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Special Agent Ali Soufan

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INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL,
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1. Evolution of al-Qaida in Afghanistan after the move from Sudan up to 9-11 (Yoel)
 - a. Camps
 - b. UBL personal movements
 - c. When and how does UBL get control of all of the training camps?
 - d. WMD
 - e. Tradecraft
 - i. Operational Geographic Regions
 - ii. Distinct Operational Phases
 - f. Abu Zubaydah's evolving role
2. East Africa Bombings (Doug & Yoel)
 - a. What do we know now that we didn't know at the trial?
3. KL Meetings (Doug)
 - a. KL Meetings
 - i. Quso says he gave Khallad \$35K for a new prosthesis and other amputees – Khallad claims he was given \$10-12K – who's right and what's the money really for?
4. USS Cole (Yoel)
 - a. Roles of Nashiri, Khallad, Badawi, and Quso?
 - b. When did we know if was al Qaida?
 - i. Intelligence v. Law Enforcement standard?
5. Interrogations (Niki)
 - a. Ref KSM interrogators don't know anything about who he was – why do you say this?
 - b. Gitmo translators?
6. Current Threat (Niki)
 - a. Loss of Afghanistan – how has al Qaida changed?
 - i. More power to individual cell commanders?
 - ii. Unapproved attacks?
 - iii. Facilitators/couriers more important?
 - iv. UBL's role?
 - b. Distinct operational phases still the same?
 - c. Loss of masterminds affect ability to conduct large-scale ops?
 - d. Best way to attack the current threat?
 - e. Decentralized al Qaida more or less threatening?
 - f. Loss of UBL effect on al Qaida?

Dieter?

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

NOTES ON SEPT. 8, 2003 ROUNDTABLE INVOLVING FBI AND CIA ON ORGANIZATION OF AL QAEDA

[Note: this discussion was on the record]

[redacted] of CTS handed out an organizational chart, based on two documents discovered in Afghanistan (one of which was the text of the 2001 merger between AQ and the EIJ). The official name of the new organization created by the merger is "Qa' idat al-Jihad," and the chart apparently attempts to reflect the makeup of this organization as of September 11, 2001.

In discussing the handout, [redacted] pointed out that the Shura Council is just advisory and could be ignored by Bin Laden. He also thought that Abu Zubaydah's claim that the Shura was divided into "A" and "B" groups was plausible.

[redacted] orally described the leaders of the committees:

Atif was head of the military committee (as well as deputy to UBL), and Saif Adel was Atif's deputy on the military committee. Abdel Hadi el Iraqi headed the Combat Division of the Military Committee; Abu Muhammad el-Masri headed the Training Division; and Adel headed the Special Operations Division.

Adel also headed the Security Committee, which protected Bin Laden, the security of Al Qaeda documents, etc.

The political committee was chaired by Zawahiri (although it is not clear what that committee did), and the Media and Information Committee was chaired by KSM. The Foreign Relations Branch of these committees handled relations with the Taliban as well as others.

Finally, there was an Administrative and Financial Committee, chaired by Shaykh Said, and his deputy was Hamza al Qatari, who was killed in Afghanistan.

In remarks later echoed by others, [redacted] cautioned against overreliance on the chart. In practice, the organization was not that rigid, and there was lots of informal activity. Different sources have different lists of committees. Also, the chart only tells you about Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and not about how their cells operated abroad. Finally, the chart is particularly weak when it comes to major terror operations, since personnel like KSM and Nashiri would go directly to UBL, bypassing the committee structure.

[redacted] maintained that relations between Al Qaeda and other groups became tighter over the years, especially in 2000-2001. Eventually, the Taliban gave Al Qaeda control over all terror training camps in Afghanistan. Thus, even figures such as Zarqawi and Abu Zubayda, who tried to maintain their independence, were sucked into the Al Qaeda orbit. You could be very close to Al Qaeda and essentially subordinate to it without swearing bayat.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

Ali Soufan from the FBI suggested that we read Abu Zubayda's diaries, which apparently have been recovered.

According to [] examples of groups close to Al Qaeda included the IMU in Uzbekistan; the Tunisian Combat Group; and Abu Doha's group.

[] reiterated that around 2000-2001 the training structure in Afghanistan was formalized and put under Al Qaeda control.

First, a would-be trainee would go to a Guesthouse in Pakistan or Iran; then he would undergo basic training in Farook Camp. This camp primarily offered military training, with a little bit of "terrorist" training in explosives and poisons. UBL would address the trainees and they would be given an opportunity to swear bayat. At this point, AQ was no longer selective, and all recruits would be given the opportunity to swear bayat.

