

Immigration And Terrorism: Moving Beyond The 9/11 Staff Report On Terrorist Travel

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OH GOD, you who open all doors, please open all doors for me, open all venues for me, open all avenues for me.

— Mohammed Atta

Executive Summary

This report covers the immigration histories of 94 terrorists who operated in the United States between the early 1990s and 2004, including six of the September 11th hijackers. Other than the hijackers, almost all of these individuals have been indicted or convicted for their crimes. The report builds on prior work done by 9/11 Commission and the Center for Immigration Studies, providing more information than has been previously been made public.

The findings show widespread terrorist violations of immigration laws. The report highlights the danger of our lax immigration system, not just in terms of who is allowed in, but also how terrorists, once in the country, used weaknesses in the system to remain here. The report makes clear that strict enforcement of immigration law – at American consulates overseas, at ports of entry, and within the United States – must be an integral part of our efforts to prevent future attacks on U.S. soil.

Among the findings:

- Of the 94 foreign-born terrorists who operated in the United States, the study found that about two-thirds (59) committed immigration fraud prior to or in conjunction with taking part in terrorist activity.
- Of the 59 terrorists who violated the law, many committed multiple immigration violations — 79 instances in all.
- In 47 instances, immigration benefits sought or acquired prior to 9/11 enabled the terrorists to stay in the United States after 9/11 and continue their terrorist activities. In at least two instances, terrorists were still able to acquire immigration benefits after 9/11.
- Temporary visas were a common means of entering; 18 terrorists had student visas and another four had applications approved to study in the United States. At least 17 terrorists used a visitor visa — either tourist (B2) or business (B1).
- There were 11 instances of passport fraud and 10 instances of visa fraud; in total 34 individuals were charged with making false statements to an immigration official.
- In at least 13 instances, terrorists overstayed their temporary visas.
- In 17 instances, terrorists claimed to lack proper travel documents and applied for asylum, often at a port of entry.
- Fraud was used not only to gain entry into the United States, but also to remain, or "embed," in the country.
- Seven terrorists were indicted for acquiring or using various forms of fake identification, including driver's licenses, birth certificates, Social Security cards, and immigration arrival records.
- Once in the United States, 16 of 23 terrorists became legal permanent residents, often by marrying an American. There were at least nine sham marriages.
- In total, 20 of 21 foreign terrorists became naturalized U.S. citizens.

Introduction

In August 2004, on the last day the 9/11 Commission was statutorily permitted to exist, a 240-page staff report describing the 9/11 Commission border team's 15 months of work in the area of immigration, visas, and border

control was published on the web.¹ *9/11 and Terrorist Travel* focused on answering the question of how the 9/11 hijackers managed to enter and stay in the United States.² To do so, we looked closely at the immigration records of the hijackers along with larger policy questions of how and why our border security agencies failed us. The goal of this report is to build on that report in two areas: (1) to provide additional facts about the immigration tactics of indicted and convicted operatives of al Qaeda, Hamas, Hizballah and other terrorist groups from the 1990s through the end of 2004; and (2) to enlarge the policy discussion regarding the relationship between national security and immigration control. This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the 9/11 Commission or its staff.

Background

The terrorist operatives covered in this report are foreign nationals. They all had to travel to the United States in order to conduct their operations here. Few had difficulty getting into the United States. Many successfully obtained immigration benefits while here. Most have committed immigration law violations in addition to terrorist offenses, some of which have resulted in deportation or imprisonment in U.S. jails.

What requires emphasis is the ease with which terrorists have moved through U.S. border security and obtained significant immigration benefits such as naturalization. The security gaps that existed then still, in many instances, exist today. My work on the 9/11 Commission made it clear that terrorists need travel documents for movement at some point during their journey here as much as they need weapons for operations. Once within U.S. borders, terrorists seek to stay. Doing so with the appearance of legality helps ensure long-term operational stability. At the 9/11 Commission we called this practice *embedding*, a term also used in this report.

Terrorists have used just about every means possible to enter the United States, from acquiring legitimate passports and visas for entry to stowing away illegally on an Algerian gas tanker.³ This study reviews 94 individuals closely affiliated with terror organizations, whether through overt terrorist acts, connections to criminal activity in support of terror, or terror financing. Most have been convicted or indicted. It summarizes how these terrorists have successfully sought legal immigration benefits through fraudulent means and the legal action (if any) taken against them. This report only includes the six 9/11 hijackers who abused immigration benefits to stay in the United States.

Some of the terrorists discussed here have engaged in a variety of al Qaeda-related plans targeting American civilians within the United States. As each plot unfolded, cell members who were in place within the United States became operational. We know that at least after September 11, the plots discussed here originated in Afghanistan under the guidance of 9/11 mastermind **Khalid Sheikh Mohammed** (KSM). All aspects of the training, along with spiritual and tactical guidance, developed there. The plots were conceived with multiple objectives: they sought to achieve mass casualties, economic damage, destruction of infrastructure, and terror. Some plots never progressed beyond an idea's genesis, while others reached operational stages before becoming defunct. While U.S. intelligence and law enforcement have identified at least a couple of dozen potential plots, the only plots discussed here are ones where the ways and means of the Al Qaeda operatives' immigration histories are publicly available.

KSM primarily hatched these plots until his capture by Pakistani authorities outside of Islamabad in March 2003. KSM grew up in Kuwait in a religious family and allegedly joined the Muslim Brotherhood at the age of 16. According to the 9/11 Commission Report, "KSM claims . . . to have become enamored of violent jihad at youth camps in the desert."⁴ In 1983, KSM enrolled first at Chowan College, a Baptist school in Murfreesboro, North Carolina, and then at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro. There one of his classmates was Ramzi Yousef's brother, who himself later became an al Qaeda member while Yousef planned the 1993 World Trade Center and Bojinka plots with KSM. In 1986, KSM returned to Pakistan for jihadi military training.

Not swayed in the least bit by American culture or democratic ideals, KSM told his captors in 2003 that even during his U.S. stay he considered killing the radical Jewish leader Meir Kahane when Kahane lectured in Greensboro.⁵ Although there is no evidence KSM ever returned to the United States, he did obtain a U.S. business/tourist visa on July 23, 2001 under an alias of a Saudi citizen, perhaps due to rising concern about the friction between 9/11 ringleader and pilot Mohamed Atta and pilot Ziad Jarrah.⁶

Overview

This report covers a study I recently completed of the U.S. immigration histories of 94 foreign nationals involved in nefarious activities related to terrorism and affiliated with terrorist organizations from 1993 to the present. (Names of terrorists covered by this study are in bold.) Although most of the operatives in this report have been captured or convicted of terrorist activities, there is an underlying premise that this report is far from complete due to my assumption that the weaknesses in our immigration system and lack of adequate intelligence available to our frontline officers (a problem that persists today, if somewhat improved) have facilitated the entry and embedding of numerous terrorists and their supporters both prior to and since 9/11 who we still do not know about. Thus this report is not intended to be a definitive account. Rather, it seeks to expand the discussion of how terrorists use our immigration system to enter and embed in the United States, in order to assure more effective border security policies.

This report also covers foreign nationals closely associated with Hamas, primarily engaged in terror financing, and creating foundations and shell corporations for the purposes of raising and laundering money. Those discussed here who are aligned with Hizballah were usually engaged in providing material support to terror organizations operating abroad such as procuring explosives, money, night vision goggles, sleeping bags, radios, camouflage suits, global positioning equipment, and identification and travel documents. These operations were conducted in a manner similar to traditional organized crime families.

Al Qaeda operatives discussed here were strategically positioned throughout the United States — often in places not previously associated with terrorist activity, such as Peoria and Chicago, Illinois; Columbus, Ohio; Baltimore, Maryland, and its suburbs; Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and upstate New York. A couple of al Qaeda operatives covered in this report are still at large and currently unindicted, including **Adnan Shukrijumah** and **Aafia Siddiqui**, yet are included here because they are high on the FBI's list for questioning and spent long periods of time in the United States.

The lists found throughout this report (under immigration benefit subject headings at the end of each section) begin with **Mir Aimal Kansi**, who in January 1993 opened fire outside CIA headquarters in McLean, Virginia; the most recent cases, from 2004, involve the surveillance cases in New York City; in Charlotte, North Carolina; Nashville, Tennessee; Las Vegas, Nevada; and southern California. All told, 21 of these terrorists committed five attacks against U.S. interests causing a total of 3,341 deaths and 8,463 injuries; 29 were involved in 12 unexecuted plots. Five hijackers from 9/11 had clear immigration violations, while one (**Marwan Al-Shehhi**), had a possible violation; thus, 13 hijackers are not included in the chart below. I do not discuss the 9/11 plotters in this report or other earlier terrorists in detail, as each is covered in *9/11 and Terrorist Travel*.

In 47 instances, immigration benefits sought or acquired prior to 9/11 enabled the terrorists to stay in the United States after 9/11 and continue their terrorist activities. This includes three terrorists whose visas or entries into the United States were on 9/2/01, 9/6/01 and 9/10/01. In three instances, terrorists sought immigration benefits after 9/11. One political asylee associated with the 9/11 hijackers was denied and deported after having previous immigration violations. The second managed to maintain his student status in the United States through mid-2002. A third gained legal permanent residency status in 2002.

Although each of these 94 terrorists had committed an immigration violation of some kind, criminal charges alone were brought in at least 37 instances and immigration charges in 18. Indictments in 50 cases included both immigration and criminal charges. There have been a total of 15 deportations and 23 criminal convictions. In 16 instances, individuals were not convicted (e.g., the six 9/11 hijackers), are being held as an enemy combatant (e.g., **Khalid Sheikh Mohammed**), or have fled the United States (e.g., **Anwar Al-Aulaqi**, an imam associated with the 9/11 hijackers and believed to be now in Yemen.)

Many of these terrorists may have been affiliated with one or more terrorist organizations, but 40 individuals are associated with al Qaeda, 16 with Hamas, 16 with either the Palestinian or Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and six with Hizballah are specifically identified. Three are unaffiliated but of a radical Islamist background; one each is affiliated with the Iranian, Libyan or former Iraqi governments; one each is associated with the Pakistani

terrorist groups Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad; and the affiliations of eight others indicted or detained on terrorism-related charges are unknown.

While I was able to rely on legacy Immigration and Naturalization Service immigration alien files and legal documents for over half of this study, the most recent entries draw on multiple news accounts when indictments are unavailable. The immigration alien files are derived from the 9/11 Commission staff report *9/11 and Terrorist Travel*—where statutory authorities permitted us access to normally inaccessible immigration alien files—for 46 of these individuals. In another 24 cases, we were able to rely on legal documents (often with multiple defendants).

Valid visas were held upon entry by 35. This number includes the six 9/11 hijackers known to have sought enhanced immigration status while in the United States. Student visas to attend various universities were used by 18 individuals and four had applications approved to change status from tourist to student. Another 17 used a visitor visa—either tourist (B2) or business (B1)—to enter. In at least 13 instances, the foreign nationals in this study overstayed their visas. In all 94 cases, the terrorist sought to stay in the United States once he or she had successfully entered.

