bin Laden Unit) intended to proceed with its plan of half a year earlier, "building up the capabilities of foreign security services that provided intelligence via liaison."[50]

This was a Blee specialty. Steve Coll reports that Richard Blee and his superior Cofer Black, excited about the opportunities presented by liaison arrangements for expanding the scope of CIA reach in critical regions, had flown together into Tashkent in 1999, and negotiated a new liaison agreement with Uzbekistan.[51] According to Coll and the Washington Post, this arrangement soon led, via Tashkent, to a CIA liaison inside Afghanistan with the Northern Alliance.[52] Thomas Ricks and Susan Glasser reported in the Washington Post that, beginning after the embassy bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi in 1998, "The United States and Uzbekistan have quietly conducted joint covert operations aimed at countering Afghanistan's ruling Taliban regime and its terrorist allies …, according to officials from both nations."[53]

This involvement in Uzbekistan was part of a wider regional pattern. Beginning in 1997, the U.S. had begun a series of annual military maneuvers with Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek forces, as exercises for possible deployment of combat U.S. forces in the region.

> CENTRAZBAT '97, as it was known, was clearly a test of America's ability to project power into the Caspian basin in the event of a crisis. "There is no nation on the face of the earth that we cannot get to," said General Jack Sheehan…the highest-ranking officer to attend the exercise. And, lest anyone doubted the nature of our interests in the region, a deputy assistant secretary of defense accompanying Sheehan, Catherine Kelleher, cited "the presence of enormous energy resources" as a justification for American military involvement. The 1997 operation was the first in an annual series CENTRAZBAT exercises designed to test the speed with which Washington could deploy U.S.-based forces directly to the region and commence combat operations.[107]

In other words, the Pentagon had been active in Uzbekistan for four years before the public Rumsfeld-Karimov agreement of October 2001.

Speaking as a former junior diplomat, let me observe that a liaison arrangement would probably have required special access

clearances for those privy to the arrangement and sharing the liaison information.[54] This would explain the exclusion of the FBI agents who were not cleared for this information, as well as the behavior of other non-cleared CIA agents who proceeded to collect and disseminate information about the two alleged hijackers. Alec Station needed both to protect the double identity of the two Saudis, and to make sure that they were not embarrassingly detained by the FBI.

Almost certainly the CIA had relevant liaison arrangements, not just with the Saudi GID and Uzbekistan, but also with the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan, as well as the intelligence services of Egypt, and perhaps Yemen and Morocco. In particular there is reason to think that Ali Mohamed, a double agent who was protected by the FBI from being detained in Canada, thus allowing him to help organize the al Qaeda embassy bombings of 1998, was permitted under such arrangements to enter the US as an agent of foreign intelligence, probably Egyptian.[55] Ali Mohamed figures both in the content and as source of the President's Daily Brief (PDB) of August 6, 2001, in which the CIA warned the president, "Bin Ladin Determined to Strike in US."[56] According to Mohamed's FBI handler, Jack Cloonan, "all that information came from Ali," while the PDB itself attributes its key finding to what "an Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) operative told an [---] service."[57] (Ali Mohamed was definitely EIJ, and this service was probably Egyptian.)

Ali Mohamed

But when Mohamed, like al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi, was inappropriately admitted to the US, it was reportedly not by the CIA, but possibly by "some other Federal agency."[58] This was very possibly a Pentagon agency, because from 1987 to 1989, Ali Mohamed "was assigned to the U.S. [Army] Special Operations Command [SOCOM] in Fort Bragg, the home of the Green Berets and the Delta Force, the elite counterterrorism squad."[59] SOCOM, which includes JSOC (the Joint Special Operations Command), has its own intelligence division;[60] and SOCOM is the command that first mounted the Able Danger program in 1999 to track al Qaeda operatives, and then, inexplicably, both shut it down before 9/11 and destroyed its database.[61] In addition SOCOM was working in Uzbekistan with CIA operatives as a result of the liaison agreement negotiated by Cofer Black and Richard Blee of the CTC.

Cofer Black

For this and other reasons, I suggest reconceptualizing what Fenton calls the anomalous "Alec Station group" as an inter-agency liaison team (or teams) with special access clearances, including Alec Station personnel, collaborating personnel in the FBI, and possibly SOCOM. (One of these collaborators was FBI agent Dina Corsi, who according to Fenton withheld vital information from fellow agent Steve Bongardt even after the NSA had cleared it for him.)[62]

Background: the Safari Club and William Casey

These arrangements can be traced in one form or another, at least back to the 1970s. Then senior CIA officers and ex-officers (notably Richard Helms), who were dissatisfied with the CIA cutbacks instituted under Jimmy Carter's CIA director, Stansfield Turner, organized an alternative network, the so-called Safari Club. Subordinated to intelligence chiefs from France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and (under the Shah) Iran, the Safari Club provided a home to CIA officers like Theodore Shackley and Thomas Clines, who had been marginalized or fired by CIA Director Turner. As Prince Turki later explained, the purpose of the Safari Club was not just to exchange information, but to conduct covert operations that the CIA could no longer carry out directly in the wake of the Watergate scandal and subsequent reforms.[63]

In the 1980s, CIA Director William Casey made key decisions in the conduct of the Afghan covert war, not through his own CIA bureaucracy but with the Saudi intelligence chiefs, first Kamal Adham and then Prince Turki. Among these decisions was the creation of a foreign legion to assist the Afghan mujahideen in their war against the Soviets – in other words, the creation of that support network which, since the end of that war, we have known as al Qaeda.[64] Casey worked out the details with the two Saudi intelligence chiefs, and also with the head of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), the Saudi-Pakistani bank in which Adham and Turki were both shareholders.

