

**FBI's Handling of  
Intelligence Information  
Related to  
*Khalid al-Mihdhar*  
&  
*Nawaf al-Hazmi*  
September 11 Attacks**



November 2004

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United States Department of Justice  
Office of Inspector General

Glenn A. Fine



# Findings

## U.S. Department of Justice Inspector General

“The FBI had at least *five* opportunities to learn about their presence in the United States and to seek to find them before September 11, 2001.”

# The Five Missed Opportunities

# ***First***

## ***Early January 2000***

- **Mihdhar travels to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where he meets with other al Qaeda operatives. Surveillance photos taken. (Malaysia Photos)**
- **Mihdhar was suspected al Qaeda operative. CIA learns he had multiple-entry US visa and, in March 2000, that Hazmi had traveled to Los Angeles in January 2000.**

# First

- CIA does not disclose to FBI existence of Mihdhar's U.S. visa, and surveillance photos are not disclosed to FBI at that time.
- Nor does anyone from CIA share information that Hazmi traveled to US in January 2000.

# Second

## *February 2000*

- Mihdhar & Hazmi move to San Diego, where they live with a long-time FBI asset.
- FBI does not learn until after 9/11 that Mihdhar and Hazmi had lived with one of the Bureau's assets (informant).

# *Third*

## *December 2000 & January 2001*

- Reliable joint FBI - CIA source provides information related to FBI investigation of USS Cole attack.
- Source links Mihdhar and Hazmi with purported mastermind of attack, “Khallad.”

# Third

- However, FBI not informed that Khallad has been identified in Malaysia photos.
- This identification could have led FBI to focus on who else was at Malaysia meetings with Khallad, which could have led FBI to identifying and locating Mihdhar or Hazmi.

# Fourth

## *Summer 2001*

- CIA and FBI has various interactions regarding USS Cole attack which touch on participants in January 2000 Malaysia meetings and information developed by CIA regarding meetings.
- Yet, despite these interactions, in e-mails and in June 11 meeting at NYFO, FBI is never informed of critical intelligence information that Khallad was identified in Malaysia photographs with Mihdhar and that Hazmi had traveled to the US.

# *Fourth*

## *Summer 2001*

- Again, this information could have led FBI to initiate a search for Hazmi earlier than it did.

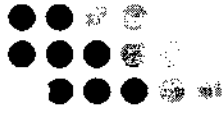
# ***Fifth***

## ***August 2001***

- FBI learns Hazmi met with Khallad in Malaysia in 2000 and that Mihdhar had re-entered US on July 4, 2001.

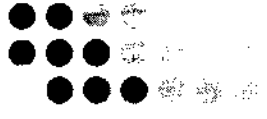
## ***Early September 2001***

- FBI starts searching for Mihdhar & Hazmi but without high priority and fails to locate them before attacks.
- FBI assigns few resources and little urgency is given to the investigation.



# **Fifth**

- Further, separation between intelligence and criminal information (the Wall) affects who can receive access to information about them.
- This interpretation of the wall also hampers ability of NYFO agents working USS Cole investigation to participate in search for Mihdhar & Hazmi.

