

Ghost Riders in the Sky

The Alternative Scenario

Release 1.2, June 30/02

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The morning of September 11 dawned bright and clear over Boston's Logan Airport as crews arrived for the first flights of the day. The departure lounge for American Airlines Flight 11 was already filling with passengers when John Ogonowski, the pilot, and Thomas McGuinness, the first officer, arrived to board their Boeing 767 and begin the pre-flight check.

As they walked through the lounge, Ogonowski casually scanned the waiting passengers, a longtime habit. Nothing out of the ordinary.

In the cockpit, he and McGuinness worked through the long checklist and, when they came to engine start-up, the two giant General Electric turbofan engines roared into life. The weather reports were good all the way to Los Angeles. It would be a routine flight.

At 7:45 the flight crew closed the cabin doors and the 767 began to taxi out to the runway. Clearance came minutes later and, at 7:59, the engines opened to full throttle and the 767 became airborne. It climbed into clear blue skies, leveled at 25,000 feet, and headed west toward Los Angeles. Ogonowski called up the coordinates for Los Angeles on the flight control computer, then engaged the autopilot. A flight attendant brought coffee to the cockpit and stayed to chat briefly, before resuming her duties.

The flight continued normally until 8:27, nearly half an hour into the trip. At that point Ogonowski's chest felt tight and he experienced difficulty breathing. Was it a heart attack? He glanced nervously at McGuinness, thinking that if the symptoms got worse, he should warn the co-pilot that he was having a medical problem. But McGuinness' face was white and he appeared to be gasping for air. Then he vomited. "We have a situation," declared Ogonowski, trying desperately to think. There were screams coming from the passenger compartment behind the closed cockpit doors. His mind seemed to be clouding over and breathing was now impossible. He managed to say, "Call the flight attendants," before passing out. McGuinness' head was already lolling to one side.

Back in the passenger area, the last flight attendant to lose consciousness, sank slowly to her knees before passing out in the aisle. The aircraft smelled of vomit and feces. Except for one or two passengers lying in the aisles, most remained in their seats. They appeared to have all fallen asleep, but they were dead. Everybody in the aircraft was dead.

Back in the cockpit, pilot and copilot sat dead in their seats, eyes staring blackly at the deep blue sky above the cockpit windows. The aircraft continued to fly normally when suddenly the numbers on the inertial navigation system display changed. Instead of the coordinates for Los Angeles airspace, new numbers jumped into place. The aircraft banked steeply to the left and began a slow descent, adding another 100 mph to the airspeed.

In the distance, the New York skyline was growing steadily larger through the cockpit windows. The aircraft was still descending and seemed to be heading for lower Manhattan.

By the time the 767 crossed the East River, it was all too clear where the aircraft was headed. The World Trade Center Towers loomed steadily larger, dead ahead through the cockpit windows. At 8:45, the Boeing 767 slammed into the North Tower. A huge ball of flame, burning jet fuel, blossomed from the southeast side of the North Tower. The passengers and crew of Flight 11, having been gassed, were now cremated, along with hundreds of office workers in the North Tower.

At 9:03, 18 minutes later, even as thousands of New Yorkers gaped upward in astonishment and dismay at the burning North Tower, another Boeing 767, approaching from the southwest, crashed into the South Tower. United Airlines Flight 175 had also departed from Boston Logan that morning at 8:15.

At 9:45 another passenger liner crashed into one corner of the Pentagon building. At 10:00 am, a fourth aircraft crashed in a field near Pittsburgh, apparently unable to complete its mission.

Within minutes of the first crash, major networks carried the developing story. Four apparent suicide attacks involving large passenger aircraft had just struck two of America's most important landmarks. Asked for their impressions, people on the street described it as "unreal." The scale was unprecedented. The drama swept away the debris of ordinary life, shocking Americans into numbness, then anger.

In the days that followed, the story of four cells of Arab terrorists emerged with unprecedented speed. The names of the hijackers were revealed, along with their affiliation or "links" to al Qaida and the dreaded Osama bin Laden. Soon, Bush would declare his "war on terrorism." Soon American forces would be heading for Afghanistan. Soon Israel would be re-invading the West Bank and Gaza.

The September attacks acquired, almost from the start, an apocalyptic dimension, as if the hijackers stood proxy for the Four Horsemen themselves.

This analysis explores the possibility that the aircraft were hijacked electronically from the ground, and not physically from the cockpit. In such a case, there would be no Horsemen, only "ghost riders," recalling the American ballad, Ghost Riders in the Sky.

