

~~Team 6~~  
FBI

To: Front Office  
From: Michael Jacobson  
Re: Niaz Khan

DECLASSIFIED UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE  
INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL,  
E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)  
ISCAP APPEAL NO. 2012-048, document no. 2  
DECLASSIFICATION DATE: July 8, 2015

As you're aware, there was an article in the *Wall Street Journal* this past Thursday about a British citizen named Niaz Khan who claimed that he approached the FBI in April 2000 about a possible UBL hijacking plot. We investigated these allegations fairly thoroughly during the Joint Inquiry, and the story Khan is now telling to the press is fairly consistent with what we learned during the JI.<sup>1</sup>

**Summary of Khan's Allegations to the FBI in 2000**

Khan first came to the attention of the FBI on April 6, 2000, when he was referred to the FBI's Newark Office by the Atlantic City Police Department. The police informed the FBI that Khan had placed a telephone call to 911 in Atlantic City, claiming that he was in danger of being killed. The police interviewed Khan later that same day, and determined during the interview that he might have information regarding an aircraft hijacking. As aircraft hijacking is a matter within the FBI's jurisdiction, they quickly referred Khan to the FBI.

On April 7, 2000, Khan was interviewed by FBI's Newark Office. He told the FBI that on approximately March 18, 2000, he was at a casino in Manchester, England and had lost a great deal of money. He was leaving the casino, fairly despondent, when he was approached by a Pakistani man who asked him why he looked so upset. When Khan explained his situation, this individual offered him a chance to "change his life" by going to Pakistan. The individual explained that by doing so, Khan would be doing something positive for Islam. Khan was told that his trip and other expenses would be paid for and he was also instructed where to purchase his ticket. Khan quickly agreed, and visited the travel agency that same day. This individual also told Khan that he would make the necessary hotel arrangements for Khan in Lahore, Pakistan, and informed Khan how and where to meet his contact who would take him to the training camps.

Khan informed the FBI that he traveled to Pakistan on March 22, 2000, spending one day in Lahore, before proceeding to the camps in Afghanistan. The camp, according to Khan, was approximately 40 minutes from Lahore, and may have been called "Radwan Hakim." Khan remained at the camp for about three or four days, training with several or eight other recruits. During this brief period, the group received Islamic instruction, weapons training and on training on airplane hijacking (Khan said that they trained on a 747). The Islamic training was primarily focused on Usama Bin Ladin, and the hardships Bin Ladin has endured in fighting for the Islamic cause. The recruits were all asked repeatedly whether they were willing to die for the Islamic cause.

After completing the training, Khan was told to travel to JFK Airport in New York, via London and Switzerland. At JFK, Khan was to make contact with a cab driver named "Babu Khan." Khan was provided with a description of the cab driver, and was also told to wear a certain outfit so that the cab driver could identify him. The mission, as explained to Khan, was that he was to meet 5 or 6 other individuals in the U.S. and that they would all participate in hijacking a 747. Khan was told that the group would include pilots. This hijacking was supposed to take place sometime between April 7 and April 21 of 2000. The plan, according to Khan, was to use all necessary force to hijack the plane, which they would then fly to Kabul, Afghanistan. If they could not make it to Kabul, they were to blow the plane up. They were to use "pen guns" and grenades to accomplish the hijacking, which would be provided to them by personnel employed in the airport's "Duty Free" section.

However, Khan said that when he arrived at JFK on April 2, 2000, he decided not to go through with the plan. Instead, he went to Atlantic City, where he gambled away the money that he was provided for the mission. At that point, he contacted the Atlantic City police.

#### **FBI Investigation of Khan's Allegations**

The FBI's Newark Office made a variety of efforts to corroborate Khan's claim. The FBI was able to verify some aspects of Khan's story. A review of Khan's passport indicated that he had traveled to Pakistan in March of 2000, entering Pakistan on March 22 and departing on March 30, 2000. The State Department's Diplomatic Security Service was also able to determine that Khan had, in fact, stayed at a hotel in Lahore, Pakistan during this time period. Also supporting Khan's story is the fact that Khan's family filed a missing person's report on April 7, 2000, indicating that Khan had been missing for three weeks. Khan's credibility also rose, in the eyes of the FBI's Newark Office, after he passed an FBI polygraph, which included questions on his training in Afghanistan and involvement in a hijacking plot. During the investigation (as is mentioned in the *Wall Street Journal* article), the FBI also learned that Khan had been attending a mosque in Oldham, England for the past six years. Khan said that the imam was named Qari Rahman, whom Khan as a supporter of UBL and the Taliban.

However, there were many aspects of Khan's story which the FBI was never able to confirm. The FBI was never able to identify the cab driver or any of Khan's other possible contacts in the U.S. This was despite the FBI's attempt to recreate the original scenario by placing Khan in the same spot at JFK Airport where he was supposed to meet the cab driver, wearing the same outfit. The manager of the hotel in Lahore, Pakistan where Khan stayed said that it was doubtful that Khan went far from the hotel during his trip. According to the manager, Khan stayed in his room virtually the entire time he was at the hotel. Khan was registered at the hotel from March 22-30 of 2000, which also contradicts his story that he only stayed there for one night and then proceeded to the camps. The FBI was not able to confirm that there was a UBL training camp named "Radwan Hakim," as Khan claimed. The FBI drew up composites of Khan's associates

and trainers at the camp, based on descriptions from Khan, but these also did not lead anywhere.

The FBI worked this investigation closely with a number of other U.S. Government agencies. As discussed earlier, the Diplomatic Security Service assisted with the investigation in Pakistan. The FBI also sent the information about Khan to the CIA, requesting CIA traces on Khan. The FBI also coordinated with the FAA, due to Khan's allegations that the group would get their weapons from duty free personnel. In investigating this possibility, the FBI determined that duty free personnel had full access to planes, and that it would be fairly easy for them to bring weapons on board. The FBI's Newark Office convinced the FAA's representative at FBI Headquarters to disseminate a security advisory to the airlines about this potential vulnerability.

### **FBI Decision to Return Khan to England**

After several weeks, the FBI had to make a decision as to what to do with Khan. The FBI could not charge him with any crime, and so they could not hold him. By that point, he was no longer cooperative, and had become despondent. It is true, as the article notes, that there was not agreement within the FBI as to the merits of Khan's claims. The Newark agents appeared to believe Khan, despite their inability to corroborate many of his allegations. The New York office and FBI Headquarters were more skeptical and considered him most likely to be a fabricator.

The FBI eventually decided to send Khan back to England. On April 20, 2000, several Newark agents traveled with Khan to England, where he was turned over to British authorities. The British then let Khan go. In the view of the Newark case agent, the British had no interest in this case from the start. The case agent stated that he would have liked to continue the operation once Khan was back in England, and to try to use Khan as a potential asset. However, according to the case agent, the British were not interested and the CIA was scared off by Khan's possible suicidal tendencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Our JI investigation on this matter included interviewing the Newark case agent, the New York Office's squad supervisor who was involved in this matter, relevant FBI Headquarters personnel, as well as reviewing FBI and CIA documents. Our assessment during the JI was that the FBI's Newark office had thoroughly investigated the allegations, but was unable to corroborate many of Khan's claims.