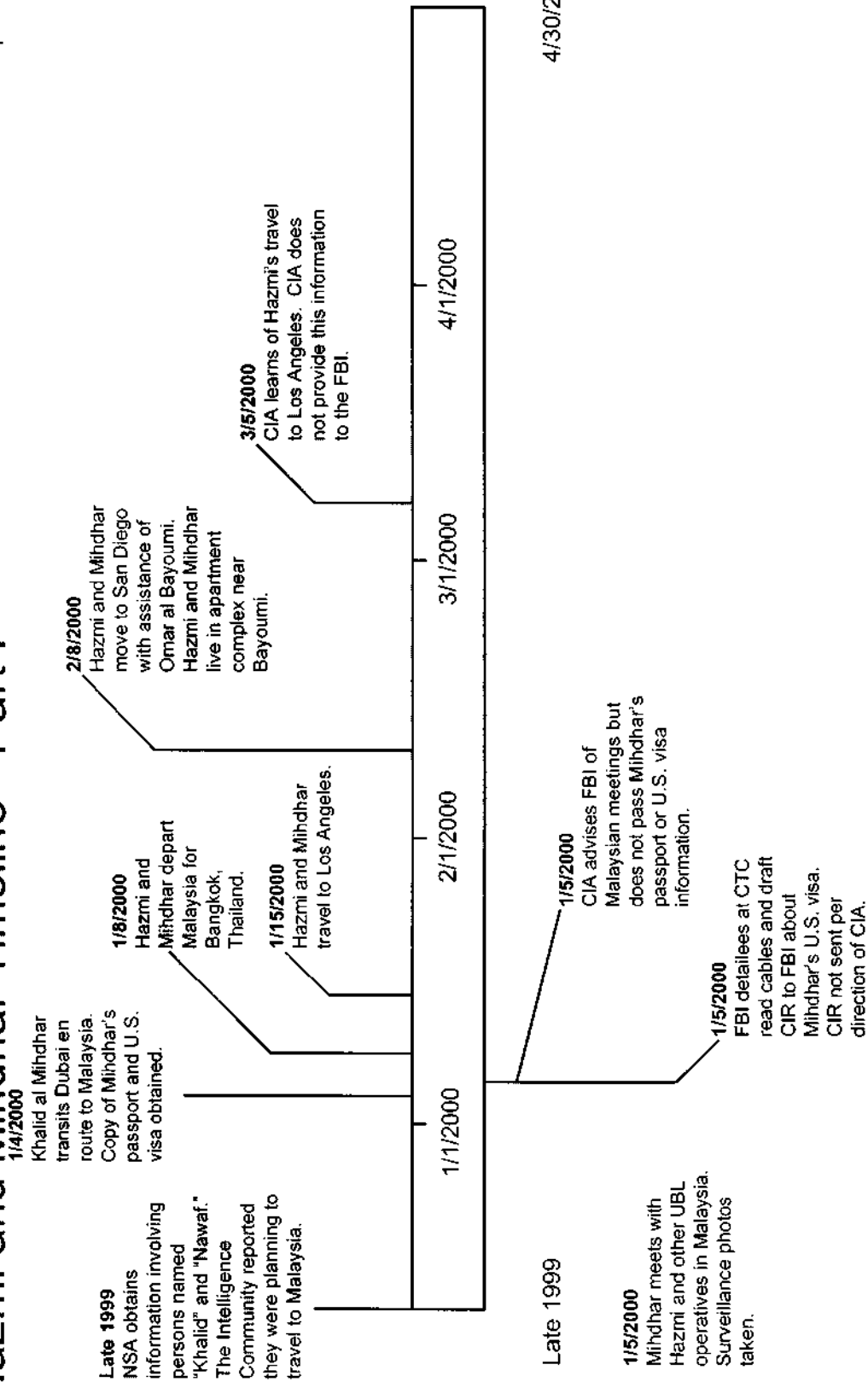


# **Fifth**

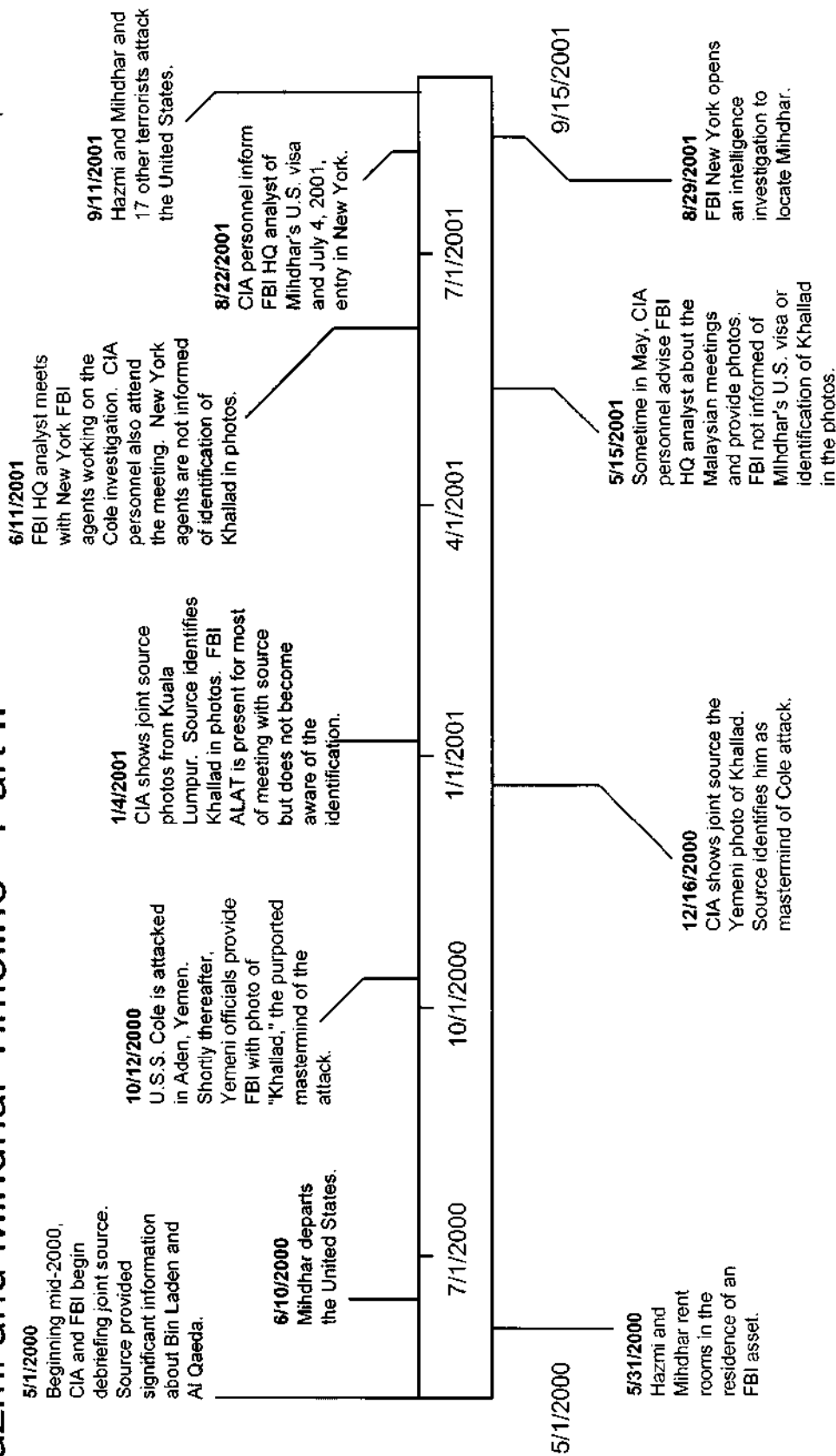
- Clear predicate for criminal investigation that no one appears to notice at the time.
- Neither CIA nor FBI Watchlisted Mihdhar or Hazmi until August 24, 2001.
- FBI is not close to locating Mihdhar or Hazmi before 9/11 attacks.



# Hazmi and Mihdhar Timeline - Part I



# Hazmi and Mihdhar Timeline - Part II



# The Employees

Dina Corsi  
FBI Intelligence Operations Specialist  
Usama Bin Laden Unit, FBIHQ

Rod Middleton  
FBI Acting Supervisory Special Agent  
Usama Bin Laden Unit, FBIHQ

Doug Miller  
FBI Special Agent  
CIA Alec Station

# The Employees

“Mary”

FBI Analyst

CIA Alec Station

Robert Fuller

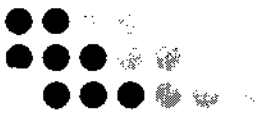
FBI Special Agent

Usama Bin Laden Squad, NYFO

Steve Bongardt

FBI Special Agent

Usama Bin Laden Squad, NYFO



# The Employees

“John”

CIA Detailee

International Terrorism Operations Section

FBIHQ

“Patrick”

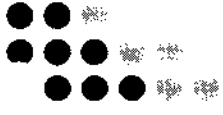
Detailee, Immigration & Naturalization Service

FBI NY

“Peter”

CIA

Counter Terrorism Center



# Timeline: Opportunity ONE

- **Late 1999**

Intelligence Community on high alert due to concerns of new Millennium.

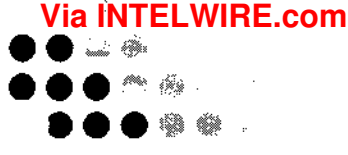
- **Late 1999**

National Security Agency obtains information that persons named “Khalid” and “Nawaf” are planning to travel to Malaysia.

- **Early 2000**

CIA determines links between these two and al Qaeda and also identifies “Khalid” as Khalid al Mihdhar.