All those who engage or intend to engage in terrorist activity upon entry into the United States have committed fraud under U.S. immigration law. However, traditional fraud used to attain some form of immigration benefit, e.g. false documentation, lying about material facts, or entering into a sham marriage, was frequent. About two-thirds of the individuals studied (59) clearly engaged in fraud in order to enter or embed in the United States, and they did so multiple times (79 instances). Discovery of such fraud usually occurred while the individuals were attempting to upgrade their status in some way (e.g., obtain work authorization, become legal permanent residents, or become naturalized). Representatives of every terrorist organization in this study used fraud to some degree, although certain groups appear to use characteristic patterns of tactics in their travel operations. The level of fraud within these cases ranges from a relatively "minor" failure to disclose information on immigration forms to the alteration or fabrication of passports and other travel documents. An individual was categorized as engaging in fraud so long as the circumstances of his or her immigration history revealed fraudulent activity in relation to any immigration matter, even if no criminal charges for fraud were ever brought.

There were 12 instances of passport fraud and 11 of visa fraud; 39 times, individuals were charged with making false statements to a border, immigration enforcement, or benefits adjudicator. Seven were indicted for acquiring or using other forms of fake identification, including driver's licenses, birth certificates, social security cards, and immigration arrival records.

Once in the United States, 16 of 23 applicants for legal permanent residency obtained it, and 20 of 21 attempts to become naturalized were successful. At least 18 of these applications were based on marriage to a U.S. citizen, with a minimum of 10 being a sham (one convicted terrorist married three times).⁷

In 17 instances, the terrorists claimed to lack proper travel documents and instead sought political asylum.

The 1986 amnesty program was fraudulently used five times in attempts to establish residency. One terrorist, **Mir Aimal Kansi**, sought amnesty under the 1986 law for illegal entrants.⁸ Four others, three convicted for their roles in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and one in the 1993 Landmarks case, sought amnesty under the Special Agricultural Workers Program. Three who sought amnesty under this program attained it.⁹

The individuals reviewed in this chapter were from all over the Middle East. No country produced more than 10 percent of the individuals in the data sample. Eleven individuals traveled to the United States on documents from Pakistan, Egypt, and Jordan. In addition, eight individuals came from Lebanon, while seven originated from the Palestinian territories and Iraq. Only five individuals entered from Saudi Arabia, and four from Morocco. Countries of origin with three or fewer persons were Kuwait, Yemen, the UAE, Syria, Qatar, Algeria, Somalia, Iran, the Sudan, South Africa, and France.

The **Naturalized** **Citizens**

Of the 20 successful naturalizations out of 21 applications in this study, 11 had clear indications of fraud. Three of those instances related to document fraud. Another nine withheld material facts or lied on immigration documents.

Until the formation of the Department of Homeland Security in March 2003, legacy INS was responsible for adjudicating naturalization applications for eligibility. In 2004, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at DHS processed about 600,000 applications. Because of the 1986 illegal-alien amnesty, and other reasons, naturalization applications surged in the 1990s, reaching 1.5 million in 1997.¹⁰ Background checks prior to 9/11 consisted of minimal and sometimes nonexistent reviews of FBI paper files. Today, concern that terrorists may seek naturalization is understood yet will remain difficult to prevent under current law, where USCIS does not have direct access to federal law enforcement or intelligence information, cradle to grave identification numbers and travel histories do not exist, and where applications are neither wholly electronic nor biometric.

Naturalization Means a U.S. Passport

Iyman Faris, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Kashmir who lived in Ohio, pled guilty in May 2003 to casing the Brooklyn Bridge for al Qaeda, as well as researching and providing information to al Qaeda regarding the tools necessary for possible attacks on U.S. targets.¹¹ In October 2003, Faris was sentenced to 20 years in prison.¹²

Faris entered the United States in 1984 at the age of 25 and was naturalized in December 1999. During the mid 1980s, Faris made good friends with a senior member of al Qaeda. In 1999, Faris received his U.S. citizenship. With access to a U.S. passport, travel in and out of the United States became simple. He would travel at least twice to Afghanistan in the next two years on behalf of al Qaeda, each time returning to conduct al Qaeda business in the United States.

In 2000, Faris traveled to Afghanistan with this same senior al Qaeda member. There he was introduced to Osama bin Ladin at an Afghan training camp. During meetings with senior members of al Qaeda, Faris was asked about procuring an "escape" plane. Faris then became involved with plots that included the Brooklyn Bridge and trains.¹³ He also conspired with **Nuradin Abdi** to bomb a Columbus shopping mall (a plan discussed below).¹⁴

Faris admitted to federal agents that during another trip to Karachi in early 2002, he was introduced to KSM.¹⁵ As the two talked about Faris's work as a truck driver in the United States, Faris told KSM that some of his deliveries were made to air cargo planes. KSM was interested in Faris's access to these planes, and the two discussed how cargo planes held "more weight and more fuel,"¹⁶ and thus had excellent potential to be converted into weapons.¹⁷ Faris's employer, Yowell Transportation, confirmed that Faris regularly delivered to an air cargo company at the Columbus airport.¹⁸ It may have been Emery, a global cargo company that has its North American hub in Columbus.

According to Faris, KSM told Faris that al Qaeda was planning two simultaneous attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. The two then talked about destroying the Brooklyn Bridge by severing its suspension cables. Faris was tasked with obtaining the necessary equipment.¹⁹

In April 2002, Faris returned to the United States and researched "gas cutters" and the Brooklyn Bridge on the Internet. He also traveled to New York City in late 2002 to examine the bridge. He decided the plan was too difficult because of the security and the structure of the bridge. Faris then sent a coded message communicating this to al Qaeda leadership.²⁰

The Special Case of the Sham Marriage

Marrying a U.S. citizen is one of the easiest ways to stay in the United States once within the country's borders. Whether an individual comes to the United States and receives a two-week business entry, a six-month tourist length of stay, or a "duration of status" commensurate with his or her schooling, marrying an American provides an entrée toward a permanent legal status and eventual naturalization. Of the 20 naturalized citizens and 16 legal permanent residents in this study, at least 18 married U.S. citizens, 10 of whom entered into sham marriages to obtain residency, some of them multiple times.

Two conversations between radical Islamists about travel and immigration suggest the tactical importance of such marriages. In the first, taped in August 2000 in Italy between Es Sayed (the document forger active in Italy who was discussed above) and Abdulsalam Ali Ali Abdulrahman (a Yemeni described by foreign law enforcement as one "who travels on a diplomatic passport"), the subject of marrying Western women is woven into a discussion of jihad:

A: This is worse than Iran, it's a terrifying thing, it moves from north to south from east to west: they see this thing only through a picture but it's crazy, who planned this is crazy but is also a genius, it will leave them mesmerized, you know the verse that says he who touches Islam or believes himself to be strong against Islam must be hit?

S: God is great and Mohammed is his prophet. They are dogs' sons.

*A: They are. **Let me go to Germany and we'll see: there are beautiful and brave women there, we have Jamal Fekri Jamal Sami. We marry the Americans, so that they study the faith and the Quran.***

*S: **I know many brothers who want to get married, the American woman must learn the Quran.***

*A: They think they are lions but they are traitors, they perceive themselves as the world power but we'll deal with them. **I know brothers who entered the US with the scam of the wedding publications, claiming they were Egyptians and not revealing their true identity and they were already married.***

*S: **You must be an actor, if they catch you it's serious.***

A: Because they like Egyptians there because Mubarak has many interests with them, but sooner or later he'll end up like Sadat.

S: It was a good attack that at the military parade.

A: A mujahid for the cause of jihad never gets tired for jihad gives you the strength to go on. We are in a country of enemies of God but we are still mujahideen fighting for a cause and we should take the youth here as Sheikh Abdelmajid does. The mujahid that fights in the enemy's lines has a greater value. Sheikh Abdelmajid is considered the emir of propaganda for the entire ummah. We can fight any force by using candles and planes and they won't be able to stop us with their heavy weapons. We have to hit them day and night. Remember: the danger in the airports, in that country the fire is burning and is only waiting for some wind. Our goal is the sky. . . . In Yemen people are talking about you running the mosque.

S: Yes, but only for a few times because I have other things to do. I like to move around, be active. When will this wedding take place?

A: When the light is turned on because last time Sheikh Hajab and Sheikh Abdelmajid blessed 10 of the youth and God is with us.²¹

The second conversation was taped in Spain. Spanish authorities reported:

*On the 26th of May [2004], Rabei Osman defended to another disciple, called Yahia, the theory by which the "end justifies the means" for the cause of jihad. **"Everything is permitted including marrying with Christian women, because we need [immigration] papers. We have to be everywhere, in Germany, in Holland, in London. We are dominating Europe with our presence. The women serve to obtain documents, because we are in favor of the cause of God."**²²*

Seven of the 10 conspirators in the 1993 Landmarks plot married U.S. citizens, and six successfully converted the marriage into legal permanent residency or naturalization. One conspirator, **Fadil Abdelghani**, obtained legal residency despite having overstayed his length of stay as a tourist in 1987.²³ **El Sayyid Nosair** married a U.S. citizen in 1981 and was naturalized in 1989. When he was naturalized, the INS was unaware that the FBI had knowledge of Nosair's weapons training of Islamic militants.²⁴

In November 1990, a year after Nosair was naturalized, the radical rabbi Meir Kahane was murdered in New York City. Nosair, seen holding the gun at the scene, attempted to flee but was caught; he was eventually acquitted of murder but convicted of weapons charges. He was later indicted for his role in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, in part because he had in his apartment numerous sensitive U.S. military documents

from Fort Bragg, now believed to have been provided by **Ali Mohamed** (discussed below). In March 1993, while searching the apartment of Ibrahim El-Gabrowni, who was the messenger in the World Trade Center plot, authorities discovered a series of fraudulent Nicaraguan passports for his cousin Nosair and Nosair's family. They also found five birth certificates—for Nosair, his wife, and their three children—and driver's licenses, all in the names of aliases.

Al Qaeda. Three defendants involved in the August 1998 East Africa bombings married U.S. citizens; two acquired legal permanent residency and one became naturalized. Their immigration status enabled all three to operate in the United States for at least a dozen years prior to their arrests for their terrorist activity. Initially they worked on behalf of other radical Islamists and then, after the organization was founded, for al Qaeda, doing substantial damage to U.S. national security in the process.

Ali Mohamed was a key liaison between the East Africa conspirators and al Qaeda's leadership. He met his American wife on the plane to the United States in 1985, and had been a legal permanent resident since 1986. Mohamed was not arrested for his terrorist activity until 1998; before then, he moved frequently in and out of the United States on behalf of al Qaeda. Mohamed's criminal activities during his time in the United States included conducting a human smuggling operation on the West Coast, supplying U.S. military information to al Qaeda leadership, and training Bin Ladin's bodyguards abroad.

Wadi El-Hage came to the United States as a student in the early 1980s; he acquired legal permanent residency after marrying an American in 1986. He was later naturalized.²⁵ El-Hage had crossed paths with Mohamed on a number of occasions before planning began for the East Africa bombings.²⁶ He was an operational commander for that plot until his arrest by U.S. law enforcement 11 months before the bombings occurred.²⁷ During his nearly two decades in the United States, he had become Bin Ladin's personal secretary; he also worked with the Al Kifah Refugee Center in New York and set up numerous charitable front organizations for al Qaeda in Africa. Throughout this time, his immigration status enabled him to easily travel in and out of the United States.