Analyzing the Terror Attacks

The discrepancy between the account I have just given of the hijackings and the one reported in the media is obvious and, to many, highly improbable. How could anyone question such an open-and-shut case? There had been the decisive (and all-too-rapid) unfolding of the FBI investigation, the steady stream of timed press releases and Pentagon briefings, the disclosure of a war plan by the White House within days of the attacks. What could they be but the work of a well-prepared government? Besides, people who have only just begun adjusting to the "new reality" will hardly be in a mood to exchange it for something far worse. Nevertheless, the "unreality" of the attacks themselves would seem to join seamlessly with the unreality of the subsequent drama.

Perhaps the script was written long before September 11, 2001.

In a following section I will examine the technical feasibility of hijacking large commercial aircraft electronically, as described in the opening scenario. I do not claim that is actually what happened on September 11, nor do I claim that any other method was used. Nor do I claim that the attacks were planned and carried out by "Arab terrorists."

I claim only that the method described below amounts to one of several genuine possibilities, albeit among the most efficient methods. I must therefore also claim that the rush to judgment following September 11 was, at best, foolhardy on the part of the Bush administration and, at worst, disastrous for America. In that event, the evidence compiled here points to elements within the power structure

of the US government and it can only be concluded that the United States itself has been hijacked.

Before explaining how electronic hijacking might be feasible, it would be appropriate to disclose some findings related to the attacks for clues they may contain that something quite different from hijackings by "Arab terrorists" was in progress that day.

The historical context:

First and most important, no attack by any so-called "terrorist" group, whether Palestinian, Basque separatist, Irish nationalist, American "Christian fundamentalist," Tamil Tiger, Red Army brigade, or what have you, was ever carried out without the group responsible claiming responsibility. The whole point of the attack is to publicize a cause. The only exception to this rule in the history of terrorism is the mysterious Al Qaida, led by the equally mysterious Osama bin Laden. Robert Fisk, the well-known British reporter, gave voice to the same opinion: "They left no message behind. They left just silence."¹ In Fisk's opinion, this was quite out of character for any terrorist organization.

If Al Qaida was responsible for the attacks, what possible reason would bin Laden have for not claiming responsibility? The White House claim that Al Qaida's purpose was to inflict "nameless terror" on America is deeply contradictory. The only other terrorist acts for which none of the "regular" organizations took responsibility, namely, the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, as well as the attack on the USS Cole in 2000, were also blamed on Al Qaida. What reason would bin Laden have for imagining that the terror inflicted by Al Qaida on September 11 would be blamed on anyone but Al Qaida, let alone be "nameless?" It simply fails to make sense. Worse yet, bin Laden has repeatedly denied involvement in the attacks. On September 11 bin Laden said "This terrorist act is the action of some American group. I have nothing to do with it." Later, on September 28, "I have already said that I am not involved in the 11 September attacks in the United States. As a Muslim, I try my best to avoid telling a lie. I had no knowledge of these attacks, nor do I consider the killing of innocent women, children, and other humans as an appreciable [sic] act."²

Nevertheless, the White House claimed to have "links" between Al Qaida and the September 11 attacks, secret information that, for reasons of "national security," could not be disclosed to the public.

Intelligence leaks:

Another discrepancy in the September 11 attacks is apparent to anyone who has followed the history of 'terrorism.' The sheer size of the operation as outlined by the White House, the high degree of coordination involved, and the need for absolute secrecy, is not one, but two, orders of magnitude greater in scale than anything previously attempted by any terrorist group. Indeed, even the previous attacks blamed on Al Qaida were relatively simple operations involving the clandestine transport of explosive materials (by boat or car) to the target site. In the large-scale operation of September 11, the requirement of secrecy was especially important.

The scale of the operation was more suited to a large, well-organized intelligence agency, with as many as 50 field agents involved, each privy to one or more aspects of the plan. With such a large operation, leaks are inevitable. The two cited below both point to a very different source for the attacks.

According to Ha'aretz (Israel's largest daily newspaper), two employees of Odigo, an Israel-based messaging service in one of the WTC towers, received email warnings³ of the attack two hours before impact on September 11. The employees immediately informed the company, which cooperated with Israeli security services, as well as American law enforcement agencies, giving them the source of the message. No follow-up on this story has been made available, which leads one to believe that the message did not come from a "terrorist" source: If such a source had been suspected (much less proved) the administration would not have hesitated to use the item in its "war on terrorism."

An interesting report of another leak⁴ alleges that "A US military intelligence report revealed details of an internal intelligence memo linking Mossad to the WTC and Pentagon attacks. The memo was in circulation three weeks before the attacks. It pointed to a threat that Mossad was planning a covert operation on US soil to turn public opinion against the Arabs." David Stern, an expert on Israeli intelligence operations, stated, "This attack required a high level of military precision and the resources of an advanced intelligence agency. In addition, the attackers would have needed to be extremely familiar with both Air Force One flight operations, civil airline flight paths, and aerial assault tactics on sensitive US cities like Washington." Stern also pointed out that the attacks "serve no Arab group or nation's interest, but their timing came in the midst of international condemnation of Israel . . ."