In so doing, Casey was in effect running a second or back-channel CIA, building up the future al Qaeda in Pakistan with the Saudis, even though the official CIA hierarchy underneath him in Langley rightly "thought this unwise."[65] In *American War Machine*, I situated the Safari Club and BCCI in a succession of "second CIA" or "alternative CIA" arrangements dating back to the creation of the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) in 1948. Thus it is relevant that CIA Director George Tenet, following Casey's precedent, met with Saudi Ambassador Bandar around once a month, and would not tell CIA officers handling Saudi issues what he had discussed.[66]

Fenton himself invokes the example of the Safari Club in proposing the possible explanation that Blee and Wilshire used a "parallel network" to track al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi inside the United States. In his words, "Withholding the information about Almihdhar and Alhazmi only makes sense if the CIA was monitoring the two men in the US itself, either officially or off the books."[67] But a third option would be that the GID was monitoring their movements, a situation quite compatible with Saudi Prince Bandar's claim that Saudi security had been "actively following the movements of most of the terrorists with precision."[68]

Joseph and Susan Trento heard from a former CIA officer, once based in Saudi Arabia, that "Both Hazmi and Mihdhar were Saudi agents."[69] If so, they were clearly double agents, acting (or posing) as terrorists at the same time they were acting (or posing) as informants. In espionage, double agents are prized and often valuable; but to rely on them (as the example of Ali Mohamed illustrates) can also be dangerous.

This was particularly the case for the CIA with respect to Saudi Arabia, whose GID supported al Qaeda energetically in countries like Bosnia, in exchange for a pledge (negotiated by Saudi Interior Minister Naif bin Abdul Aziz with Osama bin Laden) that al Qaeda "would not interfere with the politics of Saudi Arabia or any Arab country."[70] Pakistan's ISI was even more actively engaged with al Qaeda, and some elements of ISI were probably closer to the ideological goals of al Qaeda, than to Pakistan's nominally secular government.

But in all cases the handling of illegal informants is not just dangerous and unpredictable, but corrupting. To act their parts, the informants must break the law; and their handlers, knowing this, must protect them by failing to report them, and then, all too often, intercede to prevent their arrest by others. In this way, handlers, over and over again, become complicit in the crimes of their informants.[71]

Even in the best of circumstances, decisions have to be made whether to allow an informant's crime to go forward, or to thwart it and risk terminating the usefulness of the informant. In such moments, agencies are all too likely to make the choice that is not in the public interest.

A very relevant example is the first World Trade Center bombing of 1993 – relevant because Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged mastermind of 9/11, was one of the 1993 plotters as well. The FBI had an informant, Emad Salem, among the 1993 plotters; and Salem later claimed, with supporting evidence from tapes of his FBI debriefings, that the FBI deliberately chose not to shut down the plot. Here is Ralph Blumenthal's careful account in the *New York Times* of this precursor to the mystery of 9/11:

> Law-enforcement officials [i.e. the FBI] were told that terrorists were building a bomb that was eventually used to blow up the World Trade Center, and they planned to thwart the plotters by secretly substituting harmless powder for the explosives, an informer said after the blast.
>
> The informer was to have helped the plotters build the bomb and supply the fake powder, but the plan was called off by an *F.B.I. supervisor who had other ideas about how the informer, Emad A. Salem, should be used*, the informer said.
>
> The account, which is given in the transcript of hundreds of hours of tape recordings Mr. Salem secretly made of his talks with law-enforcement agents, portrays the authorities as in a far better position than previously known to foil the Feb. 26 bombing of New York City's tallest towers. The explosion left six people dead, more than 1,000 injured and damages in excess of half a billion dollars. Four men are now on trial in Manhattan Federal Court in that attack.[72]

What makes the 1993 plot even more relevant is that Salem, according to many sources, was an agent of the Egyptian intelligence service, sent to America to spy on the actions of the Egyptian "Blind Sheikh" Omar Abdel Rahman.[73] This raises the possibility that the F.B.I. supervisor who had "other ideas" about how to use Emad Salem, was a member of a liaison team, with special knowledge he could not share with other FBI agents. It may have been, for example, that the Egyptian intelligence service declined to let Salem's cover be blown. This suggestion is both speculative and problematic, but it has the advantage of offering a relatively coherent explanation for otherwise baffling behavior.

This explanation does not at all rule out the possibility that some officials had more sinister motives for allowing the bombing to take place and covering it up afterwards. Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman was at this very time a key figure in a sensitive Saudi program, signed on to by U.S. officials as well, to supply mujahideen warriors in Bosnia against Serbia (including some, like Ayman al-Zawahiri, who were later accused of the 9/11 plot).[74] It is clear from both investigative and prosecutorial behavior that a number of different US agencies did not want to disturb Rahman's activities. Even after Rahman himself was finally indicted in the 1995 conspiracy case to blow up New York landmarks, the US Government continued to protect Ali Mohamed, a key figure in the conspiracy.