Khalid Abu Al-Dahab married three American women before he finally was able to acquire legal permanent residency; he eventually was naturalized. During his 12 years in the United States, he provided money and fraudulent travel documents to terrorists around the globe. These activities linked him to numerous attacks, including the 1998 East Africa bombings.²⁸

Hizballah. Six individuals involved in the Hizballah cigarette smuggling case in North Carolina engaged in a pattern of sham marriages to U.S. citizens followed by petitions to acquire legal permanent residency. The conspirators' "legal" immigration status allowed them to operate in the United States for nearly a decade raising thousands of dollars in organized crime activity that was both sent back in dollars to Hizballah in Lebanon and used to purchase military equipment such as stun guns, night vision goggles, computers, and digital and video cameras.²⁹

Like the 9/11 conspirators, they relied on fraud to enter the United States; but unlike the hijackers, whose stay would end with the execution of their plot, they needed to acquire an immigration status that would enable them to stay (and operate their cigarette smuggling operation) indefinitely. Three of these associates of Hizballah entered in 1992; they used Lebanese passports with counterfeit nonimmigrant tourist visas purportedly issued in Venezuela, and once the conspirators were inside U.S. borders, they paid U.S. citizens to marry them.³⁰

From January 1999 through January 2000, **Said Mohamad Harb**, one of the key figures in Hizballah's North Carolina operation run by **Mohamad Hammoud**, helped secure three fraudulent visas and three sham marriages for the purpose of "legally" bringing to the United States his brother, his brother-in-law, and sister so that they might become legal permanent residents. The two men each obtained a nonimmigrant visa from the U.S. embassy in Cyprus; though given one- and two-week lengths of stays for conducting business upon entry into the United States, each married a U.S. citizen immediately after his arrival and therefore was allowed to stay indefinitely. In the case of Harb's sister, a male U.S. citizen was paid to meet her in Lebanon and then travel with her to Cyprus, where their marriage enabled her to acquire an immigration visa. In June 2000, Harb also attempted to give an immigration special agent a \$10,000 bribe so that another brother could enter the United States.³¹

Between 1995 and 2000, Hammoud held "prayer" meetings at his Charlotte home where he would show videos of Hizballah operations and solicit donations that amounted to thousands of dollars being sent to a Hizballah military commander in Lebanon. The first federal indictment was against 18 individuals involved in the cigarette smuggling scam that may have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for Hizballah. A second indictment nine months later charged nine Lebanese with providing material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization. Seven of the conspirators pled guilty to lesser charges, while Harb entered into a plea agreement to testify against Hammoud. All the conspirators were convicted of all counts against them, including the immigration violations.³² Hammoud was sentenced to 155 consecutive years. His sentence was reduced for exceeding the maximum sentencing guidelines and remanded to the lower court.³³

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). Members of Palestinian Islamic Jihad operating in South Florida also obtained a variety of immigration benefits illegally and committed immigration violations.³⁴ **Sami Al Arian**, the highly publicized lead defendant in the pending terrorism case in Tampa, came under intense scrutiny in 1995 as the suspected leader of the PIJ in the United States.

The 1995 raid of the Al Arian's offices uncovered a web of immigration violations. The most prominent of the violations is that Al Arian allegedly lied on his own naturalization petition, failing to list his affiliation with two PIJ front organizations. An immigration agent described the fraud scheme that Al Arian was possibly using in a November 1995 search warrant affidavit:

*Based upon the facts and information that I have set forth in the instant affidavit, I have probable cause to believe that ICP (Committee of Palestine) and WISE (World and Islam Enterprise) were utilized by Sami Al Arian and Ramadan Abdullah Shallah as "fronts" in order to enable individuals to enter the United States, in an apparent lawful fashion, despite the fact that these individuals were international terrorists. Among the unlawful methods employed by these terrorist organizations are the apparent lawful procurement and use of visas and other documents relating to immigration that enable terrorists and other excludable aliens to gain entry into the United States through false statements, misrepresentations, and other forms of fraud.*³⁵

Al Arian's immigration fraud extended to others within the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. In September 1992, for example, Al Arian filed a petition for a temporary worker visa with the INS under false pretenses on behalf of Bashir Musa Nafi, one of the organization's original co-founders, who had worked for Palestinian Islamic Jihad at its London-based headquarters. The petition was granted, permitting Nafi to enter the country as a research director employed by WISE. In fact, the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) employed Nafi. His lie about IIIT on his INS petition led to his being deported to London in June 1996, only four days after his apprehension by immigration authorities.³⁶ Six years later, in 2002, IIIT was investigated as part of a terror financing investigation of over 100 interconnected business enterprises, located mostly in northern Virginia.

The 1995 raid of Al Arian's offices also contributed to the eventual deportation of **Mazen Al Najjar**, Sami Al Arian's brother-in-law and a co-founder and the executive director of WISE.³⁷ Al Najjar was editor of WISE's journal, *Qira 'at Siyasiyyah (Political Readings)*³⁸ and attended numerous terror fundraising conferences. Al Najjar also committed a series of immigration violations, from a simple overstay of his student length of stay to his fraudulent marriage to an American woman for the purpose of obtaining permanent resident status. Prior to his deportation, Al Najjar was detained as a threat to U.S. national security.³⁹

Though Al Najjar repeatedly denied that his work at WISE was terrorist-related, audiotapes such as one from 1991 have Al Najjar calling for "the unification of efforts of the national and Islamic forces in the struggle, to face the new dangerous challenges to the Palestinian cause, the central cause of the Muslim Ummah."⁴⁰ Al Najjar's deportation was ordered on May 13, 1997, but he was not deported until 2002.⁴¹ The September 2003 Al Arian superseding indictment included Al Najjar as a defendant, asserting that he was part of the PIJ's leadership in the United States.⁴² The trial is on now.

Terrorist Affiliation and Denaturalization: The Case of Fawaz Damrah

The main method of pursuing denaturalization claims against terrorists and suspected terrorists is to show that their citizenship was illegally procured. To do so, the government must first criminally charge the citizen with violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1425—knowingly obtaining citizenship unlawfully. If a conviction can be secured on this charge, then denaturalization will automatically follow, pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1451(e).

A recent example of this method is the case of **Fawaz Damrah**, the imam at the Islamic Center of Cleveland who acted as a chief fundraiser for PIJ.⁴³ Damrah was charged with making false statements when he submitted his "Application for Naturalization," INS form N-400.⁴⁴ Specifically, the government alleged that he had concealed from the INS his membership in or affiliation with three entities: Al Kifah Refugee Center, the Islamic Committee for Palestine (ICP), and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Al Kifah was al Qaeda's recruitment center in the United States and ICP was the funding mechanism for PIJ. In addition, Damrah was accused of concealing from the INS that prior to applying for citizenship, he had "incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the persecution"⁴⁵ of Jews and others, advocating or supporting violent terrorist attacks and engaging in religion-based persecution.⁴⁶ During the trial, jurors were shown footage of a 1991 speech in which Damrah called Jews "the sons of monkeys and pigs"⁴⁷ and a 1989 speech in which he declared "terrorism and terrorism alone is the path to liberation."⁴⁸

On June 17, 2004, a jury found Damrah guilty of violating 18 U.S.C. § 1425.⁴⁹ He was sentenced to two months in prison⁵⁰ and stripped of his citizenship.⁵¹ Following the verdict, Assistant U.S. Attorney Cheri Kringsman commented that Damrah "was the guy . . . brought in to raise the money for Islamic Jihad. Without the money they could not operate."⁵² Funds raised in the Islamic Center of Cleveland were sent to the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF),⁵³ a charity named in July 2004 in a 42-count indictment for providing material support to Hamas, engaging in prohibited financial transactions with a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, money laundering, conspiracy, and filing false tax returns.⁵⁴

The grand jury had indicted Damrah on charges of violating 18 U.S.C. § 1425 on December 16, 2003—one day shy of the expiration of the 10-year statute of limitations for such prosecution (set it 18 U.S.C. § 3291). It was on December 17, 1993, that Damrah met with an INS examiner to complete his interview on the information contained within form N-400. At the interview, Damrah affirmed the truth of the answers given within the application, which he had originally filed on October 18, 1993.⁵⁵

Damrah subsequently challenged the jury verdict on several grounds, and asked the trial judge to grant an acquittal notwithstanding the verdict. The judge rejected Damrah's challenge.⁵⁶ In addressing Damrah's contention that the evidence presented by the government was not sufficient to fulfill its burden of proof, the judge reviewed the evidence presented by the government and repeatedly came to the same conclusions: "a rational jury could conclude [that Damrah made false statements on his INS application] beyond a reasonable doubt."⁵⁷ This evidence consisted of wiretapped conversations between Sami Al-Arian and Damrah, as well as videotapes of Damrah speaking.⁵⁸

The judge's conclusion provides insight into the burden of evidence that the government must meet in an 18 U.S.C. § 1425 prosecution:

Damrah may protest that all this evidence still does not amount to concrete proof that he was a member of PIJ. In a sense, he is right. The Government's case was weaker than a broad majority of criminal cases this Court has heard. No doubt, the Government's 10-year delay in bringing this charge contributed to this.

*At trial, the Government never offered into evidence a PIJ or ICP membership card bearing Damrah's name or visage. Nor did it offer an oath of allegiance to PIJ and/or ICP bearing Damrah's signature. However, the Government does not need open-and-shut evidence to cross the threshold beyond which a rational jury could conclude that Damrah was a member of ICP and/or PIJ. The Supreme Court recognized as much in *United States v. Killian* when (in a case involving a defendant's ties to the Communist Party) it stated:*

The phrases "member of" and "affiliated with," especially when applied to the relationship between persons and organizations that conceal their connection, cannot be defined in absolute terms. The most that is possible, and hence all that can be expected, is that the trial court shall give the jury a fair statement of the issues[,] . . . give a reasonable definition of the terms and outline the various criteria, shown in the evidence, which the jury may consider in determining the ultimate issues. 368 U.S. 231, 258 (1961).⁵⁹

This is a lesser burden than the "clear, unequivocal, and convincing" standard in *Fedorenko*⁶⁰ that applies to denaturalization proceedings. Damrah's conviction sets a precedent: The prosecution needs only to show that "a

rational jury could conclude beyond a reasonable doubt" that the naturalization was illegally procured, the same standard that governs general criminal offenses (including 18 U.S.C. § 1425).