Those who did swear bayat would either get more advanced training in poisons and explosives, or go to the front to fight the Northern Alliance, or be sent on an operation.

After [] spoke, Ali Soufan from FBI NY gave a slide presentation on the structure of Al Qaeda, and an accompanying handout.

Although the FBI's charts do not match up precisely with the CIA's chart and presentation, there is significant overlap and agreement. Among the differences are that the FBI lists a religious committee, which is absent from CIA's chart; the CIA lists Sulyaman Bu Ghayth as a member of the Shura Council, while the FBI does not; the CIA stated that Zawahiri was probably the chair of the political committee, while the FBI lists UBL as chair; and so on.

The FBI agreed with the CIA that UBL calls the shots, and the Shura Council is advisory. The FBI stated that the role of Shura Council member Mohammed Salah (who is now dead) was to liase with other groups.

The FBI also elaborated on the training camps in Afghanistan. All camps were closed by the Taliban in 1999, except for Al Qaeda camps. A would-be trainee would arrive at a guesthouse, give up his passport and other personal documents, and fill out forms. For internal security purposes, the forms included a question on who vouched for the trainee, e.g., there were only 4 people in Yemen who could vouch for people going to AQ camps.

Farook Camp was used for basic training, and trainees were closely watched and formally evaluated. Abu Muhammad, who was in charge of training, would send evaluation papers to Atif. ("Doc. X" contains these evaluations). Trainees who seemed like promising candidates for "special operations" (i.e., terror attacks) would be interviewed by Atif and Adel. A candidate selected for a special operation would go onto specialized training with, e.g., Abed al Rahman al Muhajir (an explosives expert) or Adel Aziz el

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

Masri (a specialist in chemicals). Those trainees selected for combat rather than special ops would report to Abed al-Hadi al-Iraqi.

Per FBI, Special Operations was chaired jointly by the heads of the security and military committees, Adel and Atif, and had 5 cells: an Arabian peninsula cell headed by Nashiri; a US/South Asia cell headed by KSM; a Europe/North African cell headed by Abu Zubayda; a "rest of the world" cell headed by Adel and Abu Muhammed; and an "administrative cell" headed by Khallad.

Khallad was personally close to UBL and functioned as his "eyes and ears"; he was, therefore, part of every operation.

Abu Zubayda had been in charge of arranging for trainees to get into Khaldan Camp, which was a heavily North African camp. North Africans focused on regime change in the Muslim world, and had some disagreements with AQ, although Khaldan Camp had served as a funnel to AQ. When the Taliban closed Khaldan, Abu Zubayda and Sheikh Ibn al Libi met with UBL. All North African operatives such as Ressam (Millenium Plot), had contact w/Zubayda.

KSM, meanwhile, had lived in the US, and he had many contacts in South Asia.

Although AQ had an Arabian Peninsula cell, UBL would not allow operations in Saudi Arabia prior to September 11.

In addition to heading the US/South Asia cell of Special Operations, KSM also functioned as head of the "media office," which reported to the media committee. The media committee was intimately tied to AQ operations, i.e., statements were issued before operations. Media operatives included Khallad, al-Hawsawi, and Anas al-Libi (who was indicted for the East African bombings).

Per FBI, the security committee included a documents division for forged documents. Abu Yasir al-Jazairi was the head forger for AQ until his capture. The Security Committee also did counterintelligence, cased potential targets, and protected UBL. The US received a great deal of information from

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

UBL changes his bodyguards w/every terrorist attack. Abu Khobeib was probably the only bodyguard to stay w/UBL since Sudan.

The primary sources for the FBI's presentation included the text of the EIJ/AQ merger;

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

interrogation that contains an organizational chart (the primary FBI briefer did not, however, put much stock in the reporting on this issue from Sheik ibn al-Libi or Abu Zubayda); and other document(s) on the structure of AQ. All of these are in "Doc. X."

This essentially concluded the initial presentations.

Anonymous made several points: 1) the EIJ was basically decimated by US and Egypt by the time Zawahiri joined with UBL, although Zawahiri was respected for his scholarship; 2) direct alliances between AQ and other groups were rare; 3) AQ's media operations were not operational signals.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

He also emphasized that AQ was overwhelmingly an "insurgent operation" on 9/11 with a small terrorist component. I.e., it was primarily designed to provide military training for use in armed conflicts around the world, e.g., Afghanistan, Chechnya, Kashmir. But the insurgent base provided a pool of recruits for terror operations. In his opinion, a terrorist group would not be able to absorb all the damage the US has inflicted on AQ.