Worse, the performance of the FBI in allowing the bombing to proceed was only one of a series of interrelated bungled performances and missed opportunities, climaxing with 9/11. The first was in connection with the murder in New York of the Jewish extremist Meir Kahane. The FBI and NY police actually detained two of the murderers in that case and then released them, allowing them to take part in the WTC bombing of 1993. A key trainer of the two men was Ali Mohamed while still in U.S. Special Forces, whose name was systematically protected from disclosure by the prosecuting attorney, Patrick Fitzgerald. Then in 1994, when Ali Mohamed was detained in Vancouver by the Canadian RCMP, the FBI intervened to arrange for his release. This freed Mohamed to proceed to Kenya, where he became the lead organizer of the 1998 US Embassy bombing in Nairobi.[75]

Ali Mohamed was finally detained by the Americans in 1998, but still not imprisoned. He was apparently still a free man when he readily confessed to his FBI handler, Jack Cloonan, that he not only knew at least three of the 9/11 alleged hijackers, but had helped instruct them in how to hijack airplanes.[76] According to Ali Soufan, in a book released in September 2011, Ali Mohamed was still awaiting sentencing in 2011, twelve years after his guilty plea in May 1999.[77]

We have to conclude that there is something profoundly dysfunctional going on here, and has been going on since before 9/11, indeed under both political parties. The conditions of secrecy created by special clearances have not just masked this dysfunctionality; they have, I would argue, helped create it. The history of espionage demonstrates that secret power, when operating in the sphere of illegal activities, becomes, time after time, antithetical to public democratic power.[78] The more restricted the group of special planners with special clearances, the less likely are their decisions to conform with the dictates of international and domestic law, still less with common morality and common sense.

Add to these conditions of unwholesome secrecy the fundamentally unhealthy, indeed corrupt, relationship of U.S. intelligence agencies to those of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. This has been profoundly anti-democratic both at home and in Asia. The US

dependency on Saudi oil has in effect subsidized a wealth-generated spread of Islamic fundamentalism throughout the world, while what the 99.9 percent of ordinary Americans pay for oil and gas generates huge sums, which Saudis then recycle into the financial institutions of the one tenth of one percent at the pinnacle of Wall Street.

In like manner, America's fraught relationship with the ISI of Pakistan has resulted in a dramatic increase in international heroin trafficking by the two agencies' Afghan clients.[79] In short the bureaucratic dysfunction we are talking about in 9/11 is a symptom of a larger dysfunction in America's relationship with Saudi Arabia, with Pakistan, and through them with the rest of the world.

Liaison Agreements and the Protection of Al-Mihdhar and Al-Hazmi

Even without the suggestive precedent of the 1993 WTC bombing, it is legitimate to posit that liaison agreements may have inhibited the roundup of Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi. Let us consider first Fenton's finding of fact: "It is clear that this information [about the two men] was not withheld through a series of bizarre accidents, but intentionally."[80] This finding I consider rock hard. But we cannot be so confident about his explanation: that "the purpose of withholding the information had become to allow the attacks to go forward."[81]

I believe that in fact there are a number of possibilities about the intention, ranging from the relatively innocent (the inhibitions deriving from a liaison agreement) to the nefarious. Before considering these, let us deconstruct the notion of "letting the attacks go forward." Clearly, if the alleged hijackers were not detained at the airport gates, people would probably have been killed – but how many? Recall that in the Operation Northwoods documents, which envisaged planning "false flag" attacks to justify a U.S. military intervention in Cuba, the Joint Chiefs wrote "We could develop a Communist Cuban terror campaign" in which "We could sink a boatload of Cubans."[82] Would the loss of four planeloads of passengers have been a qualitatively different tragedy?

Of course 9/11 became a much greater tragedy when three of the planes hit the two Towers and the Pentagon. But it is possible that the liaison minders of the two Saudis did not imagine that their targets were capable of such a feat. Recall that their flying lessons, even in a Cessna, were such a fiasco that the lessons were quickly terminated. Their instructor told them "that flying was simply not for them."[83]

Let me suggest that there are three separable ingredients to the 9/11 attacks: the hijackings, the strikes on the buildings, and the astonishing collapse of the three WTC buildings. It is at least possible that the Alec Station liaison team, as a group, contemplated only the first stage, without ever imagining the two stages that ensued.

A minimal, least malign initial explanation for the withholding of information about two of the alleged hijackers would be the hypothesis I proposed in the case of Emad Salem – the restricted access created by the special clearance for a liaison agreement. But just as in 1993, the secret power created behind the wall of restrictive clearances may have been exploited for ulterior purposes. The dangerous situation thus created – of potential would-be-hijackers being protected from detention at a time of expected attack – may have inspired some to exploit the resulting conditions of secrecy as an opportunity to plan an incident to justify war. One important analogy with the 1964 false Second Tonkin Gulf Incident that was used to justify attacking North Vietnam is the same presence of a powerful faction – in 2001 the PNAC clique inside government – that was bent on unilateral military action.[84]

One clue to this more sinister intention is that the pattern of withholdings detailed by Fenton is not restricted exclusively to the two Saudis and their CIA station handlers. There are a few concatenating withholdings by other agencies – above all the Able Danger info that was destroyed at SOCOM and the withholding – apparently by NSA -- of an important relevant intercept, apparently about the alleged hijackers and Moussaoui.[85]

If the NSA was withholding information from relevant officials, it would recall the role of the NSA at the time of the second Tonkin Gulf Incident in August 1964. Then the NSA, at a crucial moment, forwarded 15 pieces of SIGINT (signals intelligence) which indicated – falsely – that there had been a North Vietnamese attack on two US destroyers. At the same time NSA withheld 107 pieces of SIGINT which indicated – correctly – that no North Vietnamese attack had occurred.[86] NSA's behavior at that time was mirrored at the CIA: both agencies were aware of a powerful consensus inside the Johnson administration that had already agreed on provoking North Vietnam, in hopes of creating an opportunity for military response.[87]

We know from many accounts of the Bush administration that there was also a powerful pro-war consensus within it, centered on Cheney, Rumsfeld, and the so-called cabal of PNAC (the Project for the New American Century) that before Bush's election had been lobbying vigorously for military action against Iraq. We know also that Rumsfeld's immediate response to 9/11 was to propose an attack on Iraq, and that planning for such an attack was indeed instituted on September 17.[88] It is worth considering whether some of those protecting the alleged hijackers from detention did not share these warlike ambitions.[89]

Did Richard Blee Have an Ulterior Motive for Withholding Information?