The virtual celebration:

A highly suspicious occurrence was the airing of a videotape supposedly shot in Palestine on the day of the attacks. The video shows Palestinians celebrating something. The media claimed that the Palestinians were celebrating the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The only problem with the tapes is the time of day. Shadows thrown by the stands and buildings in the vicinity of the celebrants clearly show the local time to be approximately noon. At the time of the attacks, however, it was already 5:00 pm (daylight time) in Palestine. At that time of day (and year), the angle of the shadows would be at least 30 degrees from the horizontal and readily visible on the video as deep shadows.

Since the tape is unquestionably a fake, shot at some other time and on some other occasion of celebration, it must be asked how it got into the hands of the American media (via an "independent producer") so quickly, unless it had been prepared in advance of the attacks. There is no other explanation for this anomaly.

Planted evidence:

Another difficulty arises in the matter of evidence discovered by FBI investigators in the parking lots of airports used by the hijackers. In more than one rental vehicle, field officers recovered copies of the Qur'an and aircraft flight manuals. In a context where the White House was stressing the "sophistication" of the attackers, as well as the high state of organization and coordination necessary to carry them out, it would seem reasonable to assume that all operatives would have been extensively briefed on the importance of leaving no trace of themselves or their mission (in pursuit of "nameless terror"). Such a briefing would certainly include all personal possessions, religious documents, flight manuals, and so on. The rental vehicles would be left as clean as they were when they were rented. No Muslim, (especially, one supposes, a "fanatic") would ever leave a Qur'an in a rented vehicle, especially if he knew he would not be returning to it. Again, there is a very serious discrepancy between the facts as reported and on-the-ground realities.

The Lebanese playboy:

Ziad Jarrah, the alleged pilot of United Airlines Flight 93 (which crashed in Pennsylvania), presents those who seek to understand the September 11 attacks with serious difficulties. As revealed in a CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) investigative report¹, first aired in November, 2001, Jarrah was the playboy son of a wealthy family in

Lebanon. The family was only nominally Muslim and Jarrah, if anything, more so. He loved to go dancing with other young people of his set in nightclubs and even had a steady girl friend, hardly practices of a believing Muslim, let alone a fanatical one. Linden MacIntyre, host and reporter, traveled to Lebanon to interview the Jarrah family, then to Hamburg, where he discussed Ziad's behavior during the months leading up to September 11 with Jarrah's landlady. The Jarrahs were completely mystified by their son's alleged role in the hijackings. The landlady, who seemed rather fond of him, was also mystified.

Jarrah loved the good life but had one over-riding passion, to study aeronautical engineering and (probably) to learn how to fly. He went to Hamburg to study and it was there, according to his landlady, that he began making mysterious evening trips to Harburg, sometimes not returning until dawn. Harburg was the address of Mohammed Atta, one of the most notorious of the alleged hijackers, and the person who, MacIntyre opines, probably recruited Jarrah for a special mission. If this is true, although we do not know what Atta may have told Jarrah, June of 2000 finds him in Florida, taking flying lessons (light aircraft only) and discussing what it would be like to fly a large commercial aircraft with his room-mate (also interviewed for the program).

Anyone with a reasonably active imagination can come up with several different stories that may have been fed to Jarrah (apart from the standard Al Qaida recruitment scenario) causing him to take flying lessons in Florida. For example, Jarrah might have been told that he was being considered for a position as private pilot to a wealthy Middle Eastern businessman currently living in Florida.

On September 9, just two days before the attacks, Jarrah telephoned his uncle in Lebanon. He sounded normal and reasonably happy, according to the uncle. He stated that he would be flying back to Lebanon in two weeks for a party which his family had planned. A new Mercedes awaited Jarrah, an anticipatory wedding gift which his father had purchased for him. MacIntyre professed no little puzzlement over the discrepancies. "It becomes more perplexing as each layer of the mystery peels away."

The 1993 Trade Center bombing:

The most important target of the September 11 attacks was undoubtedly the twin towers at the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan. These had been the target of a prior attempt at bombing in February, 1993. Among those charged with the bombing was Mohammed Salameh, a student who lived in Jersey City at the time.

On February 26, 1993, at 12:18 pm, a powerful explosion, originating in parking level 'B' beneath the WTC twin towers shook the buildings, killing seven people and trapping thousands of workers inside for hours, forcing them to breathe heavy smoke. Within a week, the FBI had arrested Mohammed A. Salameh, along with a friend, Nidal Ayyad, as prime suspects in the blast. Salameh had been traced through a fragment of metal found in the WTC parking garage. It bore the serial number of a Ford Econoline van belonging to a Ryder rental agency in Jersey City.