Terrorists Who Abused Naturalization

- **Nidal Abderrahman Ayyad.** POB: Kuwait, COC: Jordan. WTC1. Father applies for LPR status on Ayyad's behalf and becomes naturalized in 1991. Withheld facts on naturalization application. Convicted for 240 years.⁶¹
- **El Sayyid Nosair.** POB: Egypt. Landmarks 1993, and holding gun at Rabbi Kahane's murder. Egyptian naturalized upon marriage to a US citizen. Acquitted of murder charge of Rabbi Kahane. Serving life case. Denaturalization recommended but not acted on.⁶²
- **Khalid Abu Al Dahab.** Al Qaeda; East Africa bombings 8/98. Naturalization after marriage to 3d U.S. citizen.⁶³ Also ran alien smuggling and document forgery ring in support of Al Qaeda.
- **Fawaz Damrah.** PIJ fundraiser and mosque leader in Ohio. Denaturalized 2004 (see above).⁶⁴
- **Sami Al-Arian.** POB: Kuwait, COC: Egypt. PIJ leader in U.S. On trial now for terrorism charges; immigration and 1993 naturalization fraud.⁶⁵
- **Hassan Faraj.** POB: Syria. Benevolence Int'l Foundation (BIF), Al Qaeda links. Syrian came to US in 1993 as Bosnian refugee; became naturalized and charged with naturalization fraud.⁶⁶
- **Sami Khoshaba Latchin.** POB: Iraq. "sleeper spy" for Iraqis during Saddam Hussein era. Naturalized and charged with lying on naturalization petition.⁶⁷
- **Rafir Dhafir.** POB: Iraq. Sent money to Iraq in violation of U.S. sanctions; possible PIJ/ Hamas association but not confirmed. Naturalized and charged with defrauding his own charity, Help the Needy and violating U.S. sanctions against Iraq.⁶⁸
- **Rasmi Khader Almallah.** POB: Jordan. HLF (Holy Land Fdn) (Hamas) and former employer of a WTC1 bomber. Sham marriage in 1981 and naturalization in 1988; civil complaint filed to revoke naturalization based on sham marriage in 2004.⁶⁹
- **Ahmed Al Halabi.** POB: Syria. Al Qaeda link and former Gitmo translator accused of spying for Syria. Naturalized in 1990s and pled guilty to mishandling military docs in 2004.⁷⁰
- **Abdulrahman Odeh.** Hamas, HLF. Naturalized U.S. citizen indicted in 2004 for terror financing, material support.⁷¹
- **Numan Maflahi.** COB: Yemen. Suspected Al Qaeda member. Naturalized and convicted for lying to fed authorities about rel'nship with known Al Qaeda linked sheik in July 2004.⁷²
- **Mufid Abdulquader.** COB: Palestinian areas. Laundered money from HLF to Hamas. Naturalized and indicted for terror financing.⁷³
- **Tariq Isa.** POB: Palestinian areas. Laundered money from HLF to Hamas. Naturalized and indicted for terror financing.⁷⁴
- **Nageeb Abdul Jabar Al Hadi.** COC: Yemen. Al Qaeda linked and activity possibly associated with other 9/11 related planes. Prior to the summer of 2001, and sought naturalization. On 9/2/01 received a U.S. visa and charged with lying on the application.
- **Muhammad Salah.** POB: Jerusalem. Hamas financier. Naturalized in 1990s, charged with RICO in 2004, not immigration violations.⁷⁵
- **Soliman Biheiri.** Major Hamas financier in N Va w/ the SAAR Network. Indicted for fraudulently obtaining naturalization in 2000; pled to passport fraud.⁷⁶
- **Abdulrahman Alamoudi.** POB: West Bank. Hamas financier. Indicted for fraudulent immigration docs and misuse of U.S. passport (naturalized 1996).⁷⁷

- **Iyman Faris.** POB: Kashmir. Al Qaeda. Naturalized in 1999. Charged with material support to Al Qaeda in 2002.⁷⁸
- **Mukhtar Al-Bakri.** POB: Yemen. Lackawanna Group attended Afghan training camp. Naturalized (unknown date). Charged with material support to Al Qaeda in 2002. Pled guilty and sentenced to 10 years.⁷⁹
- **James El-Shafay.** Herald Square subway surveillance. Naturalized and arrested and charged with terrorist activity in 2004.⁸⁰

Legal

Permanent

Residency

Legal permanent residency is an immigration benefit otherwise known as a "green card"; it is a necessary step for those living here who seek to become naturalized. Travel with a green card is permissible and relatively easy, but immigration laws still apply upon entry and holders of LPR status are not entitled to a U.S. passport. Applications for LPR status surged in the 1990s as a result of the 1986 illegal-alien amnesty and the increased legal immigration levels in the 1990 Immigration Act. In 1994, pending LPR applications were around 125,000. The number surged to about 800,000 by 1998 and 1.2 million by 2003.⁸¹

Terrorists easily take advantage of the overwhelming numbers of applications and the ease with which the system can be manipulated due to its perpetual state of inadequate information technologies. The result is that fraud runs rampant in applications for immigration benefits, with estimates stated to me while I was on the 9/11 Commission by a senior official at USCIS to be anywhere from 50 to 75 percent. One scheme of many involves one applicant filing multiple applications under different identities with the goal of one of the applications being approved somewhere. Other forms of fraud include lying on the application, including about past criminal or terrorist activity. In this study, 16 of 23 terrorists who sought LPR status acquired it. LPR status was denied in most cases in this study when the underlying fraud was coupled with terrorist activity already under federal law enforcement investigation.

The FBI's Most Wanted Al Qaeda LPR

Born in Saudi Arabia,⁸² **Adnan El-Shukrijumah**, aka "Jafar the Pilot," has spent 15 years in the United States (mostly in South Florida), speaks fluent English, and has been employed as a teacher.⁸³ El-Shukrijumah trained with Jose Padilla to partner in the dirty bomb plot,⁸⁴ helicopter plots, and the New York and New Jersey financial infrastructure plots discovered in the summer of 2004. A Department of Homeland Security document quoted in *Newsweek* states that "KSM has identified Adnan el Shukrijumah, a Saudi born permanent U.S. resident alien, as an operative with standing permission to attack targets in the United States that had been previously approved by Osama Bin Ladin."⁸⁵ FBI Director Robert Mueller called him "a trained operative who poses an operational threat to the United States"⁸⁶ who the FBI considers to be armed and dangerous.⁸⁷

In late 2000 or early 2001, El-Shukrijumah was under investigation for his relationship to Imran Mandhai, convicted in Florida of conspiring to bomb a National Guard armory, power stations, Jewish businesses, and Mount Rushmore prior to 9/11.⁸⁸ Mandhai was associated with Hakki Cemal Aksoy, convicted in 2002 for firearms violations and asylum fraud and in whose apartment bomb making manuals and notes were found. El-Shukrijumah had previously applied for naturalization, but the INS interior enforcement office in Miami noticed that the application was fraudulent. The INS agents working the case met with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Miami, and even discussed seeking a search warrant for El-Shukrijumah's residence. Without further information linking El-Shukrijumah to terrorist activity, the matter was dropped.⁸⁹

As an LPR, El-Shukrijumah easily traveled to and from attended training camps in Afghanistan,⁹⁰ where he was most likely schooled by Ramzi Binalshibh, famous for his role as emissary between KSM and 9/11 ring leader Mohamad Atta.⁹¹ El-Shukrijumah is a skilled bomb maker and a Florida-trained pilot,⁹² and authorities have found a document that ties him (via one of his aliases) to the Oklahoma flight school where Zacarias Moussaoui trained.⁹³ He may have been friendly with Atta as well, as I describe an immigration officer's witnessing of receiving a request for help with travel documents in May 2001 from El-Shukrijumah on behalf of Atta and likely another 9/11 pilot in *9/11 and Terrorist Travel*.⁹⁴

According to Attorney General John Ashcroft, El-Shukrijumah "scouted sites across America that might be vulnerable to terrorist attack."⁹⁵ In addition to surveilling high-profile targets in New York's financial district,⁹⁶ El-Shukrijumah surveilled the Panama Canal.⁹⁷ Back in the United States, he was also involved in an aborted plot with Jose Padilla to blow up apartment buildings in the United States.⁹⁸ He was also likely Padilla's first partner in the dirty bomb plot, but differences between them ended the joint venture.

There are also reports that El-Shukrijumah attempted to procure radioactive material from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.⁹⁹ In March 2004, El-Shukrijumah attended a terrorist summit in Pakistan and met with a number of key al Qaeda members, including Abu Issa Al-Hindi, Mohammed Naeem Noor Khan, and Mohammed Babar.¹⁰⁰ Recently he has been spotted in Mexico.¹⁰¹ He reportedly met with members of the Mara Salvatrucha gang (known as MS-13) in Honduras, although Interpol denies the existence of evidence of such a meeting.¹⁰² In September 2004, the *Aviation and Security Association* reported, "An alert airline crewmember saw and then confronted a suspicious acting person at Kansai International Airport in Japan. El Shukrijumah was this suspicious person." However, law enforcement was not notified.¹⁰³

Reporting indicates that since El-Shukrijumah fled the United States after 9/11, he has tried to get back into the United States using various passports.¹⁰⁴ He has a Guyanese passport, but may also hold passports from Saudi Arabia, Canada, and Trinidad.¹⁰⁵ However, unless authorities made a decision to permit Shukrijumah his freedom for law enforcement or intelligence reasons, or know that he did manage to enter the United States on one of these passports undetected and law enforcement knows about it, I do not place much credence in these reports.

LPRs Move People and Goods

Uzair Paracha is a Pakistani citizen with lawful permanent resident status in the United States¹⁰⁶ who, along with his father, has ties to KSM.¹⁰⁷ While living in the United States, Paracha traveled to Pakistan and met with KSM. He last entered the United States in February 2003, and lived with relatives in Brooklyn.¹⁰⁸

KSM allegedly wanted Paracha to use Paracha's father's Karachi-based import-export firm to smuggle explosives into the United States. Moreover, KSM and another al Qaeda operative who lived in Baltimore, Majid Khan, planned to invest \$200,000 in that firm.¹⁰⁹ After meeting with KSM in Pakistan,¹¹⁰ Paracha agreed to assist al Qaeda by coming to the United States by assuming Khan's identity. Paracha was to obtain immigration documents that would enable Paracha to enter the United States as Khan. **Aafia Siddiqui** (discussed below in student visa section) helped secure for Paracha a post office box in Khan's name. Paracha was then to conduct financial transactions in Khan's name. Detained in March 2003 as a material witness, Paracha was charged in August 2003 with conspiring to provide material support and resources to al Qaeda.¹¹¹ Paracha's father has also been detained by U.S. authorities and is being held in Afghanistan.¹¹²

The plot was intricate. KSM had also tasked Khan, whose relatives own gas stations in the city, to "move forward" with a plot to bomb a number of U.S. gas stations by "simultaneously detonating explosives in the stations' underground storage tanks," according to Justice Department documents summarizing KSM's interrogation that were quoted in *Newsweek*.¹¹³ KSM reportedly wanted to use two or three African American Muslim converts to participate in the plot. Upon his capture,¹¹⁴ Khan told the FBI that he saw two African Americans when he met with KSM in Pakistan in 2000.¹¹⁵

Terrorists Who Abused LPR

- **Mahmud Abouhalima.** WTC1. Applied for and received amnesty under the SAW program, then applied for LPR status and then permission to travel abroad in 2/93. Sentenced to 1,300 months in prison.¹¹⁶
- **Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman.** Egyptian Islamic Jihad, WTC1 and Landmarks. 1/91 receives LPR status and when detained by INS in 7/91, uses the LPR status to gain re-entry.¹¹⁷
- **Matarwy Mohammed Said Saleh.** Landmarks 1993. Applied for LPR status based on sham marriage, in 1990 placed in deportation hearing but released on bail. Convicted and sentenced to three years, then deported in 9/96.¹¹⁸

