

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Interview of FBI Special Agent Michael Anticev

Type of event: Interview

Date: August 26, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

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INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL,
E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)
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Background

Anticev graduated from Wagner College in 1985 with a business degree. He first went to work at Prudential Bache until 1987. From 1987 to 1991 he worked on the trading desk for Jeffries. He joined the FBI on April 21, 1991. His first office was the NYFO. He was immediately assigned to work Foreign Counterintelligence (FCI) matters [redacted] and Yugoslavian) for almost a year. He then was transferred to Supervisory Special Agent (SSA) [redacted] * squad that was primarily concerned with Middle Eastern matters. He started worked on Sudanese matters. Over time this squad transformed into a counterterrorism (CT) squad. In 1995 Special Agents (SA) John Cloonan, Dan Coleman, and he were pulled into the supervisor’s office and told about an opportunity to be detailed to the CIA for a new unit that was focused on Usama bin Laden (UBL) that was later called Alec Station. Dan Coleman volunteered and took the position. Anticev continued to work on CT matters at NYFO.

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CT investigations

* squad opened the 265 [note: criminal terrorism] case on UBL. In the early days of Alec Station Dan Coleman was the focal point because the agency hands were tied as to options. In Anticev’s view, the FBI was “the only tool in the box to fight terrorism.” The endgame was always indictment. Prior to September 11, 2001, Alec Station, the Southern District of New York (SDNY), and the FBI worked jointly on CT matters. Headquarters was not involved in “calling the shots” regarding the CT cases in NYFO.

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After the Embassy bombings in August 1998 the squad was split between those working the Kenbom/Tanbom investigations and the general UBL squad. Anticev remained on the UBL squad. On this squad he worked closely with Alec Station. He said the UBL squad "was it." The investigation into the attack on the USS Cole was originally on the UBL squad.

In the summer of 2001 it was understood that something big was coming but there was no discussion of where it might be. In Anticev's view this was more "a Headquarters thing" versus a "field office thing." Anticev thought that the FBI had some good analysts such as Dina Corsi, [redacted] But the analysts were trying to solve what was on their plates at the time. They did not have the resources to have a think tank worrying about the big picture. They had trial dates to worry about.

Prior to September 11 there were plans and ideas about how to pick up UBL. He had already been indicted and thus legally could be picked up at any time. Any plans to capture UBL were handled at a higher level. Anticev said that Jack Cloonan and Dan Coleman were involved in practicing with a special operations group on rendition plans. NYFO Special Agent in Charge (SAC) John O'Neill decided whether this process was going to be a NYFO job or a Headquarters job. Anticev said the squad was not involved in the process. Anticev, however, also said Dick Clarke used to come to the NYFO to talk to O'Neill about this. Anticev recalled a meeting with Clarke, O'Neill, Pat D'Amuro (Assistant Special Agent in Charge), Cloonan, and himself where these issues were discussed.

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Anticev said there was a CIA representative in [redacted] Anticev said [redacted] did not focus on UBL issues so Anticev only spoke to him occasionally. There were, however, people on his squad who were responsible for going to [redacted] SCIF (Secure Compartmentalized Information Facility) to read [redacted] traffic.

[redacted]

Jamal Ahmed al-Fadl

In late 1995 an informant named Jamal Ahmed al-Fadl, who was nicknamed "Junior" walked into the embassy in Eritrea. [redacted] He was then taken to Germany. Then Dan Coleman, Frank Pellegrino, and an Assistant United States Attorney went to debrief him. Junior was on the run from UBL because he had stolen funds from him. The decision was made to charge Junior with various offenses and bring him to the United States where he would be an informant on the UBL organization.

[redacted] When Junior first arrived he was put up in a house in New Jersey. There was a detail placed on Junior around the clock, "24/7." They then brought his wife and children over. Junior then demanded they bring his brother and others in his extended family over to the United States. Anticev described this as a major drain on resources but Junior was considered a very important asset.

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] Anticev discussed this as an example of how close the relationship was between the FBI and the CIA. He described the relationship as healthy. He said there was arguing between the agencies, but they got the job done. He said the Administration back then kept the Agency's hands tied regarding options so there was only one clear solution - proceed for prosecution and this meant working with the FBI. In contrast, post September 11 prosecution was not the only tool in the box and so the CIA was no longer interested in working with the FBI.

[Redacted]

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September 11

On the morning of September 11 Anticev was sitting at his desk and on the telephone with his wife when the building shook badly. He could see the first tower burning. He then saw the second tower hit. The office then tried to get people down to the World Trade Center (WTC). [note: the NYFO is only a short distance from the WTC site.] He went outside and tried to stop car traffic three blocks away from the WTC site. Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) Ken Maxwell was trying to coordinate NYFO's response. A meeting spot was set up at the corner of Church and Vesey Streets. Anticev never made it to the spot because the first tower fell before he got there. All of the agents' Nextels were down so there was no communication among the agents. It became pitch black outside and he could not get within a couple of blocks of the site. He described an eerie silence but he could hear glass falling. He remembered thinking, "this is stupid." Then word got around that all the agents were to meet at the FBI garage in

[Redacted]

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The office set up a command center in the garage and they began covering leads. He "hooked up" with Assistant United States Attorney Pat Fitzgerald to discuss options. A week later he went to interview Wali Khan. They set up a video link to talk to Junior, Ali Mohammad, Joe the Moroccan (Kertchtou), and [Redacted]

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[Redacted] In October he went to Khartoum because the Sudanese started to cooperate and give them access to al Queda operatives in their custody.

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General comments

Anticev complained that post September 11 the FBI has been "cut out of the loop so badly that I don't know if we can get back into the game." He said they had "always gotten the job done" in the past. They "connected all the dots." He noted that UBL had been indicted prior to the August 1998 Embassy Bombings. He complained that there is a lack of higher management defending the FBI and its mission. He complained that the FBI is not being given access to detainees who are being held overseas. He argued that the FBI's lack of access to detainees is an FBI issue, not just a New York Field Office issue.

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