Salameh, it turned out, had certainly rented the van in question. Unlike most terrorists who rent vans to blow up large buildings, he reported the van stolen to Jersey City police on February 25 (the day before the blast). Unfortunately, he was unable to supply the license number, having left the rental documents in the stolen vehicle. He also reported the theft to the rental agency, attempting in the process to retrieve his \$400 deposit on the vehicle. On the next day, even as everyone learned of the WTC bombing, Salameh again telephoned Ryder, obtaining the plate number and filing a second report to the police, this time with the correct number. On the face of things, the youth was behaving just like someone who had no idea that his missing van had been used in the World Trade Center bombing.

This case gets even stranger. Salameh and Ayyad attended a small mosque on the second floor of a building in downtown Jersey City. The Imam was Shaikh Omar Abdel-Rahman. The shaikh was also arrested and brought to trial in separate, closed proceedings. A police search of the mosque revealed no hidden bomb-making or related material. A search of Salameh's apartment had the same negative result.

On the day before the bombing, a "friend" of Salameh's in Jersey City, one Josie Hadas, had hired him to rent a van to move a certain cargo. Police did, however, discover bomb-related wiring, instruction sheets and traces of explosives in Hadas' apartment. Hadas, an Israeli citizen, was taken into custody by police, but was soon sent back to Israel and (apparently) cannot be found to this day⁵.

The main source of damaging testimony at the trial was delivered by FBI informant Emad Salem, a former Egyptian army officer, who had become close to Shaikh Abdel Rahman and his circle of friends, infiltrating the group on behalf of the FBI. He testified that he had been involved in assisting with the bomb. The jury found the pair guilty of the blast, with Abdel-Rahman being tried in separate proceedings. The verdict was based on circumstantial evidence of a

conspiracy; none of the suspects ever being placed by witnesses, or forensic evidence, at the scene of the crime⁶.

After the trial, Salem disclosed a very different story⁷, that "We was start [sic] already building the bomb which is went off in the World Trade Center. It was built by supervising supervision from the bureau and . . . we was all informed about it and we know that the bomb was start to be built."

Those who are unfamiliar with the activities of large intelligence operations⁸ should be aware that frame-ups and other "dirty tricks" are part of regular operations. They are relatively easy to carry out, for the most part. For example, in the present case, Salameh could have been directed by Hadas to deliver the goods (innocuous items) to an address somewhere in Jersey City, where he would have to enter a building to report the delivery. While he was inside, the van would be stolen, then driven to another location to be prepared for its ultimate mission.

The missing passengers:

In most of the web sources^{9,10,11} for passenger lists, the names of the hijackers do not appear. There are, of course, a number of reasons why we might not see the names of the hijackers. One is that the airlines all decided, in releasing the lists to the media, to delete the names of the hijackers from the lists so as not to dishonor the dead, reproducing the lists as consisting of "victims" only. No statement to this effect appears in conjunction with any of the lists. Another reason is that the hijackers may have used phony names. Yet the passengers are usually identified not only by name on the lists, but their place of residence and occupations are also included. None of the entries give "terrorist" as occupation. It may be a bit of a stretch, but it is just possible that the hijackers' names do not appear on the passenger lists because they were not aboard the aircraft in the first place.

The missing black boxes:

Each of the Boeing aircraft involved in the September 11 attacks was equipped with the standard "black boxes," a flight data recorder (FDR) and a cockpit voice recorder (CVR). There is no known instance, prior to September 11, 2001, of a terrestrial airplane crash from which the essential flight and voice data were not ultimately recovered.

Only one of the eight black boxes was ever recovered, namely the CVR of United Airlines Flight 93, which crashed in rural Pennsylvania. According to ABC News, "The voice recorder was said

to be heavily damaged and the manufacturer was being asked to help with further analysis. The plane that crashed in Pennsylvania was reported to have hit the ground in excess of 500 miles an hour."

Black boxes are built to withstand g-forces of up to 3400 Gs, generated by a deceleration of 108,800 f/sec/sec. An aircraft traveling at 500 mph that crashes into the ground or a building will have all motion arrested within one-tenth of a second, yielding an average deceleration of 7,330 f/sec/sec, about 7 percent of the rated maximum. Heat resistance for the units is 1100 degrees Celsius over a thirty minute period.¹² Temperature would not have been a factor in the Pennsylvania crash, but even the fireball resulting from the WTC impacts had a temperature no greater than 1000 degrees Celsius.¹³ The heat lasted no longer than the jet fuel and temperatures may not have reached half that value in the insulated confines of the black box housings. In any event, the buildings each collapsed in less than half an hour from impact.