- **Amir Abdelghani.** Landmarks 1993. Naturalized or LPR status upon marriage to a U.S. citizen. Serving until 2019. [119](#)
- **Fadil Abdelghani.** Landmarks 1993. LPR status upon marriage to a US citizen. Overstayed tourist length of stay. Serving until 2015. [120](#)
- **Tarig El Hassan.** Landmarks 1993. Naturalized or LPR status upon marriage to a US citizen. Serving until 2023. [121](#)
- **Fares Khallafalla.** Landmarks 1993. LPR status through SAW program and married US citizen. Serving until 2019. [122](#)
- **Siddig Ibrahim Siddiq Ali.** Landmarks 1993. Naturalized or LPR status upon marriage to a US citizen. [123](#)
- **Wadi El Hage.** East Africa bombings 8/98. LPR status based on marriage to a US citizen. [124](#)
- **Wan Isra Wan Mohammad.** Possessed guns for jihad in Chechnya. Malaysian LPR in possession of firearm; one-year sentence with deportation to follow. [125](#)
- **Mohamad Youssef Hammoud.** Hizballah cigarette scam. LPR based on sham marriage in 1995. Denied and immigration visa in '96 and told to depart but did not. In 3/01, indicted and convicted for criminal conspiracy. [126](#)
- **Chawki Youssef Hammoud.** Hizballah cigarette scam. Petitions for LPR based on sham marriage in 1995. In 3/01, indicted and convicted for criminal conspiracy. [127](#)
- **Sajjad Nassar.** Attended Jaish-e-Mohammed training camp (group responsible for murder of Daniel Pearl). Acquired LPR status and pled guilty to possessing fraudulent immigration documents in 2003. Deported to Pakistan in 2004. [128](#)
- **Mohamad Atef Darwiche.** Hizballah cigarette scam. Petitions for LPR based on sham marriage in 1997. In 3/01, indicted and convicted for criminal conspiracy. [129](#)
- **Ali Hussien Dawiche.** Hizballah cigarette scam. Petitions for LPR based on sham marriage. In 1996, paroled into the U.S. In 3/01, indicted and convicted for criminal conspiracy. [130](#)
- **Ali Fayez Dawiche.** Hizballah cigarette scam. Petitions for LPR twice (1995 and 1999) based on sham marriage. In 1996, paroled into the U.S.. In 3/01, indicted and convicted for criminal conspiracy. [131](#)
- **Mohammed Abdullah Warsame.** Al Qaeda training camp. Sham marriage and received LPR status. Charged for material support to terror organization. [132](#)
- **Mohamed Kamal Elzahabi.** Al Qaeda member. Obtained LPR status on sham marriage and material support terrorism offenses. [133](#)
- **Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzook.** U.S. Hamas leader. Received green card via lottery; INS detained him for terrorist activities, deported 4/97. Charged with RICO in absentia. [134](#)
- **Hasan Saddiq Faseh Alddin.** Roommate of 9/11 hijackers Hazmi and Mihdhar. LPR via marriage; convicted twice of domestic abuse, deported to Saudi Arabia.
- **Anwar Nasser Aulaqi.** 9/11 hijacker spiritual adviser. J1 visa to LPR, now fugitive. [135](#)
- **Uzair Paracha.** Al Qaeda, plan to blow up gas stations in Baltimore. LPR, indicted for terrorist conspiracy in 2003. [136](#)
- **Adnan El-Shukrijumah.** Al Qaeda, Padilla dirty bomb plan and others. LPR, now a fugitive. [137](#)
- **Mekki Hamed Mekki.** Al Qaeda, possible plot to fly a plane into a U.S. target. Submitted multiple diversity visa applications to obtain LPR status. Indicted. [138](#)

In 1998, while on the staff of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology, and Government Information, I published an obscure report as part of a hearing record entitled *Foreign Terrorists in America: Five Years After the World Trade Center*.¹³⁹ The report was called *The Thwarted Brooklyn Bomb Plot: Identifying, Excluding, and Removing Terrorists from the United States*.¹⁴⁰ At that time, the concern was that numerous foreign nationals from state sponsors of terrorism (notably Iraq) were obtaining educations in sensitive science-related fields such as nuclear energy. In the 1980s, Libyans who acquired student visas were believed to pose a national security threat. After 9/11, the spotlight turned to vocational pilot schools such as those attended by the four 9/11 hijacker pilots. While all these concerns are legitimate, it is critical that security vetting of students be efficient, electronic, and biometrically based to assure that foreign national terrorists like the ones discussed below can not use the student visa as an entry for their activities.

From Student Visa to Sham Marriage

Mohammad Kamal Elzahabi is a Lebanese national who entered the United States in 1984 on a student visa. He paid a woman in Houston, Texas, to marry him and help him obtain legal permanent resident status. Elzahabi divorced her in 1988, after he obtained his green card.¹⁴¹ In July 2004, Elzahabi pled not guilty to charges that he had lied to FBI investigators during a terrorism-related investigation.¹⁴²

Upon obtaining his green card, Elzahabi left the United States to fight jihad in Afghanistan and met the key jihadi figures Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, Raed Hijazi, and Bassam Kanj. He again traveled to Afghanistan in 1991 and remained there about four years. During this time, he was a sniper in combat and served as an instructor in small arms and sniper skills for other jihadists attending the Khaldan training camp in Afghanistan. Elzahabi admitted that while he was in Afghanistan, he personally knew Abu Zubaida and knew of KSM.¹⁴³

Elzahabi returned to the United States in 1995 and moved to New York City, where he ran an axle-repair business. He used this business to help ship to Pakistan portable field radios, later found in Afghanistan by U.S. troops.

From 1997 to 1998 Elzahabi lived in Boston, working as a cabdriver. There he associated with Raed Hijazi, whom he aided in obtaining a Massachusetts driver's license in 1997.¹⁴⁴ Raed Hijazi (born in California to Palestinian parents and later radicalized)¹⁴⁵ was later convicted in Jordan for masterminding the failed Millennium bombing plot that had targeted American and Israeli tourists in that country.¹⁴⁶ While in Boston, he lived with Bassam Kanj, who had married an American in 1988 and was later naturalized.¹⁴⁷ Kanj helped Hijazi lease a taxi that officials believe was used to fund the Jordan plan.¹⁴⁸ Also working with these taxi drivers was Nabil Al-Marabh, discussed in the illegal entry section below.

Elzahabi also traveled to Lebanon, where he provided small arms training to the group of fighters that Bassam Kanj had formed to overthrow the government of Lebanon. Kanj was killed in 2000 in Lebanon. Elzahabi stated that he personally knew both KSM and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.¹⁴⁹

Before the 9/11 attacks, the FBI identified Mohammad Kamal Elzahabi as a suspected terrorist. Yet in early 2002, Elzahabi received a commercial driver's license to operate a school bus and transport hazardous materials.¹⁵⁰ According to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Division of Driver Vehicle and Licensing, the FBI "ran his name through a database and cleared him." In June 2004, Elzahabi's license for transporting toxic materials was still valid, though his school bus driver's license had been canceled in February for reasons unknown.¹⁵¹

Alleged Al Qaeda Operatives' Use of the Student Visa

When Al Qaeda sought to target U.S. financial infrastructures, they conducted detailed surveillance operations for a number of years of potential targets. While El-Shukrijumah may have conducted some of the surveillance, the FBI asserts that **Issa Al-Britani** (aka Dhiren Barot), an al Qaeda operative arrested in London in August 2004, came to the United States posing as a student in order to survey the Prudential Building in Newark, New Jersey.¹⁵² According to the 9/11 Commission's *Final Report*, Al-Britani's U.S. trip was directed by KSM and Bin Ladin: "KSM claims [that] at Bin Ladin's direction in early 2001, he sent Al-Britani to the United States to

case potential economic and 'Jewish' targets in New York.¹⁵³ The plot was to include hijacked tourist helicopters,¹⁵⁴ limousines packed with explosives, or large trucks.¹⁵⁵

Aafia Siddiqui is an alleged Al Qaeda operative and Pakistani citizen who entered the United States on a student visa and lived here for over a decade.¹⁵⁶ She studied and worked at Brandeis and MIT, training in biology and neurology.¹⁵⁷ With her primary residence in the United States, reports have placed Siddiqui in Liberia prior to 9/11, where she was tasked with acting as a mediator between other al Qaeda operatives.¹⁵⁸

According to the FBI's intelligence from KSM, Siddiqui was a travel facilitator in the United States, helping operatives successfully enter and embed here.¹⁵⁹ Her estranged husband supported al Qaeda by buying U.S. military style goods and manuals that were to be shipped to Pakistan.¹⁶⁰

In one instance, Siddiqui spent time in Maryland¹⁶¹ helping facilitate the illegal entry of Uzair Paracha, to support the Baltimore gas station plot described above. Siddiqui was to similarly aid "other AQ operatives as they entered the United States."¹⁶²

Siddiqui is believed to have left Boston in January of 2003.¹⁶³ In March 2003, the FBI issued a global alert for Siddiqui. A report of her capture in Pakistan in April 2003 proved to be false, and a month later the FBI issued a BOLO ("be on the lookout for") on Siddiqui in connection with current threats against the United States.¹⁶⁴

KSM has identified **Ali Al-Marri** as "the point of contact for AQ operatives arriving in the United States for September 11 follow-on operations."¹⁶⁵ Al-Marri had reentered the United States on September 10, 2001,¹⁶⁶ in order to enroll in a graduate program at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois.¹⁶⁷ Former Attorney General Ashcroft confirmed that Al-Marri was an operative "sent by al Qaeda to facilitate another wave of terrorist attacks on Americans."¹⁶⁸ KSM called Al-Marri "the perfect sleeper agent because he has studied in the United States, had no criminal record, and had a family with whom he could travel."¹⁶⁹ Phone records have tied Al-Marri to a phone number linked to the 9/11 paymaster, Mustafa Al-Hawsawi; the 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta; and the alleged 20th hijacker, Zacharias Moussaoui.¹⁷⁰

Al-Marri was arrested as a material witness on a warrant issued out of the Southern District of New York in December 2001,¹⁷¹ and in May 2003 he was indicted on a number of charges. These include making false statements to FBI agents during the investigation of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; making false statements to banks in Macomb, Ill.; identity fraud; and access device (credit card number) fraud.¹⁷² In addition to lying about calling the telephone number linked to Al-Hawsawi, he told FBI agents that his last visit to the United States before 2001 was in 1991, even though he had entered the country in the summer of 2000.¹⁷³ In addition, a search of Al-Marri's apartment turned up jihadi material and an almanac bookmarked to locate information on dams, reservoirs, and railroads.¹⁷⁴

In June 2003, Al-Marri was declared an enemy combatant after the U.S. government received, in the words of the Department of Defense, "recent credible information provided by other detainees in the War on Terrorism."¹⁷⁵ One of those detainees alleged that Al-Marri was trained in poisons; others said that Al-Marri had met with Bin Ladin at the al Faruq training camp in Afghanistan and that Al-Marri offered to martyr himself.¹⁷⁶

Mohammed Warsame was born in Somalia and sought refugee status in Canada in 1989. He became a naturalized Canadian citizen and moved to Minneapolis in 2002.¹⁷⁷ He was arrested in December 2003 as a material witness in the Zacharias Moussaoui case.¹⁷⁸ At the time of his arrest, he was a student at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. In January 2004, Warsame was indicted and charged with conspiracy to provide material support to al Qaeda.¹⁷⁹ Warsame has admitted attending an al Qaeda training camp in 2000 and 2001 and receiving military training (weapons, martial arts). He attended lectures given by Bin Ladin and even sat next to him at a meal. Moreover, he fought with the Taliban and provided financial assistance to al Qaeda members in Pakistan once he had returned to the United States.¹⁸⁰

Terrorists Who Abused Student and Exchange Visas

- **Hussam Yousef Abou Jbara.** Co-founder of the Islamic Concern Project with Sami al-Arian (Palestinian Islamic Jihad). Entered on a student visas in 1980 and 1986. Married a U.S. citizen. Eight years later Jesse Maali

files for employment authorization on Jbara's behalf. In 1999, files for political asylum, which is deemed false.¹⁸¹