# Timeline: Opportunity ONE

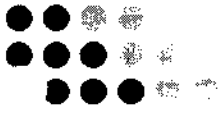


- ***January 5, 2000***

Mihdhar arrives in Kuala Lumpur. Passport contains valid US visa. Several CIA cables discuss Mihdhar's travel and discovery of US visa in Saudi passport.

- ***January 5, 2000***

Mihdhar meets with Hazmi and other Usama Bin Laden operatives in Kuala Lumpur. Surveillance photos obtained.



# Timeline: Opportunity ONE

*January 5, 2000*

Doug Miller, FBI employee assigned to CIA Counter Terrorist Center (CTC), reads relevant CIA cables and drafts Central Intelligence Report (CIR) which includes:

- National Security Agency (NSA) information on Mihdhar and planned travel to Kuala Lumpur;
- Photos of Mihdhar that would be sent via separate cover; and
- Details of Mihdhar's passport and multiple-entry US visa including listing New York as intended destination on visa application for 3-month stay.

## Central Intelligence Report

**Not sent to FBIHQ per direction of CIA**

# Timeline: Opportunity ONE

## *January 8, 2000*

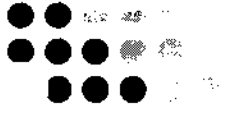
- Hazmi departs Malaysia for Bangkok, Thailand

## *January 15, 2000*

- Hazmi travels to Los Angeles

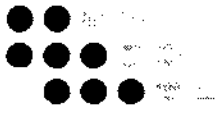
## *March 5, 2000*

- CIA learns of Hazmi's travel to Los Angeles
- CIA does not pass this information to FBI until August 2001
- CIA does not place Mihdhar or Hazmi on Watchlist
- Mihdhar & Hazmi, meanwhile, are placed on other country's Watchlists, including that of Thailand.



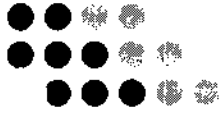
# OIG Findings: Opportunity ONE

- Hazmi with al Qaeda operatives who traveled to Malaysia and were photographed with other suspected operatives.
- Hazmi traveled to Bangkok with 3<sup>rd</sup> person.
- Mihdhar had multiple-entry US visa
- Hazmi traveled to Los Angeles in January 2000



# OIG Findings: Opportunity ONE

- Significant pieces of information not passed to FBIHQ:
  - Mihdhar's US multiple-entry visa
  - Hazmi travel to United States
  - Khallad's identification in Malaysia
- CIA did not Watchlist Mihdhar or Hazmi until August 24, 2001.



# Timeline: Opportunity TWO

## ***January 15, 2000***

- Mihdhar and Hazmi travel to Los Angeles.
- Visa entitles them to stay until July 14, 2000.

## ***February 8, 2000***

- Mihdhar and Hazmi move to San Diego and reside in apartment complex.

## ***March 2000***

- CIA learns Hazmi traveled to Los Angeles on January 15, 2000 but fact not shared with FBI until August 2001.

## ***May 31, 2000***

- Mihdhar and Hazmi rent room in residence of FBI Asset whom they met in local mosque.

# Timeline: Opportunity TWO

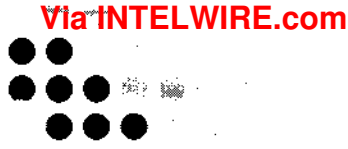
***June 10, 2000***

- Mihdhar moves out of asset's residence and departs United States.

***December 10, 2000***

- Hazmi moves from asset's residence
- Hazmi travels to Phoenix, Arizona where he lives with Hani Hanjour (American Airlines # 77) for 3 months.

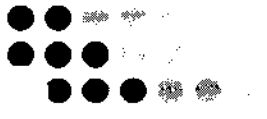
# OIG Findings: Opportunity TWO



- FBI did not obtain information about Mihdhar & Hazmi's presence in San Diego from source who had been an FBI Asset since 1994.
- While living in San Diego, Mihdhar & Hazmi did not hide their identities.

# OIG Findings: Opportunity TWO

- With real names they:
  - Rented an apartment
  - Obtained California Driver's Licenses
  - Opened Bank Accounts
  - Received Bank Credit Cards
  - Purchased a Used Car
  - Obtained Automobile Insurance
  - Took Flight Lessons at Local School
  - Obtained Local Phone Service with Mihdhar's name listed in telephone directory.