There can be little doubt that had the black boxes been recovered, they would have all the information necessary to confirm that hijackers did, indeed, commandeer the four aircraft on September 11. There have been no further reports in the media about the contents of the Flight 93 CVR. The FBI, apparently, has refused to release the tape taken from it.¹⁴

The missing interceptors:

It has been standard air force policy for many years to intercept any aircraft within minutes of it being reported off course. New York and Washington are among the most heavily guarded places in the United States. For the first time in the history of this policy being implemented, no interceptors were sent up, in spite of the fact that not one but four aircraft were involved.

It would have taken approximately five minutes for any fighter from Andrews Air force Base to intercept the aircraft that struck the Pentagon, for example. Aircraft were on standby on the morning of September 11, according to the official air force website, although the contents of the site were changed two days after the attacks to say that no aircraft were available that morning (a strange circumstance, considering the sensitivity of the area and the number of fighters stationed there).²³

The air force had not five minutes, but up to an hour to carry out

interceptions.

Virtual hijacking

The natural assumption of every single viewer of the September 11 attacks was that human beings were at the controls of the aircraft. What could they be but hijackers? Since they were also committing suicide, what could they be but terrorists? But what at first sight seems impossible sometimes turns out to be not only possible, but the actual explanation of events. Although I shall be using an in-principle argument, it must be recognized that the "devil is in the details" and that certain features of the scheme I have worked out might have to be implemented in another way. About the main conclusion, however, there can be little doubt. The thing is do-able.

As already implied, an electronic hijacking involves someone on the ground gaining control of an aircraft. In a modern commercial airliner like the Boeing 757 or 767, all control signals from the pilot and co-pilot go through the flight control system (FCS)^{15,16}. The heart of the system is a computer with three processors (to ensure reliability of operation). Each processor is able to run separate versions of what is essentially the same software. Only one processor runs at a time, but the pilot can switch from one processor to another if he suspects a malfunction. Each processor, like any multi-mission computer, has an operating system.

If something goes wrong with the computers or with the flight control system generally, a manual override is initiated by the pilot. This allows the pilot to fly the aircraft manually -- unless he is dead.

The simplest possible scheme for hijacking a modern commercial jetliner involves two elements: a) two small canisters of lethal gas hidden in the aircraft's ventilation ducts and triggered either by a timer or by radio signal, b) a small information implant (three numbers) in the flight control system and a means to trigger it.

The agent of choice for part a) would probably be fast-acting sarin, a lethal nerve gas that, at the dose levels to be used in a hijacking, would incapacitate every human being in the aircraft within a minute of first breathing the gas. Should the oxygen masks all pop out of the ceiling, it would make no difference to the outcome. One breath of the deadly gas would be more than sufficient. The symptoms described in the alternative scenario are all typical of sarin poisoning. Sarin degrades chemically within a short time of use, being undetectable thereafter.

The information implant mentioned in part b) would be new

coordinates (latitude, longitude and altitude) in a form used by the inertial navigation system (INS), which is part of the aircraft's flight control system (FCS). The central problem of this analysis is to determine which of two ways of achieving this goal is most efficient. In what I call the "custom job," a pre-installed virus-like code implant in the flight control computer(s), triggered like the gas canisters (either by timer or by radio signal), sends new coordinates to the INS. No more than a few lines of code would be required: there would be a time/signal check followed by an instruction to replace the Los Angeles coordinates by the ones stored in location so-and-so. In the "installed base" method¹⁶, the software already exists in the FCC operating system, awaiting its use (presumably) as a counter-hijacking facility. This software would be able to read the new coordinates directly by radio from the ground.

Installation of the unfriendly software and hardware would be carried out on selected aircraft during routine maintenance periods. The agents carrying out the installation might pose as mechanics or even cabin cleaners. In the cockpit they would install the special software patch (if necessary) in all three FCS processors. In a maintenance port of the plane's air supply system, they would install two custom-made sarin gas canisters, each with its trigger. Such installations are actually the easy part of the overall operation, depending on how much "cooperation" the organization receives. Although it would not be crucial, access to aircraft maintenance and location schedules would be very useful to the agents, giving them more time for installation on specific aircraft, instead of having to make the installation on additional aircraft, which might or might not be used.