- **Eyad Mahmoud Ismail.** Drove van containing bomb in WTC1. Entered on F1 visa and 2 years later dropped out of school; convicted and sentenced to 240 years.¹⁸²
- **Mohamed Kamal Elzahabi.** Supported Jordanian Millenium plot and shipped communications equipment to Pakistan. Entered on F1 visa in 1984 and entered into a sham marriage. Thereafter left the U.S. for Afghan training camp and eventually deported upon return to United States in 2004.¹⁸³
- **Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.** Manila Air Plot 1/95 and 9/11 mastermind. Entered on F1 visa and attend Chowtan College from 1992 to 1996. Began plotting attacks in 1992. Committed visa fraud in July 2001 applying for visa under a false identity.¹⁸⁴
- **Sameeh Taha and Nadia Hammoudeh.** Taught at PIJ-associated academy and employees of Sami al-Arian. Entry on student visas in 1993 and subsequent false LPR petitions. Convicted for financial fraud 8/04.¹⁸⁵
- **Hani Hanjour.** 9/11 pilot of the Pentagon flight. Entered on F1 visa for English language school in 9/00. Had attended such schools twice before in the US, but was a no show.¹⁸⁶
- **Ziad Jarrah.** 9/11 pilot of Pennsylvania flight. Attended U.S. flight school full time from initial entry, but never applied for a change of status, and thus excludable upon each of six subsequent re-entries.¹⁸⁷
- **Mohamed Atta.** 9/11 pilot of WTC flight (AA 11) and operational commander. 9/19/00 applies for a change of status from visitor to student until 9/8/01; application approved 7/17/00.¹⁸⁸
- **Marwan Al-Shehhi.** 9/11 pilot of WTC flight (UA 175). 9/22/00 applies for change of status from visitor to student until 9/8/01; application approved 8/9/01.¹⁸⁹
- **Ayman Ismail.** HLF (Hamas) fundraiser, website designer. Violated student status when became on HLF employee without seeking a change of status. Deported to Jordan.¹⁹⁰
- **Adham Amin Hassoun.** Hamas fundraiser, including Holy Land Foundation and the Global Relief Foundation. Entered as student and charged w/ terror financing and conspiracy to murder citizens in a foreign country.¹⁹¹
- **Abdel Jabbar Hamdan.** HLF fundraiser. Entered on student visa in 1979 and detained on immigration violations.¹⁹²
- **Osama Satti.** Lashkar-e-Taiba. (Pakistani terror group) weapons acquisition. Came originally as student in 1990 and got 2 degrees from Rochester Institute of Technology. On 9/6/01 entered as B2 and overstayed and convicted also of firearm possession.¹⁹³
- **Sami Omar Al-Hussayen.** Jihadi website master. Entered on F1 visa in 1999 until detained 2002. Not convicted of multiple counts of visa fraud and material support to terrorists after classified evidence supporting allegations remained protected.¹⁹⁴
- **Issa Al-Britani (aka Dhiren Barot).** IMF, NYSE, Prudential surveillance Student visa used several as cover for mission while attending various US universities.¹⁹⁵
- **Aafia Siddiqui.** Al Qaeda. Entered on F1 in mid 1990s and fugitive since 2003.¹⁹⁶
- **Ali Al-Marri.** Al Qaeda. Entered on 9/10/01 for purpose of a participating in more U.S. attacks.¹⁹⁷

The Religious Worker Visa

Among the specific requirements of obtaining a religious worker visa is the filing of an application from a primary religious organization — such as a mosque — to certify that the applicant:

- a) is a minister, or professional or other religious worker;
- b) is in the United States solely to engage in a religious vocation or to work for a bona fide United States religious organization;

- c) has been a member in the sponsoring religious organization's denomination continually for two years; and
- d) has received a job offer as a religious worker and will not be working in any secular employment.¹⁹⁸

From 1999 to 2004, about 106,000 people were admitted to the United States using visas for "religious workers." Since 9/11, the number of these admissions has continued to increase. Between 1992 and 1998, there were about 42,000 such admissions. The largest number were foreign nationals from Mexico (5,198), India (4,666), Canada (4,357), and Britain (3,393). Immigration authorities do not maintain statistics for admissions by religion. However, in the past three years, records indicate that more than 1,000 holders of religious worker visas from predominantly Muslim countries were granted admission; topping the list for these countries were Egypt (270), Indonesia (173), and Pakistan (113).¹⁹⁹

A source inside U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services told me while I was working on the 9/11 Commission in 2003 that religious worker visa fraud was known to be extremely problematic, in part because there is little vetting of either the religious institutions that sponsor the visa applicants, nor rules in place that can verify the authenticity of the applicant. Even in 2000, fraud in the religious worker authorizations was a known problem. In that year, in a hearing before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims in 2000, Chairman Lamar Smith remarked in his opening statement:

In 1997, the State Department's Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs wrote to me that the Department has: "uncovered a troubling number of scams, both individual and organized, seeking to exploit this category to obtain immigration benefits illegally . . . Most problematic are those cases that involve organized fraud rings in which documents of religious institutions in the U.S. are fabricated, or when the applicant colludes with a member of a religious institution in the U.S. to misrepresent either his or her qualifications, or the position to which the applicant is destined. The American Embassy in Moscow discovered a fraud ring in New York which fabricated documentation of several religious denominations in New York City on behalf of applicants who had no religious training and no intention of taking up religious occupations in the U.S. Several consular offices have reported suspicions that some churches in the U.S. have created fictitious positions solely to help an alien procure an immigration benefit."

Then ranking subcommittee member Melvin Watt and I asked the General Accounting Office to conduct a study to determine the extent of fraud in the program. In order to provide assistance to the GAO, the State Department conducted a field inquiry to obtain the views of consular offices as to the level and type of fraud. Almost half of the responding posts that had issued a substantial number of religious worker visas reported experiencing fraud and abuse.

The GAO report concluded that "both INS and State have expressed concern about fraud in the religious worker visa program. . . ." The report stated that INS and State Department officials were not confident that the agencies' screening processes were identifying all unqualified applicants and sponsoring organizations.²⁰⁰

More specifically, the GAO said in a 1999 report on religious worker visa fraud that:

They (the INS) do not have data or analysis to firmly establish the extent of fraud in the religious worker visa program. The nature of the fraud uncovered typically involved (1) applicants making false statements about their qualifications as religious workers or their exact plans in the United States or (2) conspiracy between an applicant and a sponsoring organization to misrepresent material facts about the applicant's qualifications or the nature of the position to be filled.²⁰¹

The problem of religious worker fraud is a mere subset of the fraud that has traditionally run rampant throughout the immigration benefits system. In the student visa arena as well, phony academic institutions—often under the guise of technical, vocational, or English-language schools—provide false cover for those seeking to come to the United States illegally. Due to the lack of adequate rules and enforcement, fraud thrives in the application process and is aided during the application review process by a lack of inadequate information and biometrically based technologies.

Religious Worker Fraud in Brooklyn

Muhammad Khalil was the imam and director of the Dar Ehya Essunnah mosque, located in a Brooklyn basement. Khalil was never charged with terrorism offenses. However, investigators said that he incited others to jihad, associating himself with Al Qaeda and bin Ladin and Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar. He urged Muslims living in the United States to arm, and stated, "Hopefully, another attack in the United States will come shortly."²⁰² According to a source who lived at the mosque in July 2000, the premises were filthy and cockroach-infested with poor sanitary conditions.²⁰³ Few people came there to pray.²⁰⁴

Since 1993, Khalil had used his position as director of a mosque to sponsor more than 200 applications for aliens seeking to obtain immigrant and nonimmigrant religious worker visas through the INS's religious worker program. According to his indictment, Khalil told the federal agents at INS offices in New York "that each applicant gave a donation to the Mosque—the usual fee was \$20, but some applicants gave thousands of dollars."²⁰⁵ In November 2001, a witness ("W-1") in custody on immigration charges informed the agents interviewing him that "Muhammad Khalil . . . was the director of the Mosque, where W-1 had been living. W-1 stated that he paid Khalil \$5,000 to \$6,000 to sponsor W-1 under the INS Religious Worker program. . . . W-1 said that he saw non-religious workers pay Khalil \$5,000 to \$6,000 to file Religious Worker applications for them."²⁰⁶

A cooperating witness described a sting he helped perform against Khalil on August 9, 2002. Under the supervision of the INS, he gave Khalil \$3,800 as a down payment for an application to obtain a religious work visa. The indictment accused Khalil of "falsely stat[ing] to federal agents that all of the individuals whom he assisted in applying for 'green cards' were religious workers who taught the Koran, Islamic history, and Arabic language."²⁰⁷

Khalil was also charged with fraudulently obtaining legitimate Social Security cards (for which he charged \$2,300) and making false statements to law enforcement officials. He had forged driver's licenses and undergraduate (B.A.) degrees as well. The mosque's operations ceased soon after Khalil was arrested in February 2003. In September 2004, a New York court convicted Khalil of all counts.²⁰⁸

Recently, an imam at a Lodi, California, mosque, **Shabbir Ahmed**, was charged with overstaying his three-year religious worker visa. Authorities said the arrest came as part of a long-term counterterrorism investigation. Another Muslim cleric, **Muhammed Adil Khan**, 47, and his son **Muhammed Hassan Adil**, 19, were also picked up in a sweep to crack down on foreign nationals who are overstaying these types of visas.²⁰⁹

Terrorists Who Abused the Religious Worker Visa

- **Omar Mohamed.** Worked for GRF, al Haramain. Failed to work for religious institution that sponsored him and obtained LPR status; lied on naturalization²¹⁰ application.
- **Shabbir Ahmed.** Lodi mosque former imam acting as liaison for Al Qaeda. Arrested 6/05 for violating the terms of his visa. Held without bond 8/05.²¹¹
- **Mohammad Adil Khan.** Lodi mosque imam. Agreed to be deported to Pakistan upon arrest.²¹²

Political

Asylum

About 50,000 to 75,000 asylum cases are filed annually. In May 2005, Congress passed The REAL ID Act. It includes provisions dealing with key aspects of U.S. asylum law. The law narrowly reforms our asylum procedures to better ensure that all courts better scrutinize asylum claims so that legitimate claims survive and fraudulent claims get thrown out. In *9/11 and Terrorist Travel*, we discussed in some depth that terrorists like 1993 World Trade Center mastermind **Ramzi Yousef** (whose uncle is KSM) used political asylum claims effectively to get in and stay in the United States. Even with the revision of the law, immigration personnel who deal with asylum applicants must remain cognizant that those who claim political persecution in a country that the United States considers a high national security risk should receive extra scrutiny.

There are a few reasons why these claims are an excellent choice for terrorists. First, the claim itself keeps the applicant from a potential automatic removal or detention. Second, if an applicant for asylum (whether at a port of entry, a hard border, or in a court room) does not appear to pose a threat to public safety, the lack of detention space usually means the applicant is free to move about the United States. Third, often the only information

available to a judge is the word of the applicant without corroborating evidence, so fraudulent claims are easily made by those motivated to make them. For all of these reasons, political asylum claims usually permit terrorists to do what they seek: buy time to live here freely.