Fenton speculates that one of those seeking a pretext for an escalated war against al Qaeda may have been Richard Blee. We saw that Blee, with Cofer Black, negotiated an intelligence-sharing liaison agreement with Uzbekistan. By 2000 SOCOM had become involved, and "U.S. Special Forces began to work more overtly with the Uzbek military on training missions."[90] In the course of time the Uzbek liaison agreement, as we saw, expanded into a subordinate liaison with the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Blee, meeting with Massoud in October 1999, agreed to lobby in Washington for more active support for the Northern Alliance.[91]

After the USS Cole bombing in Aden in 2000, Blee was pushing to expand the Uzbek military mission still further into a joint attack force in conjunction with the Northern Alliance forces of Massoud. There was considerable objection to this while Clinton was still president, partly on the grounds that Massoud was fighting Pakistani-backed Taliban forces with Russian and Iranian support, and partly because he was known to be supporting his forces by heroin trafficking.[92] But in the spring of 2001 a meeting of department deputies in the new Bush administration revived the plans of Blee and Black, (supported by Counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke) for large-scale covert aid to Massoud.[93] On September 4, one week before 9/11, the Bush Cabinet authorized the drafting of a new presidential directive, NSPD-9, authorizing a covert action program along these lines in conjunction with Massoud.[94]

In the new Bush administration Blee was no longer a minority voice, and six weeks after 9/11 he would be named the new CIA station chief in Kabul.[95] Fenton reports that in this capacity Blee became involved in the rendition of al Qaeda detainees, and suggests that the motive may have been to obtain, by torture, a false confession (by Ibn Shaikh al-Libi) to Iraqi involvement with al Qaeda. This false confession then became part of the "fixing" of evidence, and "formed a key part of Secretary of State Colin Powell's embarrassing presentation to the UN to support the invasion of Iraq."[96]

Did SOCOM Have an Ulterior Motive for Closing Down Able Danger?

What ensued after 9/11 went far beyond Blee's program for paramilitary CIA involvement with the Northern Alliance. The CIA component in Afghanistan was soon dwarfed by the forces of SOCOM: George Tenet reported that by late 2001 the US force in Afghanistan consisted of about 500 fighters, including "110 CIA officers, 316 Special Forces personnel, and scores of Joint Special Operations Command raiders creating havoc behind enemy lines."[97]

Panjshir valley, area of Northern Alliance dominance

In the Bush administration Stephen Cambone, who earlier had collaborated with Rumsfeld and Cheney in signing the PNAC's statement, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, became one of the active promoters of using SOCOM special forces to operate covertly against al Qaeda, not just in Afghanistan, but "anywhere in the world."[98]

It is possible that anything Blee may have done in Alec Station to prepare the way for 9/11 was only one part of a larger inter-agency operation, in which an equivalent role was played by SOCOM's shutting down of the Able Danger project. This might help explain a handwritten notation around 10 PM on 9/11 by Stephen Cambone, then one of Cheney's PNAC appointees under Rumsfeld in the Pentagon, after a phone call with George Tenet:

> AA 77 - 3 indiv[iduals] have been followed since Millennium & Cole
> 1 guy is assoc[iate] of Cole bomber
> 2 entered US in early July
> (2 of 3 pulled aside & interrogated?)[99]

The "guy" here is probably al-Mihdhar, and the "Cole bomber" probably Khallad [or Tawfiq] bin Attash, a major al Qaeda figure connected not just to the Cole bombing but also to the 1998 embassy attacks. One wants to know why Tenet was sharing with a hawk in the Pentagon information that has apparently never been shared by anyone outside the CIA since. And is it a coincidence that Cambone, like Blee, oversaw a program – in this case staffed by SOCOM special operations personnel – using torture to interrogate detainees in Afghanistan?[100]

Just as Blee was reportedly a special protégé of George Tenet at CIA, so Cambone was notorious for his fierce loyalty to first Dick Cheney and later Donald Rumsfeld in the Pentagon. It is not known whether he was associated with the Continuity of Government (COG) planning project where Rumsfeld and Cheney, among others, prepared for the warrantless surveillance and detention measures that were (as I have argued elsewhere) implemented beginning on the morning of 9/11 and continuing to today.[101] Nor is it known if he was associated in any way with Cheney's Counterterrorism Task Force in the Spring of 2001, which has been alleged to have been a source for the war games, including rogue plane attacks, which added to the disarray of the US response, on 9/11.[102]

Deep Events as a Repeated Pattern of U.S. Engagement in War

I want to conclude with a little historical perspective on the dysfunction we have been looking at. In a sense 9/11 was unprecedented – the greatest mass murder ever committed in one day on U.S. soil. In another sense it represented an example of the kind of signature event with which we have become only too familiar since the Kennedy assassination. I have called these events deep events – events deeply rooted in illegal covert activity in various branches of US intelligence and with a predictable accompanying pattern of official cover-ups backed up by amazing media malfunction and dishonest best-selling books. Some of these deep events, like the Kennedy assassination, Tonkin Gulf, and 9/11, should be considered structural deep events, because of their permanent impact on history.