The components of the FCS that concern us here are the flight control computer, the INS, and the autopilot. During most commercial flights, the pilot places the aircraft on autopilot, as guided by the INS. The autopilot manages the aircraft's control surfaces to guarantee a smooth, level flight, automatically compensating for various forms of disturbance such as turbulence and other factors. Autopilots have been around for over fifty years and have grown increasingly sophisticated with time. They do a superb job of what might be called "local control," keeping the aircraft on its present heading, altitude, and so on. However, autopilots have no idea where they're going, so to speak. That information must come from the INS. The destination coordinates, stored in the FCC, may be called up by the pilot and sent to the INS. Routinely, commercial pilots engage the INS and autopilot together, the INS continually sending new directions to the autopilot to keep it on course.

Inertial navigation systems have been around for approximately thirty

years and, like autopilots, have been the subject of tremendous development and sophistication. According to Edward Safford, dean of American avionics experts, "The plane can fly any course in the world without the need for a navigator or external nav aids."¹⁵ Present INS capabilities are, if anything, even more sophisticated, positioning an aircraft over the center of a runway hundreds of miles from the point of insertion. Such accuracy is adequate to accommodate the precise three-dimensional coordinates of the impact sites of the WTC towers and the Pentagon.

The agency carrying out the attacks would, after clandestine installation of software implants of the kind outlined above, simply trigger the whole operation when it was determined that the target aircraft was flying in INS/autopilot mode. The flight control computer would then engage the INS, feeding the new coordinates to the INS. The flight would be managed smoothly, the direction being changed as soon as the new destination coordinates were received. The changes in direction that took place on September 11 would be visible on ground radar (transponders or no transponders) as a "hard left" or a "hard right."

However an electronic hijacking might be managed, the organization responsible would also be sure to add other elements to the basic plan, not only developing lists of ghost riders, but sending fake cell phone calls from a handful of the passengers. Significantly, it would seem, most of the alleged calls, like the one to Lisa Jefferson, a 911 operator, were made to persons unknown to the caller. It was Jefferson who received the famous "Let's roll" call from an unidentified passenger on Flight 93, an "audio scene" that required nothing more than a sound studio to manufacture. All calls were obviously hurried, involving a minimum of chit-chat that would serve to identify the caller.

One clue to how easy it is to fake the remaining cell phone messages can be gleaned from the experiences of people who visit spiritual mediums in the hope of contacting a loved-one, now deceased. "I swear, it was my son. There was no mistaking that sweet little voice." The context leads the recipient of such a message actually to hear the loved one. Of course, the tone of voice must be approximately correct. To obtain such data, operatives could have taken the flights in question several times before September 11, engaging fellow passengers in friendly conversation: "Take this flight often?" It would not take very long to build a file of names and (secretly) recorded voices. In the sound studio, actors would create a background struggle, replete with curses and shouts. The introductory voice over, somewhat fuzzily transmitted, would carry the hook. "Honey, we've been hijacked!" Thereafter, with the belief framework installed, a

similar live voice could react to questions, literally playing the situation by ear, but being sure to include pertinent details such as "Arab-looking guys," "boxcutters," and all the rest. Any response that might stymie the imitator can always be met with, "Looks things are going from bad to worse. I'll try to get back to you." Click.

It would also be crucial, once such an "automated" hijacking is in progress, that air force fighters not be deployed anywhere in the vicinity of the aircraft. As part of operating procedure during such intercepts, pilots are instructed to inspect the aircraft visually, including a look into the cockpit. Has the aircraft been hijacked? Under this scenario, the pilot would see the flying officers slumped over their seats -- and no guys with dark beards.

Who benefitted?

If the September 11 attacks are regarded as an unsolved crime, the most reasonable approach is to follow standard criminal investigation technique, asking in effect, "Who benefitted?" Assuming for the moment that Al Qaida is not the perpetrator, the finger of suspicion swings 180 degrees; Ehud Sprinzak, an Israeli expert on terrorism at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, referred to the attacks as follows: "From the perspective of Jews, it is the most important public relations act ever committed in our favor."¹⁸ This observation ties in with a news report that was nearly lost in the post-September 11 shuffle.

Within an hour of the attacks on the WTC towers, five Israelis were spotted filming the burning buildings from Liberty State Park across the Hudson River in New Jersey. The person who spotted and reported their strange behaviour to the FBI immediately. They were "shouting in what was interpreted as cries of joy and mockery."¹⁹ The five men, described as "Israeli tourists," were picked up by the FBI, but there have been no further reports of their fate. This apparently real celebration provides an ironic contrast with the faked Palestinian one.

Certain elements in the United States also stand to benefit. First, there was an immediate excuse to engage in a lengthy military exercise that would involve the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars worth of munitions, a plus for the arms industry. Strategically, the United States would also benefit from the ensuing "war on terrorism" because it promises to secure American control of the Middle East even more securely, cutting Russia off from the Persian Gulf, en passant. There will be an oil pipeline, tapping the rich oil fields of central Asia, through the very country where Al Qaida is alleged to have its base of operations, Afghanistan.