On June 14, 2004, **Nuradin Abdi** was indicted in Columbus, Ohio, on four counts, including conspiracy to provide material support to al Qaeda.²¹³ In 1999, Abdi had applied for and received asylum. Abdi was allegedly involved in a plot with the admitted al Qaeda member Iyman Faris²¹⁴ to blow up a Columbus shopping mall. In addition, Abdi allegedly received bomb-making instructions from a co-conspirator and had intended to travel to Ethiopia to receive training in guns, guerrilla warfare, and bombs at a military-style training camp.²¹⁵ Federal investigators believe that the plot may have involved as many as five people.²¹⁶ The three other men, unnamed, were truck drivers with Faris.²¹⁷

Sixteen other instances of political asylum being used to either prevent removal or deportation are as follows:

- **Kamran Sheikh Akhtar** was detained in Charlotte, North Carolina while videotaping buildings there in July 2004. He entered the United States illegally through Mexico in December 1991 and claimed political asylum in 1992. Five years later, in 1997, the asylum request was denied. A month later, he sought to resist removal by filing for residency based on marriage to an American. In March 1998, he is found by an immigration judge to be removable and is given voluntary departure, but a month later the marriage petition secures a permanent residency.²¹⁸

- **Abdul Halim Hassan Al-Ashqar** came to the United States on a student visa in 1989. He had received a scholarship through the U.S. government from the Thomas Jefferson Center "in order to complete my higher education in Business Administration"²¹⁹ at the University of Mississippi. He was able to do so despite the fact that he had co-founded a university on the West Bank with Abu Marzook (eventually deported for his role as U.S. leader of Hamas) and Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. He had run public relations at that university for eight years prior to coming to the United States. Once in the United States, Al-Ashqar overstayed his visa and continued working for Hamas in a variety of functions.²²⁰ He was imprisoned for refusing to testify about Abu Marzook during a grand jury investigation.²²¹ Al-Ashqar was then placed in deportation hearings himself, but claimed political asylum. The asylum claim was denied, but he fought that denial for six years in U.S. courts. In 2004, he agreed to voluntarily depart, but was instead indicted on RICO charges for running Hamas in the United States with Marzook.²²² In January 2005 announced he was an independent candidate for president of the Palestinian Authority.²²³

- **Hesham Hedayet**, who killed airline personnel at LAX on July 4, 2002, filed for political asylum in 1992 but ended up acquiring legal status through a diversity immigration lottery.²²⁴

- **Rabih Haddad**, a Lebanese citizen and a co-founder and chairman of the Global Relief Foundation (GRF), was arrested on December 14, 2001, the same day that its offices were raided.²²⁵ GRF's assets were frozen by the U.S. Treasury Department on December 14, 2001, for financially supporting al Qaeda.²²⁶ Also on December 14, 2001, the government detained Haddad on a visa violation. Haddad was originally admitted to the United States in 1998 with the status of a non-immigrant visitor. His visa expired on August 31, 1999.²²⁷ Haddad was ordered deported. Despite a series of appeals and the filing of an application for asylum and withholding of removal,²²⁸ in November 2002 an Immigration Judge concluded that he presented "a substantial risk to the national security of the United States."²²⁹ Haddad appealed again and was denied again, and on July 14, 2003, Haddad was deported to Lebanon.²³⁰ After his deportation, the Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) issued a press release that reiterated GRF's ties to Wadi El-Hage and stated again that GRF was a Specially Designated Global Terrorist.²³¹

- At least three people closely associated with the September 11 hijackers claimed political asylum, one that helped them obtain Virginia identification cards, and two other "friends."

- **Malek Mohamed Seif**, a friend of 9/11 hijacker Hanjour filed a false application for asylum and was indicted for social security, mail, and immigration fraud.²³²

- **Eyad Mohammed Mohammed Mustafa** helped 9/11 hijackers (unknowingly) to obtain VA ID cards. He made a false claim of asylum during deportation in October 2002. The application was denied and he

was
Jordan.²³³

deported

to

- **Mohdar Abdullah** was a friend of two 9/11 hijackers. He claimed political asylum defensively in 2000 after overstaying his visitor's length of stay by a year and a half. He was charged with fraud in November 2001 and was deported to Yemen in May 2004. Yemen.²³⁴
 - **Abdel Hakim Tizegha**, an associate of the LAX Millennium plotters, claimed political asylum based on persecution by Muslim fundamentalists. He said he entered at Boston as a stowaway on an Algerian gas tanker. Hearings were rescheduled five times. The claim was denied two years later, and then appealed. Nine months later his location was unknown.²³⁵
 - **Abu Mezer**, responsible for the New York City subway plot in August 1997, was arrested in Washington state in January 1997 after his third attempt to illegally enter the United States. The next month, he applied for political asylum, denying an affiliation with Hamas. In July, he did not show up for his hearing. Instead, he called his attorney and stated he had married a U.S. citizen and was living in Canada. On Aug. 1, 1997, he was arrested in New York City based on an informant's tip.²³⁶
 - **Muin Mohammad** (aka Muin Shabib, Kamel Mohammad Shabib, and Abu Muhammad) is one of the original founders of AAEF and is listed on the group's 1993 IRS Form 990 as the secretary of the AAEF Executive Committee.²³⁷ According to an FBI Action Memorandum, Muin Kamel Mohammed Shabib attended the October 1993 Hamas conference in Philadelphia along with Abdelhaleem Al-Ashqar and others.²³⁸ And documents submitted by the Department of Justice in *HLFRD v. John Ashcroft* show that Shabib was identified by the government of Israel as a senior Hamas operative formerly in charge of Hamas' Central Section (Ramallah-Jerusalem) in the West Bank.²³⁹
- On March 16, 1994, the FBI in Falls Church, Va., at the home of Yasser Bushnaq, interviewed Shabib. During the interview, Shabib admitted supporting Hamas financially and politically.²⁴⁰ Shabib was interviewed under the pretext of gaining information relating to his immigration status (he had applied for political asylum in December 1993).²⁴¹
- **Faraj Hassan** was arrested and charged with naturalization fraud in June 2004 after being granted refugee status from Syria in 1993. He worked for the Benevolence International Foundation that was considered a strong source of funding for Al Qaeda.²⁴²
 - Three terrorists involved in the Feb. 26, 1993, World Trade Center bombing, **Ramzi Yousef**, **Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman**, and **Biblal Alkaisi**, all sought political asylum. Yousef, mastermind of the bombing, was initially arrested with fraudulent travel documents upon entry at JFK International Airport in August 1992. Yousef claimed political asylum and was released pending a hearing.²⁴³ Alkaisi, also a key witness in the Meir Kahane murder, filed for both "temporary protected status" using a fake birth certificate and fake immigration entry record in August 1991, and for political asylum in May 1992 falsely claiming a prior illegal entry.²⁴⁴ Sheik Rahman, who issued the fatwa for Anwar Sadat's assassination and was also convicted for his role as the spiritual leader of the 1995 conspiracy to bomb New York City landmarks, had a long history of immigration violations and fraud, including a March 1992 political asylum claim to prevent his pending deportation.²⁴⁵
 - **Mir Aimal Kansi**, who killed two people outside CIA headquarters on Jan. 25, 1993, became an illegal overstay in February 1991. In February 1992, he simultaneously sought both political asylum and amnesty under a 1986 law. While the applications were pending, he was able to obtain a Virginia driver license and work as a courier.²⁴⁶
 - **Ibrahim Parlak** of the Kurdistan Worker's Party applied for political asylum upon his arrival to the United States in 1991. In 1992, he was granted asylum and LPR status the following year. In October 2004, he was charged with inciting terrorism and providing material support for terrorist activities. He was also charged with lying on his INS applications for failing to disclose his membership in the Kurdistan Worker's Party along with his prior aggravated felon record from Turkey.²⁴⁷

Conclusion

The attack of 9/11 was not an isolated instance of al Qaeda infiltration into the United States. In fact, dozens of operatives, mostly before, but also a few after 9/11 (other than the 9/11 hijackers) have managed to enter and embed themselves in the United States, actively carrying out plans to commit terrorist acts against U.S. interests or support designated foreign terrorist organizations. For each to do so, they needed the guise of legal immigration status to support them. Al Qaeda has used every viable means of entry. The longer the duration of the permissible length of stay granted by the visa or the adjustment of status to permanent residency or naturalization, the easier the terrorist could travel both within and without the United States. No matter what the terrorist organization or mission, it is clear from this study that terrorists will continue to try to come to the United States to carry out operations, and their instructions will continue to include immigration-related plans. Until we have a system designed to weed out terrorists, their plans on how to stay in the United States will likely succeed.

Those who come to stay and embed themselves into communities throughout the United States will continue to rely on a false guise of legality. Sham marriages and student status that lead to legal permanent residency and an almost certain guarantee of naturalization will likely continue to be some of the most egregious immigration abuses by terrorists. More aggressive culling of applications for national security risks will help prevent terrorists from attaining enhanced immigration status on the front end. However, it must therefore be a prerequisite for any strategy that seeks to attain border security to include the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) in fraud prevention and national security agendas.

Risk management as well as targeting and pattern analysis will help assure that tight resources are used more efficiently to target immigration benefit applications that may pose a national security risk. In addition, law enforcement agencies with criminal jurisdiction, such as the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and FBI-run Joint Terrorism Task Forces, must consider such investigations as priorities. Once it is discovered that a naturalized citizen is a terrorist, denaturalization should be automatically put in motion with a streamlined appeals process that harnesses the talents of both ICE and DOJ legal expertise.

To address fraud effectively, immigration benefits adjudicators must have access to comprehensive, biometrically based immigration histories that include information from the moment an individual first applies for a visa at a U.S. consulate or presents a passport at a port of entry through every subsequent request for an immigration benefit. USCIS needs to have a fully electronic applications process with biometrics embedded into each application and required on site interviews. Adequate human resources will be necessary to fulfill such a mandate while efficiently processing applications. Well-trained fraud specialists should be available at every immigration benefits center with access to the Forensic Document Lab. The practical result is that USCIS should not have to rely solely on fees for upgrading its data systems, technologies, security vetting procedures and other necessary national security tasks. Budgets must be allocated.

Also critical are security background checks, with real-time access to federal, state, and local law enforcement information upon request. The more access that is given to the national security or law enforcement information that exists on a foreign national, the less we will need to rely upon unwieldy name-based watchlists. The more security measures the United States incorporates into its own adjudications of immigration benefits *before* they are granted, the more success the United States will have in rebuffing terrorists who seek to embed here.

Underpinning practical improvements at USCIS must be a commitment to enforce the law with better and more resources. Better resources include clearer guidelines for processing immigration benefits in order to eliminate the arbitrary decision-making that inevitably takes place in their absence. In addition, comprehensive immigration reform must entail, in the long run, not only streamlining the overly complex immigration laws, but also providing sufficient human and technological resources to enforce the law on the border *and* in USCIS immigration benefits centers.

These recommendations should not be considered in a policy vacuum. Comprehensive immigration reform that includes review of all elements of our immigration security infrastructure (seven fragments dispersed through six agencies) must be vigorously debated and addressed now. However, that does not mean that we should wait

to provide sorely needed technological, informational, and human resources to our frontline personnel at U.S. consulates abroad, at our ports of entry, and our borders. Severe deficiencies have existed in these areas for years that must be redressed now; what we still lack are the metrics to determine exactly what measures will provide the best value on tight border budgets. We must find a way to acquire that information to assure our border system provides the value the American people deserve and have the right to demand.

Endnotes

¹ I covered the legacy Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) while my closest colleague, Tom Eldridge, primarily covered consular affairs at the State Department. Another colleague, Walt Hempel, did essential work on reviewing alien files of terrorists and helping me vet complex immigration law questions. My other colleague, Kelly Moore, while joining us late in the game, did essential work helping us edit and fill in intelligence portions of the report. We could not have done any of this work without the support of the 9/11 Commissioners and Executive Director Philip Zelikow, Deputy Director Chris Kojm, General Counsel Dan Marcus, and the ingenuity of Susan Ginsburg. Each gave us necessary go-aheads at various critical junctures during our investigation and production of the report.