It is striking that these structural deep events – the JFK assassination, Tonkin Gulf, and 9/11 – should all have been swiftly followed by America's engagement in ill-considered wars. The reverse is also true: all of America's significant wars since Korea – Laos, Vietnam, Afghanistan (twice, once covertly and now overtly), and Iraq – have all been preceded by structural deep events. As I wrote in *American War Machine*, a J-5 Staff Report of 1963 reported to the Joint Chiefs that "The engineering of a series of provocations to justify military intervention is feasible and could be accomplished with the resources available." Tonkin Gulf, 9/11, and even the Kennedy assassination itself can all be seen as events that were indeed "engineered," along the guidelines set out in 1962 in the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposals for Project Northwoods.

In two recent books I have been slowly persuaded, against my own initial incredulity, to list more than a dozen significant parallels between the Kennedy assassination and 9/11. Thanks to Kevin Fenton's brilliant research, I can list a further analogy. The CIA files on Lee Harvey Oswald, more or less dormant for two years, suddenly became hyperactive in the six weeks before the Kennedy assassination. Fenton has demonstrated a similar burst of activity in FBI files on the two Saudis in the weeks before 9/11 – a burst initiated by Tom Wilshire, at a time suspiciously close to when the alleged hijackers settled on a final date for their attack. Then in both cases there were also strange delays, leaving the files open at the time of the deep events.[105]

The Impact of 9/11 on U.S. and International Law

Throughout this essay we have seen two different and indeed antithetical levels of U.S. foreign policy at work. On the surface level of public diplomacy we see a commitment to international law and the peaceful resolution of differences. On a deeper level, represented by a long-time Saudi connection and covert arrangements to control international oil, we see the toleration and indeed protection of terrorists in fulfillment of both Saudi and American secret goals. We should see the actions in 2000-2001 of the "Alec Station group," with respect to the two alleged hijackers al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi, in the context of this long-time Saudi connection, as well as of the secret consensus in 2001 – just as earlier in 1964 – that America's oil and security needs (along with those of Israel) required a new American mobilization for war.

Horrendous as it was, the murder of over 2000 civilians on 9/11 was not the only major crime of that day. 9/11 also initiated a series of on-going onslaughts on both international and domestic U.S. law. Law and freedom go together, and both had been significantly enhanced by the founding documents of the United States in the 18th Century. The world benefited; written constitutions soon appeared on every continent; and the Young Europe movements, inspired by America's example, began the long difficult process towards today's European Union.

Starting in 2001, both law and freedom have been progressively eroded. International comity, which depends on each state not doing to others what they would not want done to them, has been supplanted, at least for a while, by U.S. unilateral military

engagement without constraint, acting without fear of retribution. Drone killings in far corners of the world have now become routine, causing more than an estimated 2000 Pakistani deaths, the vast majority of them untargeted civilians, and over 75 percent of them under President Obama.[106] The preemptive war against Iraq, despite being proven both unwarranted and counterproductive, has been followed by the preemptive bombing of Libya, and the prospect of still further campaigns against Syria and Iran.

Writing as a Canadian, let me say that I believe in American exceptionalism, and that at one time America was truly exceptional in its unprecedented replacement of authoritarian with limited constitutional government. Today America is still exceptional, but for its percentage of citizens who are incarcerated, for its disparity in wealth and income between rich and poor (a ratio exceeded among large nations only by China), and for its wanton use of lethal power abroad.

Only the last of these trends began with 9/11. But 9/11 itself should be seen as a dialectical outcome of America's imperial expansion and simultaneous decay -- a process inevitably afflicting those superstates that amass and retain more power than is necessary for the orderly management of their own affairs.

Peter Dale Scott, a former Canadian diplomat and English Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, is the author of Drugs Oil and War, The Road to 9/11, and The War Conspiracy: JFK, 9/11, and the Deep Politics of War. His most recent book is American War Machine: Deep Politics, the CIA Global Drug Connection and the Road to Afghanistan. His website, which contains a wealth of his writings, is here http://www.peterdalescott.net/q.html

Recommended citation: Peter Dale Scott, 'Launching the U.S. Terror War: the CIA, 9/11, Afghanistan, and Central Asia,' *The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol 10, Issue 12, No 3, March 19, 2012.*

Notes:

[1] A shorter version of this paper was presented at the International Hearings on 9/11 at Toronto, September 11, 2011. It can be seen on line at here.

[2] But perhaps no single act of terror committed in the last decade, whether by Qaddafi in Libya or Assad in Syria, has surpassed or even come close to the U.S. devastation of the Iraqi city of Fallujah.

[3] "Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation," September 11, 2001, here. On September 20, 2001, Bush said in an address to a joint session of congress, "Our 'war on terror' begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."

[4] On this point see the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 66: "To date we have seen no evidence that … Iraq cooperated with al Qaeda in developing or carrying out any attacks against the United States."

[5] *Sunday Times* (London), May 1, 2005; Mark Danner, *The Secret Way to War: the Downing Street Memo and the Iraq War's buried history* (New York: New York Review Books, 2006).

[6] *9/11 Commission Report*, 266-72 (272).

[7] Rory O'Connor and Ray Nowosielski, "Who Is Rich Blee?" 911Truth.org, September 21, 2111, here; Rory O'Connor and Ray Nowosielski, "Insiders voice doubts about CIA's 9/11 story," Salon, October 14, 2111, here. O'Connor and Nowosielski add corroboration from former Counterterrorism Chief Richard Clarke. "Clarke said he assumed that 'there was a high-level decision in the CIA ordering people not to share that information.' When asked who might have issued such an order, he replied, 'I would think it would have been made by the director," referring to Tenet — although he added that Tenet and others would never admit to the truth today "even if you waterboarded them.'

[8] Kevin Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots* (Walterville, OR: TrineDay, 2011).