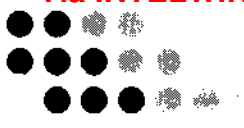
# Timeline: Opportunity THREE

## *August 7, 1998*

- United States Embassies bombed
  - Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
  - Nairobi, Kenya
- NYFO leads investigation

## *May 1, 2000*

- CIA & FBI begin questioning joint source who provided significant information on al Qaeda operations.
- Source gives information about “Khallad.”
- Source says “Khallad” involved in Embassy bombings.
- Khallad was trusted senior Usama bin Laden operative.



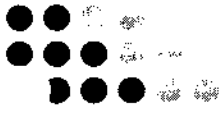
# Timeline: Opportunity THREE

## *October 12, 2000*

- USS Cole Attack in Yemen
- NYFO leads investigation

## *December 16, 2000*

- Source identifies Khallad as mastermind of attack on USS Cole.



# Timeline: Opportunity THREE

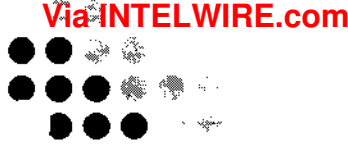
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*January 4, 2001*

- Source also identifies Khallad as being present in some of the Malaysia photos.
- Source's identification of Khallad in Malaysia photos raises question whether Mihdhar and Hazmi were also linked in attack on USS Cole.

# OIG Findings: Opportunity THREE

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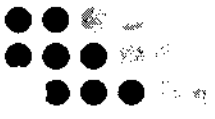


- FBI not made aware of source's identification of Khallad in Malaysia meeting photos.
- NYFO not aware of existence of Malaysia meeting photos.

## OIG Findings: Opportunity THREE

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- Had FBI known about identification of Khallad in Malaysia photos, agents would have likely sought information about other participants at meeting, including Mihdhar & Hazmi, which would have increased FBI's chance of locating them prior to events of 9/11.



# Timeline: Opportunity FOUR

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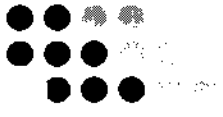
*October 12, 2000*

- USS Cole attacked in Yemen.
- NYFO agents lead investigation of attack.
- Steve Bongardt, a NYFO agent, is assisted by Dina Corsi from Usama bin Laden Unit at FBIHQ.

# Timeline: Opportunity FOUR

*May 2001*

- “John,” a former CIA Deputy Chief of the Usama Bin Laden Unit detailed to FBI International Terrorism Operations Section, becomes interested in any nexus between Malaysia Meeting Photos & bombing of USS Cole.

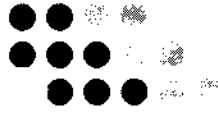


# Timeline: Opportunity FOUR

## *May 2001*

- “John” asks another CIA analyst, “Peter,” about Malaysia Meeting.
- “John” becomes aware that Hazmi had traveled to United States in January 2000 and that Khallad had also been identified in Malaysia Meeting Photos.

# Timeline: Opportunity FOUR



## *End of May 2001*

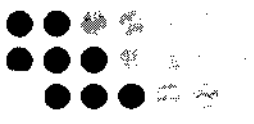
- Dina Corsi, FBIHQ analyst, learns of January 2000 Malaysia Meeting Photos when “John” gives some of them to her. She knew Mihdhar was in photos but neither “John” nor “Peter” tell her that Khallad had been identified in Photos, that Mihdhar held a US Visa or of Hazmi’s travel to United States in January 2000.



# Timeline: Opportunity FOUR

## *End of May 2001*

- Corsi plans meeting at FBI NYFO to discuss USS Cole Investigation. Planned participants include:
  - NYFO agents on Cole including Steve Bongardt.
  - “Mary,” an FBI detailee to CIA’s Counter Terrorist Center Usama Bin Laden Unit who has recently been told to get up to speed about the Malaysia Meetings
  - “Peter,” who is a CIA employee



# Timeline: Opportunity FOUR

*June 11, 2001*

- FBIHQ analyst Corsi meets with NYFO agent Bongardt and others who are working on the USS Cole investigation.
- CIA's "Peter" and "Mary" also attend this meeting.