If the United States and Israel are jointly culpable of this crime, it would not be unfair to ask what role each played in the disaster. Under the alternative scenario, it would seem likely that by secret arrangement Israel's Mossad took care of the aircraft attacks under a separate (and purely oral) "contract." This way, the right hand would not know what the left hand was doing, except in the most general terms; elements in the US government would have known that some kind of attack was coming.

In one of many ironic twists that accompany this scenario, the declaration by the US Department of State that they had definite information that Al Qaida was responsible may actually have been true.

Implications of the alternative scenario

If the September 11 attacks were planned and executed as a combined clandestine operation between Mossad and some US agencies such as the CIA and NSA (with God knows what involvement by the Joint Chiefs and the White House), it can be reliably inferred that other attacks blamed on Al Qaida are also fakes or "dirty tricks" in CIA parlance. These would include the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998, as well as the attack on the USS Cole on October 12, 2000, in the port of Aden, Yemen.

Self-attack is the theme of some scandalous proposals of the Joint Chiefs and the National Security Agency to launch attacks on American targets, blaming them on Cuban terrorists some decades ago.²⁰ The scheme code-named "Operation Northwoods" and "Operation Mongoose" both involved terror attacks, mostly on US soil. The attacks included blowing up a ship at the US naval base in Guantanamo, Cuba, sinking boatloads of refugees, mounting a "communist" terror campaign in Miami which included bombings and the assassination of prominent Cuban exiles, etc.

It would consequently be fair to assume that Al Qaida itself is not exactly your run-of-the-mill terrorist operation. The possibility emerges that Al Qaida is a front under joint Israel-US control. Links between bin Laden and the CIA, as well as between the bin Laden and Bush families are well-known. With "Al Qaida" performing the necessary terrorist services, the United States gets a free hand to engage in whatever military operations it likes, while Israel gets a free hand on the West Bank and Gaza. This in no way precludes the possibility that some members of Al-Qaida may think they belong to a genuine terrorist organization, including bin Laden himself. (The whole operation becomes increasingly reminiscent of Joseph Heller's

novel, Catch-22, wherein Milo Minderbinder sells US Air Force bombing services to the Germans.)

Unfortunately, we are not living in a novel or a movie. However, the surreal quality of the September 11 attacks, noted by many observers, may be an unwitting, grassroots comment on the overly-dramatic, near-cinematic quality of the attacks. What might be called "Hollywood evil" (rather than the "banal evil" thought to lie behind the Jewish Holocaust, for example) has been invoked in the form of a terrorist who has no real cause, who, having being made insane by his religion, simply loves to kill people and looks forward to martyrdom. (Or perhaps he is "envious of western civilization.") Such imagery has played a key role in media reporting on the Middle East since well before the September 11 attacks.

Why now?

Under the alternative scenario, the timing of the September 11 terror attacks can be directly related to Israel's discomfiture, one should say extreme discomfiture, with a slow turning of the tide of public opinion in the west against Israel for its treatment of the Palestinians. The change is more noticeable in Europe than in North America, but Israel has feared that as time went on, more and more Americans would become disillusioned with Israel and there would be increasing political pressure on elected officials to begin changing America's relationship with Israel.

This was not to be tolerated, as more than \$100 billion dollars (probably a conservative estimate) has been sent from the United States to Israel since the 1950s. With this money and only with this money, most of it "foreign aid," much of it in donations, Israel has been able to survive economically. Much of the foreign aid money goes right back to the United States, being spent on American arms.

Among the pressure items prompting Israel to act now was the UN conference on racism in Durban which addressed, among other matters, the issue of Israeli state racism. American and Israeli delegates walked out of the conference as soon as the item was raised.

Another pressure item was the filing by Palestinian complainants of a brief to the Belgian Court of International Law on the June 18 2001²¹. The Palestinians were survivors of the Sabra and Shatila massacres in Lebanon in 1982. Their brief singled out Ariel Sharon and other Israelis. It came just one day after a BBC documentary concluded that Sharon was indictable for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Thought to constitute a strong legal challenge, the complaint is likely

to lead to trial. Sharon would be charged under the 1993 Law for the Repression of Grave Breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and of additional Protocols I and II. Sharon has taken the prospects of a trial seriously enough to hire a Belgian lawyer Michele Hirsch to derail the proceedings.

American policy in the Middle East, broadly conceived, has come to resemble Israel's policy on the West Bank and in relation to neighbouring Arab states. Israel, which has been using the word "terrorist" for several decades, urging it upon the US media at every opportunity, uses the label to obscure the roots of "terrorism" in its own policies in the West Bank, Gaza, and in neighbouring Arab states. Its continuing response to Palestinian militancy seems calculated to guarantee a continuing source of violence that permits Israel to pose as a victim, rather than a perpetrator.