[9] 9/11 Commission Report, 259, 271; Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 352–54; Peter Dale Scott, *American War Machine* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 203.

[10] Lawrence Wright, "The Agent," *New Yorker*, July 10 and 17, 2006, 68; cf. Wright, Looming Tower, 339-44; discussion in Peter Dale Scott, *The War Conspiracy: JFK, 9/11, and the Deep Politics of War* (Ipswich MA: Mary Ferrell Foundation Press, 2008), 355, 388-89.

[11] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 383-86.

[12] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 48. Cf. Lawrence Wright, "The Agent," *New Yorker*, July 10 and 17, 2006, 68; quoted approvingly in Peter Dale Scott, *American War Machine*, 399.

[13] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 371, cf. 95.

[14] Lutz Kleverman, "The new Great Game," *Guardian* (London), October 19, 2003, here.

[15] Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century: A Report of the Project for the New American Century, September 2000, here, 17, 27.

[16] "US Pulls out of Saudi Arabia," BBC News, April 29, 2003, here.

[17] Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: inside America's war on terror* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 31.

[18] Bradley Graham, *By His Own Rules: The Ambitions, Successes, and Ultimate Failures of Donald Rumsfeld* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009), 290.

[19] PNAC, Letter to President Clinton on Iraq, January 26, 1998, here.

[20] Gary Dorrien, *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana* (New York: Routledge, 2004). Bacevich was speaking of a 1992 memo drafted by Wolfowitz for then Defense Secretary Cheney, calling for America to retain the power to act unilaterally. See Lewis D. Solomon, Paul D. Wolfowitz: visionary intellectual, policymaker, and strategist (New York: Praeger, 2007), 52; Andrew

Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 2002), 44.

[21] Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 131. Much earlier, on the afternoon of September 11, DOD official Stephen Cambone recorded notes from his conversation with Rumsfeld : "Near term target need -- Go massive Sweep it all up thing related and not" (here).

[22] Wesley Clark, *Winning Modern Wars* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003), 130.

[23] Nicholas Lemann, "The Next World Order," *New Yorker*, April 1, 2002, here.

[24] *Rebuilding America's Defenses -- Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century*: A Report of the Project for the New American Century, September 2000, here, 17, 27.

[25] Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into chaos: the United States and the failure of nation building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Viking, 2008), 70, 69; citing Ahmed Rashid, "US Builds Alliances in Central Asia," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 1, 2000: "The CIA and the Pentagon had been closely collaborating with the Uzbek army and secret services since 1997, providing training, equipment, and mentoring in the hope of using Uzbek Special Forces to snatch Osama bin Laden from Afghanistan, a fact I discovered on a trip to Washington in 2000."

[26] Peter Dale Scott, "The Doomsday Project and Deep Events: JFK, Watergate, Iran-Contra, and 9/11," Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus, November 21, 2011, here.

[27] Scott, *The Road to 9/11: wealth, empire, and the future of America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 9.

[28] Estimates of annual spending on Homeland Security range up to a trillion dollars. See Stephan Salisbury, "Weaponizing the Body Politic," TomDispatch.com, March 4, 2012, here.

[29] Cf. Simon Johnson, "Too Big to Jail," Slate, February 24, 2012, here: "The main motivation behind the administration's indulgence of serious criminality evidently is fear of the consequences of taking tough action on individual bankers. And maybe officials are right to be afraid, given the massive size of the banks in question relative to the economy. In fact, those banks are bigger now than they were before the crisis, and, as James Kwak and I documented at length in our book *13 Bankers*, they are *much* larger than they were 20 years ago."

[30] John Farmer, *The Ground Truth: the untold story of America under attack on 9/11* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009), 288; quoted in Anthony Summers and Robbyn Swan, *The Eleventh Day: the full story of 9/11 and Osama bin Laden* (New York: Ballantine, 2011), 147.

[31] Summers , 383-84; cf. Farmer, *Ground Truth*, 41. Although a Democrat, Berger was subsequently protected by the Republican Bush Administration from having to testify to Congress about his behavior (a condition of his plea bargain).

[32] Summers, *Eleventh Day*, 334.

[33] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 72-79. Grewe subsequently left government to work at the Mitre Corp., a private firm doing CIA contract work with the CIA and another private firm, Ptech. Questions about Ptech and Mitre Corp's work on FAA-NORAD interoperability systems were raised in 9/11 testimony presented some years ago by Indira Singh; see Scott, *Road to 9/11*, 175.

[34] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 78. Kirsten Wilhelm of the National Archives told Fenton,(p. 78) that "It appears Barbara Grewe conducted the interviews with 'John' [Wilshire] and Jane [Corsi]," another key figure. Wilhelm could find no "memorandum for the record" (MFR) for the Wilshire interview, which Fenton understandably calls "about the most important interview the Commission conducted" (p. 79). Summers, also citing correspondence with Kirsten Wilhelm, disagrees, saying that the report of Wilshire's interview exists, but "is redacted in its entirety" (Summers, *Eleventh Day*, 381, cf. 552). This is an important point to be focused on in future investigations.

[35] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 225.

[36] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 38; citing 9/11 Commission Report, 181-82.

[37] Michelle has since been identified on the Internet, but so far basically by only one source.

[38] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 42-45; summarizing Justice Department IG Report, 239-42; cf. Wright, Looming Tower, 311-12.

[39] Fenton, Disconnecting the Dots, 50; summarizing Justice Department IG Report, 242-43; cf. Wright, Looming Tower, 311.

[40] Fenton, Disconnecting the Dots, 45.

[41] I do not know whether in fact they boarded the plane. However I am now satisfied that al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi acted as if they intended to hijack, as evidenced by their al Qaeda contacts in Malaysia and elsewhere, their attempts to learn to fly, etc.