# Timeline: Opportunity FOUR



**June 11, 2001**

NY Meeting

- Corsi displays 3 Malaysia photos but does not tell NY agents of Mihdhar's link to al Qaeda due to "*The Wall*."
- NYFO agents not informed of Mihdhar's visa to enter United States or the fact that Khallad had been identified in Malaysia Meeting Photos.
- Corsi does not leave photos with NY agents because she does not believe she is permitted to do so.

# Timeline: Opportunity FOUR

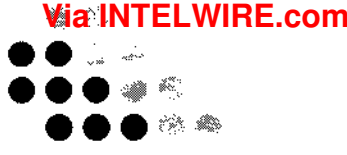
## *June to August 2001*

- Limited follow-up from Corsi about Malaysia photos or permission from National Security Agency to pass Mihdhar intelligence to NYFO.

# OIG Findings: Opportunity FOUR

- While there are several interactions between FBI & CIA in May and June that could have resulted in the FBI learning more about the Malaysia photos and Mihdhar, FBI personnel did not become aware of significant intelligence informations about Mihdhar’s connections to “Khallad.”

# OIG Findings: Opportunity FOUR

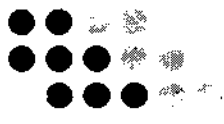


- Not disclosed to Corsi or FBI NYFO in May - June 2001:
  - Mihdhar's valid US multi-entry visa
  - Hazmi's presence at Malaysia meeting
  - Hazmi's travel to Los Angeles
  - Khallad's identification in Malaysia

# OIG Findings: Opportunity FOUR

*June 11, 2001*

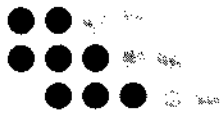
- Part of NYFO meeting becomes “Very Contentious” when agents want more information about Malaysia meeting & Corsi refuses to provide because of “The Wall” restrictions.
- Little followup by Corsi or NYFO agents regarding Malaysia photos.
- CIA – FBI interaction another failed opportunity for FBI to obtain critical information.

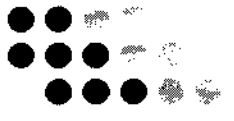


# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

*July 13, 2001*

- “John” writes “OK. This is important” in a cable to CTC managers asking if information about identification of Khallad in Malaysia Meeting Photos can be passed to FBI.
- In the cable he calls Khallad a “major-league killer who orchestrated USS Cole attack and possibly the Africa bombings.”
- No evidence CIA managers acted on “John’s” request until August 30, 2001.





# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

*July 23, 2001*

- Having seen no action, “John” e-mails CIA Counter Terrorist Center Manager inquiring on status of request to pass info. to FBI.
- John notes that *“When the next big op is carried out by UBL hardcore cadre, Khalad will be at or near the top of the command food chain--and probably nowhere near either the attack site or Afghanistan. That makes people who are available and who have direct access to him of very high interest. [KAM] should be of very high interest anyway, given his connection to the [redacted].”*

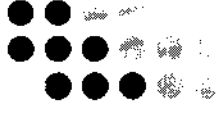
# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

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*August 21, 2001*

- “Mary” locates CIA cables regarding Hazmi’s travel to United States on January 15, 2000. She checks with U.S. Customs representative about Hazmi & Mihdhar’s travel and discovers Mihdhar entered on July 4, 2001 but has not departed.
- “Mary” immediately leaves voicemail message for Dina Corsi, who is on annual leave.

# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE



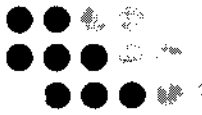
## *August 22, 2001*

- “Mary” meets with Corsi at FBIHQ and tells her of information learned day prior.
- Corsi confirms:
  - Mihdhar & Hazmi enter US on January 15, 2000 with destination Sheraton Hotel, Los Angeles.
  - Mihdhar departs US on June 10, 2000.
  - No departure record for Hazmi.
  - Mihdhar re-enters US on July 4, 2001 at JFK NY destined for Marriott Hotel NYC.
  - No record Mihdhar departed US.
- Corsi incorrectly assumes Hazmi left US on July 10, 2000 with Mihdhar.
- In fact, Hazmi remains in US.

# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

*August 22, 2001*

- “Mary” asks another CIA CTC officer to draft notice to Department of State, Immigration Service, US Customs and FBI requesting Mihdhar & Hazmi be placed on **Watchlist**.
- Mihdhar & Hazmi placed on watchlists on August 24, 2001.



# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

*August 22, 2001*

- Watchlist System
  - ✈ Department of State: **VISA/VIPER**  
**TIPOFF**
  - ✈ Immigration: **LOOKOUT**
  - ✈ Customs **TECS**

# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

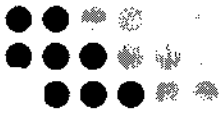
*August 23, 2001*

- Corsi contacts her Unit's Supervising Agent, Rod Middleton, regarding Mihdhar's travel to the United States and tells him Mihdhar entered the U.S. on July 4, 2001 with no indication of a departure.
- Middleton recalls his reaction as an " 'Oh, shit' moment."
- Middleton & Corsi agree an investigation should be opened to locate Mihdhar.

# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

*August 27, 2001*

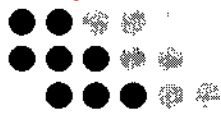
- Corsi requests permission through the NSA representative to the FBI to pass to the FBI agents working on the USS Cole investigation the information associating Mihdhar with a suspected terrorist facility in the Middle East linked to al Qaeda activities.



# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

*August 28, 2001*

- Corsi sends NYFO draft of Electronic Communication [EC] requesting Full Field Investigation to locate Mihdhar.
- Despite Urgency... Corsi marks EC as “Routine,” which is the lowest level of precedence.
- “Routine” means Within Normal Course of Business.



# **Timeline: Opportunity FIVE**

***August 28, 2001***

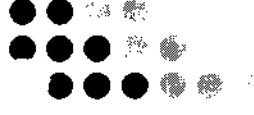
- **Corsi's EC is provided to various criminal agents on NYFO UBL Squad including agent Steve Bongardt.**

# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

*August 28, 2001*

- Bongardt argues that the Mihdhar investigation should be “265” as it relates to USS Cole.
- “199” International Terrorism Intelligence Investigation.
- “265” International Terrorism Criminal Investigation.

# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

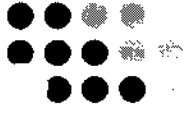


## *August 28, 2001*

- Corsi asks Bongardt to delete it because of NSA information it contains.

## *August 29, 2001*

- Corsi e-mails Bongardt of decision of FBI's National Security Law Unit stating no Criminal agent should attend any interview of Mihdhar if he is located.



# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

August 29, 2001

- Bongardt responds via e-mail to Corsi:

***“...someday someone will die—and wall or not—the public will not understand why we were not more effective and throwing every resource we had at certain problems. Let’s hope the National Security Law Unit will stand by their decisions then, especially since the biggest threat to us now, UBL, is getting the most protection”***

# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

*August 29, 2001*

- NYFO opens Full Field Intelligence (199) Investigation to locate Mihdhar.
- Case assigned to agent Robert Fuller, who is relatively inexperienced.
- Fuller is also working another matter at the time.
- It is Fuller's first Intelligence investigation.

# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE



*August 30, 2001*

- Corsi e-mails agent Fuller, introducing herself and attaching Mihdhar's US visa application, which she received the day prior from US Consulate, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- On application, Mihdhar falsely stated he had not previously applied for visa.
- Neither Corsi nor Fuller notice this discrepancy.

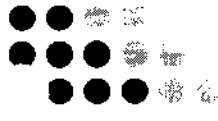
# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

*August 30, 2001*

- CIA sends Central Intelligence Report to FBI outlining identification of “Khallad” in Malaysia meetings.
- This is **First** record showing information regarding January 2000 meeting was provided by CIA to FBI.

# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

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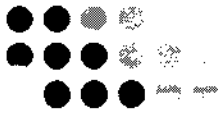
## *September 4, 2001*

- Fuller begins work to locate Mihdhar.
- Fuller did not start sooner due to other assignment.
- Fuller completes LOOKOUT form for Immigration & Naturalization Service.
- Fuller seeks assistance of “Patrick,” who is an INS agent assigned to FBI.

# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

*September 4, 2001*

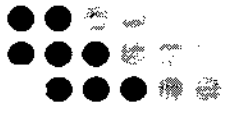
- Fuller checks box on form identifying Mihdhar as “Potential Witness” rather than “Terrorist” to prevent overreaction.
- Fuller confirms US Customs TECS lookout was in place for Mihdhar.
- Fuller requests local criminal history check on Mihdhar though NYPD.
- Fuller performs same checks for Hazmi after reading Corsi’s EC several times.