[redacted] of CIA said that AQ's main focus is the US, and not on local insurgencies. He cited a letter from UBL to Mullah Omar that the US has recovered which lays out AQ's goals. FBI NY noted that the US is the "head of the snake" to UBL and AQ.

There was agreement that AQ's multinational character of what makes it so hard to stamp out.

FBI NY said that KSM joined AQ in the late 1990s, and that he brought JI into the AQ orbit.

Someone said that Abu Khobeib al-Sudani delivered money from AQ for the 1995 assassination attempt of Mubarak. No one knew whether the story of Ubl offering the Saudis protection against the Iraqi government after the invasion of Kuwait was actually true, but they noted that everyone in Al Qaeda believes the story.

Anonymous opined that AQ is not trying to destroy the US, just to "bleed us" to force changes in US policy. He said that UBL is not apocalyptic. He noted that AQ views Somalia as a victory and an example of how their strategy will work.

FBI NY said that WTC I was not related to UBL, but urged us to talk to FBI agents Pelligrino and Anticev about WTC I and Manila Air, as they were more knowledgeable.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

It was noted that UBL left paramilitary forces in Afghanistan/Pakistan when he left the area prior to the Sudan period. It was also noted that UBL lost a lot of money when he moved to Afghanistan.

There was a brief discussion of the status of Al Qaeda today. [redacted] of CIA thought that Al Qaeda could operate pretty effectively as a decentralized organization. He said that it had become so decentralized that some people were even violating UBL's instructions. Anonymous disputed the widespread assumption that Al Qaeda has lost its Afghanistan base; he says this is not entirely true. Anonymous stated that the US does not know what's going on in 98% of the country.

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E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

This was followed by discussion of the charts that the Commission staff had drafted based on a document seized in Baku in 1998, and debriefs of the defector Fadl. CIA stated that someone [redacted] had corroborated almost everything Fadl said.

Unlike the FBI/CIA charts relating to 2001, Fadl has a large shura with about 30 names. This led to a discussion of the differences between AQ in Sudan and AQ in Afghanistan.

One hypothesis was that AQ was more of a Comintern in Sudan, but then tightened its organizational structure in Afghanistan, perhaps in part because of merger discussions with EIJ. Also, more focus on business and assisting other jihads in Sudan, while in Afghanistan perhaps there was more focus on direct AQ fighting and operations, as well as on media to attract more fighters. Anonymous suggested that AQ went to Afghanistan more or less voluntarily in order to wage war on the US. He also noted that the period from May 1996 to May 1997 was an unsettled time for AQ, because of the ongoing Afghan civil war.

Anonymous and FBI NY agreed that UBL dominated EIJ and the Egyptians rather than vice versa. Before 1996, UBL did not have operatives of his own. He was using Abu Hafs' and Sif al-Adl's contacts/operatives in the EIJ. However all the EIJ in Albania were taking orders from Abu Hafs/AQ.

FBI NY stated that that in retrospect it is clear that the Somalis greatly increased their military capacity from June 1993 on due to AQ training and weaponry. There was a huge shipment of RPG's into Somalia that summer. Evidence exists AQ trained the Somalis to use them b/c the Somalis learned how to shoot at helicopters w/RPG's, especially from above. This was a technique used against the Soviets b/c helicopters had all the armor underneath.

Commission staff also showed a 1988 chart from Tareekh Osama that may be a precursor to AQ. There was some discussion of precisely what this chart related to, as well as whether Walid Khan and Hambali were listed on it. Commission staff also displayed a chart showing training by UBL and other major figures in Masada camp in the 1980s.

Finally, there was a renewed discussion about the importance of not relying too much on organizational charts, at least when it came to operations. UBL was central to these operations, and they were highly compartmented within AQ. In practice, AQ was flexible and fluid, although this does not make the organizational charts worthless. Similarly, when it came to relations with most other terrorist groups, ties were mostly loose and informal and based on personal relationships rather than on some kind of formal "regional council." E.g., personal relationship between KSM and Hambali.

The FBI believes one of the biggest challenges that exists is cracking down on those individuals that answered UBL's call to all Muslims to fight the infidels who are not necessarily part of AQ or any other terrorist organization.