[42] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 383-86.

[43] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 48. Cf. Lawrence Wright, "The Agent," *New Yorker*, July 10 and 17, 2006, 68; quoted approvingly in Peter Dale Scott, *American War Machine,* 399.

[44] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 371, cf. 95.

[45] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 239-42, 310-22. Fenton notes that Corsi worked at FBI HQ, which coordinated "liaisons with foreign services" (Fenton, 313).

[46] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 310.

[47] The 9/11 Commission Report discounted the importance of al-Bayoumi (217-18); but the Report of the Joint Congressional

Inquiry into 9/11 (173-77), even though very heavily redacted at this point, supplied corroborating information, including a report that Basnan had once hosted a party for the "Blind Sheikh" Omar Abdurrahman, involved in the first World Trade Center bombing of 1993.

[48] At first I suspected, as have others, that the two men were Saudi double agents. Another possibility is that they were sent as designated targets, to be surveilled by the Saudis and the Americans separately or together. One of my few disagreements with Fenton is when he calls al-Mihdhar "one of [the hijackers'] most experienced operatives" (Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 205). My own impression is that he was either an inexperienced and incompetent spy, or else someone deliberately exposing himself to detection, in order to test American responses.

[49] Summers, *Eleventh Day*, 396.

[50] 9/11 Commission Report, 184.

[51] Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: the secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 456-57.

[52] Thomas E. Ricks and Susan B. Glasser, *Washington Post*, October 14, 2001, here.

[53] Ricks and Susan B. Glasser, *Washington Post*, October 14, 2001; cf.

[54] In 1957, I myself, as a junior Canadian diplomat, acquired a special access, higher-than-top-secret clearance to access intelligence from NATO, a relatively overt and straightforward liaison.

[55] For the Ali Mohamed story, see Scott, Road to 9/11, especially 151-60.

[56] Scott, *Road to 9/11*, 158; citing John Berger, "Unlocking 9/11: Paving the Road to 9/11" (here): "Mohamed was one of the primary sources for the infamous Aug. 6, 2001, presidential daily brief (PDB) entitled 'Bin Laden Determined to Strike in U.S.'" The PDB, often cited as an example of the CIA's good performance, is in my opinion more probably another example of the Bin Laden Unit salting the record in preparation for post-9/11 scrutiny. The PDB, without naming Ali Mohamed, refers to him no less than three times as a threat, despite the fact that at the time he was under USG control awaiting sentence for his role in the 1998 embassy plots. The PDB, in other words, appears to have been a performance for the record, analogous to Wilshire's performance in the same month of August at the FBI.

[57] John Berger, *Ali Mohamed*, 20 (Cloonan); *9/11 Commission Report*, 261 (PDB).

[58] James Risen, New York Times, October 31, 1998; in Scott, *Road to 9/11*, 346-47.

[59] *Raleigh News and Observer*, November 13, 2001; in Scott, *Road to 9/11*, 347. I have added the word "Army." The HQ for USSOCOM itself is at Fort MacDill Air Force Vase in Florida.

[60] Dana Priest and William M. Arkin, "'Top Secret America': A look at the military's Joint Special Operations Command," *Washington Post*, September 2, 2011, here.

[61] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 168-69; Summers, *Eleventh Day*, 371, 550.

[62] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 372.

[63] Scott, *American War Machine*, 161; Scott, Road to 9/11, 62-63.

[64] Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, oil, and fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven CT: Yale UP, 2000), 129.

[65] John Prados, *Safe for Democracy*, 489; discussion in Scott, *American War Machine*, 12-13.

[66] James Risen, *State of War: the secret history of the CIA and the Bush administration* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 188-89.

[67] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 104.

[68] Summers, *Eleventh Day*, 397.

[69] Joseph J. and Susan B. Trento, in Summers, *Eleventh Day*, 399. Since I presented this paper at a conference in Toronto on September 11, 2011, "Bob Kerrey of Nebraska, a Democrat who served on the … 9/11 Commission, [has] said in a sworn affidavit … that 'significant questions remain unanswered' about the role of Saudi institutions. 'Evidence relating to the plausible involvement of possible Saudi government agents in the September 11th attacks has never been fully pursued,' Mr. Kerrey said" ("Saudi Arabia May Be Tied to 9/11, 2 Ex-Senators Say," *New York Times*, February 29, 2001, here).

[70] Wright, *Looming Tower*, 161; in Summers, *Eleventh Day*, 216.

[71] Such corruption is predictable and very widespread. In the notorious cases of Gregory Scarpa and Whitey Bulger, FBI agents in the New York and Boston offices were accused of giving their mob informants information that led to the murder of witnesses and other opponents. Agents in the New York office of the old Federal Bureau of Narcotics became so implicated in the trafficking of their informants that the FBN had to be shut down and reorganized.

[72] Ralph Blumenthal, "Tapes Depict Proposal to Thwart Bomb Used in Trade Center Blast," *New York Times*, October 28, 1993, emphasis added. The next day, the Times published a modest correction: "Transcripts of tapes made secretly by an informant, Emad A. Salem, quote him as saying he warned the Government that a bomb was being built. But the transcripts do not make clear the extent to which the Federal authorities knew that the target was the World Trade Center.

[73] Scott, *Road to 9/11*, 145.

[74] Peter Dale Scott, "Bosnia, Kosovo, and Now Libya: The Human Costs of Washington's On-Going Collusion with Terrorists," Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus, July 29, 2011, here. Evan Kohlmann has described how a Zagreb office in support of the Saudi-backed jihad in Bosnia received "all orders and funding directly from the main United States office of *Al-Kifah* on Atlantic Avenue controlled by Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman" (Evan Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe*, 39-41; citing Steve Coll and Steve LeVine, "Global Network Provides Money, Haven," *Washington Post*, August 3, 1993).