In this context, some identifiable techniques emerge, general principles which can be relied upon to predict future actions, either by Israel or the US in relation to events in the Middle East. Here is one of them.

The straw man

Use of the word "terrorist" has given closet racists a green light to indulge themselves in hatred, whether in small ways or large. The combined effect of their attitudes and actions amounts to the leading edge of public support for the "war on terrorism." Of their profound ignorance of the underlying realities one needs only to cite instances like the arson attack on a Hindu temple in Canada within days of September 11. The perpetrators evidently thought it was a mosque!

In order to cultivate this racism and to use it for political and military purposes, it has been the practice in the United States in recent decades to single out an individual who could be called the "straw man." This individual becomes the incarnation of evil and a token for the race he represents. The exposure is often accompanied by reassuring statements that, of course, most Arabs are not like that.

Because the straw man becomes, inevitably, a propaganda asset, his continued existence is guaranteed, despite assurances that the US is out to get him at all costs. The family of Moammar Khaddafi was bombed in 1986 but, strangely enough, Khaddafi himself was away at the time. In 1990 Saddam Hussein's Iraq was bombed into near-oblivion, resulting in the deaths of over 200,000 Iraqi civilians, many of them children, yet Saddam, strangely enough, survived. At the present time, they are still looking for the wily bin Laden. If they ever

find him, according to this analysis, it will be a) a fleeting appearance and b) near the next planned scene of American military operations. One event that would confirm the predictive power of this theory, for example, would be alarming reports that bin Laden has been spotted somewhere near Pakistan's arsenal of 30-odd nuclear weapons. Israel, one supposes, would love to see them placed under quarantine by US forces.

In any event, under the scenario proposed here, we may be sure that whatever we hear about bin Laden or Al Qaida in the future, the information will always come from one source, even if it pretends others.

The media

Sadly, ever since the Gulf War, the US media, particularly television news operations, have been under strict control of the Pentagon in any and all matters relating to military reporting.²² Gone are the days of the independent reporter roaming the war zone, as was the case in Vietnam. Reporters who do not toe the Pentagon line, adopting its interpretation of events, are simply not invited to press briefings. The media have, furthermore, been subtly influenced into adopting the "terrorist" spin urged upon it by parties with an interest in promoting hatred of Arabs and/or Muslims.

In this context the American news media have become enthusiastic partners in the war on terrorism, serving narrow interests that it interprets as "American." Under the scenario developed in this report, it can be reasonably be suggested that had the media not allowed its own best interests to be undermined in this way over the last two decades, the September 11 attacks would not have taken place. For without the guarantee of a news media already programmed to fall instantly into line with the "terrorism" spin urged upon it by the Pentagon, the planners of this tragedy would surely have thought twice.

By allowing the "terrorist" to become a separate, amorphous entity, straight out of Central Casting, the media have guaranteed that legitimate struggles for self-determination, driven as they sometimes are to violent expression, will result in more "terrorists," involving American forces in a never-ending search for the boogey-man of the new millennium:

"So cowboy change your ways to-day or with us you will ride, chasing this devil herd across these endless skies."

Recommendations:

The mere possibility that the September 11 attacks had a quite different source demands two responses:

1. An open, public inquiry into the attacks should be set up under an independent judicial body. Investigations currently under way in the US Congress may well be compromised by the attempts of Bush and Cheney to limit their scope, itself a suspicious circumstance.
2. The evidence presented in the trials of Salameh, Ayyad and others in relation to the 1993 Trade Center bombing should be re-examined by an independent judicial body in open hearings.

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Note: This document has been given a Release Number and date, reflecting an ongoing process of inquiry. If you have information about any of the items in this analysis, please contact the author. Documented information will be most useful in producing improved versions of this report. The author can be reached by email at <akd@uwo.ca>.

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History of Releases:

This document is undergoing successive revisions as more information about the September 11 attacks comes to light. Thoughtful comments by knowledgeable readers have made this succession of increasingly feasible scenarios possible. Future releases will refine the details, but the author already has the distinct impression of converging on the simplest and most "practical" alternative scenario.

- Release 1.0: January 22, 2002: In this scenario, hijackers were recruited by an intelligence agency.
- Release 1.1: February 4, 2002: In this scenario, the use of hijackers was assumed to be too risky and two all-electronic hijacking operations were explored.
- Release 1.2: March 8, 2002: after expert criticism relating to impossibility of disabling manual control, a new approach developed. If the passengers and crew of the aircraft are gassed first, the whole operation becomes an order of magnitude simpler.
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