# Timeline: Opportunity FIVE

*September 5, 2001*

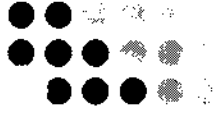
- Investigation by Fuller on Mihdhar & Hazmi includes:
  - NCIC Criminal History Checks
  - ✓ Credit Checks
  - ✓ Motor Vehicle Checks
  - ✓ Marriott Hotel Checks
  - ✓ Choice Point Searches [with assistance]
- Results: **Negative**
- After 9/11, records on Hazmi were located in this commercial database.



# **Timeline: Opportunity FIVE**

## ***On or About September 5, 2001***

- Fuller contacts Corsi concerning her request to have him locate Khalid al-Mihdhar.
- Fuller & Corsi discuss potential for obtaining additional data on Mihdhar such as credit card number from Saudi Arabian Airlines.
- According to Fuller, Corsi tells him that it would not be prudent to do so.



# **Timeline: Opportunity FIVE**

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## ***September 10, 2001***

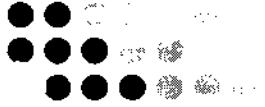
- Fuller prepares request for FBI Los Angeles to search various Sheraton Hotel records concerning Mihdhar & Hazmi.

## ***September 11, 2001***

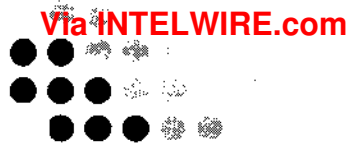
- Fuller's request not transmitted until this date.

## **OIG Findings: Opportunity FIVE**

- **Although FBI & CIA personnel had many discussions throughout July & August 2001 regarding USS Cole attacks and Malaysia meeting, the CIA did not provide and the FBI did not become aware of significant intelligence information regarding Mihdhar's US visa, Malaysia meetings and identification of Khallad in photos.**



# OIG Findings: Opportunity FIVE



- CIA also did not provide to the FBI the information about Hazmi's January 2000 travel to United States until August 22, 2001.

# OIG Findings: Opportunity FIVE

- On August 22, 2001, when FBI became aware of information about Mihdhar and that he was in United States, the Bureau took steps to open an Intelligence Investigation to locate him but did not pursue as an urgent matter or assign many resources to it.
- It was given to a single inexperienced agent without any priority.

# OIG Findings: Opportunity FIVE

- Dispute within FBI regarding whether to open a Criminal vs. Intelligence case demonstrated the wall between Criminal and Intelligence Divisions.

# OIG Findings: Opportunity FIVE

*On September 11, 2001*

❖ **The FBI was not close to locating Mihdhar or Hazmi when they participated in the attacks.**

• **Criminal Predicate**

• **Experience Level of Agent**

• **Lookout Form**

• **Choice Point Search**

• **Saudi Arabian Airlines Contact**

# Summary of Items FBI Missed

- In sum: FBI failed to receive from CIA 3 critical pieces of intelligence about Mihdhar and Hazmi in a timely manner:
  - Mihdhar's possession of a valid, multiple-entry US visa;
  - Hazmi's travel to the US; and
  - Identification of Khallad in surveillance photo of Malaysia meetings attended by Mihdhar and Hazmi and other al Qaeda operatives in January 2000.

# Summary of Items FBI Missed

- CIA became aware of these 3 pieces of intelligence in January 2000, March 2000 and January 2001, but none of this information was passed to FBI until August 2001.
- Nor did CIA watchlist Mihdhar & Hazmi before August 24, 2001.
- Moreover, there were several opportunities for FBI to have obtained this information in other ways.

# Summary of Items FBI Missed

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- But significant systemic problems hindered flow of information between CIA and FBI.
- Further, employees at both CIA and FBI failed to provide or seek important information about Mihdhar & Hazmi, despite numerous interactions between them on issues related to Hazmi from January 2000 through August 2001.

# FBI Letter to Inspector General June 2004

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On behalf of the Director, I want to thank you and your staff for this report....

... the FBI values the Office of the Inspector General's input as a comprehensive independent assessment of our operations and as a means of identifying weaknesses that require corrective action to strengthen our operations.

...your findings and recommendations are consistent with the FBI's internal reviews and with those of other oversight entities.