[75] Scott, *Road to 9/11*, 153, 347; citing "Canada freed top al Qaeda operative," {Toronto} *Globe and Mail*, November 22, 2001, here.

[76] Scott, *Road to 9/11*, 151-59.

[77] Ali Soufan, *The Black Banners*, 94-95, 561.

[78] The corruption appears to be inevitable in superpowers – states which have accumulated power in excess of what is needed for their own defense. The pattern is less discernible in less powerful states like Canada.

[79] "America's Afghanistan: The National Security and a Heroin-Ravaged State," Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus, #20, 2009, May 18, 2009, here. Cf. "U.S. looks into Afghan air force drug allegations," CNN, March 8, 2012, here: "The United States is investigating allegations that some members of the Afghan air force have used their planes to transport drugs, a U.S. military spokesman said Thursday. Investigators want to know whether the drug-running allegations, first reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, are linked to the shooting deaths last year of eight U.S. Air Force officers at the airport in the Afghan capital, Kabul. 'The allegations of improper use of AAF aircraft is being looked into,' said Lt. Col. Tim Stauffer, referring to the allegations that Afghan air force equipment has been used to illegally ferry drugs and arms."

[80] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 310.

[81] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 371, cf. 95.

[82] Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Courses of Action Related to Cuba (Case II)," in Scott, *American War Machine*, 196.

[83] *Washington Post*, September 30, 2001; in Summers, *Eleventh Day*, 293; cf. *9/11 Commission Report*, 221-22.

[84] See Scott, *American War Machine*, 199-203.

[85] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 360-61, 385. There was also apparent withholding of information at a high level in the US Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM): "One official who attended the DO5 [a USJFCOM intelligence unit assigned to watch terrorism against the US] briefing was Vice Adm. Martin J. Meyer, the deputy commander in chief (DCINC), USJFCOM ….. But despite the red flags raised during the briefing, Meyer reportedly told Maj. Gen. Larry Arnold, the commander of the Continental United States NORAD Region (CONR), and other high-level CONR staffers two weeks before the 9/11 attacks that 'their concern about Osama bin Laden as a possible threat to America was unfounded and that, to repeat, "If everyone would just turn off CNN, there wouldn't be a threat from Osama bin Laden"'" (Jeffery Kaye and Jason Leopold, "EXCLUSIVE: New Documents Claim Intelligence on Bin Laden, al Qaeda Targets Withheld From Congress' 9/11 Probe," Truthout, June 13, 2011, here).

[86] Scott, *American War Machine*, 201.

[87] Scott, *American War Machine*, 200-02.

[88] Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 30-33; Summers, *Eleventh Day*, 175-76; James Bamford, *A Pretext for War*, 287.

[89] Mark Selden has described the pattern of "arousing nationalist passions as a result of attacks out of the blue" as one which has "undergirded the American way of war since 1898" (Mark Selden, "The American Archipelago of Bases, Military Colonization and Pacific Empire: Prelude to the Permanent Warfare State," forthcoming, 2012, *International Journal of Okinawan Studies*).

[90] Thomas E. Ricks and Susan B. Glasser, *Washington Post*, October 14, 2001, here. Significantly, the proposal for a joint attack force with Massoud's Northern Alliance was also resisted by Massoud himself (Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan*, 597-98, 796n25). The problem of Massoud's resistance to an American troop presence vanished when he was assassinated on September 9, 2011, two days before 9/11.

[91] Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 467-69.

[92] Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 513, 534-36, 553.

[93] Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 558.

[94] Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 573-74.

[95] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 108.

[96] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 110-14.

[97] George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: my years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 255.

[98] Jeremy Scahill, "Shhhhhh! JSOC is Hiring Interrogators and Covert Operatives for 'Special Access Programs,'" *Nation*, August 25, 2010, here.

[99] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 127-30; Summers, *Eleventh Day*, 387-88.

[100] Jason Vest, "Implausible Denial II," *Nation*, May 31, 2004, here.

[101] Peter Dale Scott, "Is the State of Emergency Superseding our Constitution? Continuity of Government Planning, War and American Society," November 28, 2010, here.

[102] Scott, *Road to 9/11*, 216-18.

[103] Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Courses of Action Related to Cuba (Case II)," Report of the J-5 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, May 1, 1963, NARA #202-10002-10018, 21, here; discussion in Scott, *American War Machine*, 193, 196.

[104] Scott, *American War Machine*, 195-205; Northwoods document, Joint Chiefs of Staff Central Files 1962-63, p. 178, NARA Record # 202-10002-10104.

[105] Fenton, *Disconnecting the Dots*, 283-355; Scott, *War Conspiracy*, 341-96.

[106] Jason Ditz, "Report: CIA Drones Killed Over 2,000, Mostly Civilians in Pakistan Since 2006," AntiWar.com, January 2, 2011, here. Cf. Karen DeYoung, "Secrecy defines Obama's drone war," *Washington Post*, December 19, 2011, here ("hundreds of strikes over three years — resulting in an estimated 1,350 to 2,250 deaths in Pak).

[107] Michael Klare, *Blood and Oil* (New York: Metropolitan Books/ Henry Holt, 2004), 135-36; citing R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S. Leads Peacekeeping Drill in Kazakhstan,"*Washington Post*, September 15, 1997. CF. Kenley Butler, "U.S. Military Cooperation with the Central Asian States," September 17, 2001, here.

Created by Datamomentum