² *9/11 and Terrorist Travel* is available in book form from [Hillsboro Press](#).

³ There is no immigration arrival record for Abdel Hakim Tizegha, an associate of Ahmed Ressam in the Millennium plot. He fraudulently claimed political asylum (he stated he was harassed by Muslim fundamentalists in Algeria). His story was that he entered Boston as a stowaway on an Algerian tanker. He was released pending a hearing, which was rescheduled five times. His claim was finally denied two years later, but was appealed, allowing him to stay. Nine months later he could not be located. See *9/11 and Terrorist Travel: A Staff Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (Franklin, Tenn.: Hillsboro Press, 2004), p. 58.

⁴ *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 145. Unless otherwise noted, the biographical information on KSM is drawn from the *9/11 Commission Report*, pp. 145–50, and the accompanying endnotes.

⁵ Kahane was later assassinated by El Sayyid Nosair, who was also indicted in the 1993 WTC bombing.

⁶ *9/11 and Terrorist Travel: A Staff Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (Franklin, Tenn.: Hillsboro Press, 2004), p. 39.

⁷ Khalid Abu Al-Dahab was a travel facilitator for al Qaeda, and married three U.S. citizens. With the third marriage, he was granted legal permanent residency and became naturalized. See *9/11 and Terrorist Travel: A Staff Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (Franklin, Tenn.: Hillsboro Press, 2004), at p.57.

⁸ *9/11 and Terrorist Travel: A Staff Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (Franklin, Tenn.: Hillsboro Press, 2004), at pp. 187-189.

⁹ Mohammed Salameh attempted to use SAW to acquire residency. Although he failed to acquire LPR status as he sought, filing under the law enabled him to stay legally in the United States. *9/11 and Terrorist Travel: A Staff Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (Franklin, Tenn.: Hillsboro Press, 2004), at pp. 193-194. Brothers Mahmud and Mohammed Abouhalima both acquired residency under SAW, Id. at pp. 194-195 and p. 190. Fares Khallafalla married a U.S. citizen and received LPR status under SAW, Id. at 53, 199.

¹⁰ Office of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, G-22.3 Naturalization Summary Chart.

¹¹ Plea Agreement, U.S. v. Faris. (E.D. Va. 03-189-A). May 1, 2003. (Unsealed June 19, 2003).

¹² "Iyman Faris Sentenced for Providing Material Support to Al Qaeda." U.S. Department of Justice Press Release. Oct. 28, 2003. Available at http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2003/October/03_crm_589.htm Accessed July 9, 2004.

¹³ Statement of Facts, U.S. v. Faris. (E.D. Va. 03-189-A). May 1, 2003.

- ¹⁴ Government's motion to detain defendant and memorandum in support, U.S. v. Abdi. (S.D. Oh. 2:04-CR-88). June 14, 2004.
- ¹⁵ Government's motion to detain defendant and memorandum in support, U.S. v. Abdi. (S.D. Oh. 2:04-CR-88). June 14, 2004. *See also* Susan Schmidt, "Trucker Pleads Guilty in Plot by Al Qaeda." *The Washington Post*. June 20, 2003.
- ¹⁶ Statement of Facts, U.S. v. Faris. (E.D. Va. 03-189-A). May 1, 2003. (Unsealed June 19, 2003.)
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁸ R. Jeffrey Smith and Amy DePaul, "'Scout' Had Low Profile." *The Washington Post*. June 21, 2003.
- ¹⁹ Statement of Facts, U.S. v. Faris. (E.D. Va. 03-189-A). May 1, 2003. (Unsealed June 19, 2003.)
- ²⁰ *Ibid*. The FBI first interviewed Faris shortly after 9/11; federal agents followed him when he traveled to New York. *See* Ted Wendling, "Ohio Agents Tailed Terrorist." *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. June 21, 2003.
- ²¹ Report of Italian Intelligence (DIGOS) to the District Attorney, Milan, May 15, 2002, Terror threat of Islamic origin.
- ²² Conversation taped by Italian police in Milan, June 2, 2004. *See also* "Casare con cristianas." *El Mundo* (Spanish national daily newspaper). Oct. 6, 2004.
- ²³ *9/11 and Terrorist Travel: Staff Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*. Franklin, TN: Hillsboro Press, Sept. 2004, at pp. 53, 199.
- ²⁴ *Id.* at pp. 52, 197-198.
- ²⁵ Kevin Peraino and Evan Thomas, "Odyssey Into Jihad: April Ray's husband became bin Laden's secretary. Now he's behind bars. Her brush with the shadowy world of Al Qaeda." *Newsweek*. Jan. 14, 2002.
- ²⁶ When Mohamed acquired the list of unindicted co-conspirators in the 1993 World Trade Center case, which included his name, he sent it to El-Hage (then in Kenya acting as Bin Ladin's personal secretary), expecting it to be forwarded to Bin Ladin in Khartoum. *See* Steven Emerson, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us*. New York: Simon & Shuster, 2002 at p. 59.
- ²⁷ Complaint, U.S. v. Wadih el Hage. (S.D. NY) Aug. 26, 1998.
- ²⁸ The immigration information in this paragraph is derived from *9/11 and Terrorist Travel* at p. 57.
- ²⁹ Superseding Indictment, U.S. v Hammoud, et al. (W.D. NC 00-CR-147) Mar. 28, 2001.
- ³⁰ The reference here is to Mohamad Youssef Hammoud, Mohamad Atef Darwiche, and Ali Fayez Darwiche. *See also* Superseding Indictment, U.S. v Hammoud, et al. (W.D. NC 00-CR-147) Mar. 28, 2001.
- ³¹ Superseding Indictment, U.S. v Hammoud, et al. (W.D. NC 00-CR-147) Mar. 28, 2001.
- ³² U.S. v. Hammoud, 381 F.3d 316, 65 Fed R. Evid. Serv. 338 (4th Cir. (N.C.) Sep 08, 2004) (No. 03-4253).
- ³³ Hammoud v. U.S., 125 S.Ct. 1051 (Jan. 24, 2005) (NO. 04-193). On remand to U.S. v. Hammoud, 405 F.3d 1034 (4th Cir. Apr 27, 2005) (NO. 03-4253).
- ³⁴ The PIJ as well as Hamas have as their ultimate aim the destruction of Israel and the creation of an Islamic state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea; however, they have distinct political priorities and conflicting views on the degree of Islamic rule over the Palestinian ummah (community). Both vie for adherents in the Middle East.
- ³⁵ Affidavit of INS Supervisory Special Agent William West In re: Search of ICP/WISE Offices, et al. Nov. 17, 1995.
- ³⁶ Superseding Indictment, U.S. v. Al-Arian, et al. (M.D. Fl.. 03-CR-77)." Sept. 21, 2004 at p. 21.
- ³⁷ Mazen A. Al Najjar Curriculum Vitae.
- ³⁸ Title Page. *Qira'at Siyasiyyah*. Vol. 1 No. 1 (Winter 1991).

³⁹ Affidavit of Jan Fairbetter In the Matter of Mazen Al Najjar In Deportation Proceedings. Oct. 13, 2000 at p. 2. Former INS supervisory agent (working on the Al Arian case since 1995) William D. West explained, "The marriage fraud evidence was not used as a basis for the underlying deportation charge, which was his overstaying his original student visa (F-1) authorized period of admission. We used the evidence of the marriage fraud primarily in the hearings related to the denial of discretionary relief from deportation and in the custody proceedings. It was important, as it demonstrated his propensity to engage in deception and fraud, but it was not the basis for his being found deportable . . . that was a basic overstay nonimmigrant. One of the ironies of the Al Najjar deportation case was just that . . . a 'simple' overstay F-1 student case cost millions of dollars, eight years of litigation (1984–2002) and nearly four years of detention in order to effect his removal from the US. All because that overstay student happened to be a Ph.D. terror suspect instead of a dishwasher or bag boy. That in itself says something about the system" (e-mail, Jan. 18, 2005).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Memorandum Decision of the Immigration Judge, In the Matter of Mazen A. Al Najjar, (EOIR Bradenton, FL A26-599-077) June 23, 1997.

⁴² Indictment, U.S. v. Al Arian, et al. (M.D. Fl. 03-CR-77) Feb. 20, 2003. *See also* Superseding Indictment, U.S. v. Al Arian, et al. (M.D. Fl. 03-CR-77) Sept. 21, 2004.

⁴³ U.S. v. Damrah, 334 F. Supp. 2d 967, (N.D. Oh. 2004).

⁴⁴ Id. at p. 969.

⁴⁵ Indictment, U.S. v. Damrah. Dec. 16, 2003.

⁴⁶ "Ohio Imam Convicted of Lying About Associations with Palestine Islamic Jihad After ICE/FBI Investigation." *ICE Press Release*. June 18, 2004. Available at <http://www.ice.gov/graphics/news/newsreleases/articles/061804akron.htm>. Accessed Feb. 9, 2005)

⁴⁷ Memorandum Opinion, U.S. v. Damrah (N.D. Oh. 03-CR-484) Aug. 30, 2004.

⁴⁸ Trial Transcript, U.S. v. Damrah (N.D. Oh. 03-CR-484) June 17, 2004 at p. 746.

⁴⁹ U.S. v. Damrah, 334 F. Supp. 2d 967 (N.D. Oh 2004) at p. 969.

⁵⁰ Judgment, U.S. v. Damrah (N.D. Oh. 03-CR-484). Sept. 20, 2004.

⁵¹ Memorandum Opinion, U.S. v. Damrah (N.D. Oh. 03-CR-484). Sept. 23, 2004.

⁵² "Imam Convicted of Lying About Terrorism Ties on Citizenship Application," *The Associated Press*. June 18, 2004.

⁵³ Affidavit of SA David Kane, In the Matter Involving 555 Grove Street, Herndon, Va., and Related Locations. (E.D. Va. 02-MG-114.) Mar. 2002. (Unsealed Oct. 17, 2003).

⁵⁴ Indictment, U.S. v. Holy Land Foundation (N.D. Tx. 04-CR-240). July 27, 2004.

⁵⁵ Damrah, 334 F. Supp. 2d at p. 969.

⁵⁶ Damrah, 334 F. Supp. 2d at p. 985.

⁵⁷ Damrah, 334 F. Supp. 2d at pp. 981-82.

⁵⁸ Damrah, 334 F. Supp. 2d at pp. 979-81.

⁵⁹ Damrah, 334 F. Supp. 2d at pp. 982-83.

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²⁴² Sabrina Tavernise, "U.S. letter tries to establish a doctor's links to terrorists." *The New York Times*, Nov. 6, 2004. See also Michael Weissenstein, "Prosecutors allege Brooklyn doctor's terror ties." *Associated Press*. Nov. 5, 2004.

²⁴³ *9/11 and Terrorist Travel: Staff Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*. Franklin, TN: Hillsboro Press, Sept. 2004, pp. 49-52.

²⁴⁴ *Id.* at pp. 53, 190-192.

²⁴⁵ *Id.* at pp. 2-56.

²⁴⁶ *Id.* at pp. 187-189.

²⁴⁷ James Prichard, "Terrorism charges filed against Michigan restaurant owner." *Associated Press*. Oct. 19, 2004.

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