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Interview of FBI Special Agent Ali Soufan

Type of event: Interview

Dates: August 26, 2003
September 15, 2003

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Barbara A. Grewe

Team Number: 6

Location: FBI, New York Field Office

Participants – Non-Commission: 8/26/03 Randy Blair, FBI; Robert Sinton, FBI (portions); 9/15/03 Sean O'Neill

Participants – Commission: 8/26/03 Barbara Grewe, Doug MacEachin; 9/15/03 Barbara Grewe, Caroline Barnes, Peter Rundlet (majority of interview)

Background

SA Soufan received his undergraduate degree from Mansfield University. He obtained a masters degree in International Relations at Villanova. He is fluent in Arabic (native speaker). Soufan entered on duty with the FBI at Quantico on July 6, 1997, after being recruited at Villanova. He transferred to the NYFO in November 1997. The NYFO was his first choice office. He spent 6 months rotating through various staffs then in February 1998 he joined a JTTF squad that focused on EIJ and Iraqi FCI work (I-40 with SSA Tommie Donlon). When Soufan was on the applicant squad (this squad does background checks for FBI employees) he wrote a paper on Usama Bin Laden (UBL). His supervisor suggested that he meet with Mark Chidicimo, who was then the supervisor of the analysts. Soufan wrote the paper based on public sources on the Internet. He then "hooked up" with Kevin Cruise who was working on UBL matters. Soufan said he did not even know that a UBL squad existed until he worked with Kevin Cruise. Cruise was very interested in what Soufan had written. Soufan drafted an EC regarding UBL, its title was "International Islamic Front," that was placed in a binder along with his other UBL research. After the East Africa bombings occurred the EC was used to justify assignment of the East African bombings case to the NYFO.

In June 1998 Soufan was on surveillance when he was paged by Cruise. Cruise told him his "friend" [note: reference is to UBL] had done a press conference with ABC news. [note: this was the John Miller interview that is described in his book The Cell.] Soufan told Cruise that was UBL's third warning. Soufan explained that it is a part of

Arab/Semitic culture to give three warnings – it was considered a sign that one was on the path of righteousness. UBL’s first warning was his declaration of war in 1996. The second was the 1998 fatwa. Finally, the third was the warning contained in the June 1998 interview. Despite this pattern, Soufan said UBL did not give three warnings for 9/11. Soufan never had an opportunity to debrief Miller on his interview of UBL although he believes others in the office may have. He noted that SAC John O’Neill and Miller were good friends so he assumed that Miller and O’Neill spoke about it.

After the August 7, 1998, East Africa bombings Soufan went to the UBL squad and said he thought UBL was responsible. The FBI had opened a command post. Tommie Donlon took Soufan to SAC O’Neill in the command post and had him tell O’Neill what he knew about UBL. Soon thereafter UBL claimed responsibility, and then NY became the OO for the case. O’Neill asked Soufan, NYPD Detective Tommie Corrigan (who was assigned to the JTTF), and Kevin Cruise to write a teletype to Headquarters about what they knew. Soufan stayed in the command post with O’Neill for some time and they became close. SAC John O’Neill transferred Soufan to [redacted]’s I-49 squad to work al Qaeda cases. This later became John Liguori’s squad and eventually was renamed IT-1. This squad needed his language skills as he was the only Special Agent with Arabic language skills in the NYFO. There was [redacted] who also spoke Arabic. Soufan worked closely with [redacted] who was the analyst on the squad.

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E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

Later SAC John O’Neill transferred Soufan back to the Iraq squad. On that squad he focused on Albania and arrests of EIJ operatives (one arrest was before the East African bombings and one was after). He continued to help out [redacted]’s squad as well.

In September 1998, he was assigned the Operation Challenge matter in London. Based on voluminous documents found in a house there a large number of people were arrested. Soufan and the others, however, were particularly focused on three individuals who were connected to UBL or EIJ. He worked closely with New Scotland Yard on the matter. Soufan claims they “are the best.” When the English justice system released the three suspects on the grounds that there was inadequate basis to charge them, Ken Karras (SDNY), Ali Soufan and SA Dan Coleman (NYFO) quickly put together an indictment to get the three men rearrested and charged. They were able to link the AKAs found on documents seized in the search with these three individuals. [redacted] who was a Headquarters’ analyst put things together, created spreadsheets, and did research on people to pull the case together. The British gave copies of the recovered documents to the Legat who gave them to NYFO. Soufan indicated that this was a police case, so they worked with New Scotland Yard, not MI-5. They gave a briefing to MI-5 but there was confusion because MI-5 thought the case was built on sources not documents. Apparently MI-5 had copies of all of the documents but had not bothered to read them.

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Soufan has been active with training other agencies regarding counter-terrorism, including New Scotland Yard and MI-5. Soufan noted that he believes our system is better than the British system because MI-5 does not share with enough with NSY, which it considers are just “cops.” Soufan recalled he had given a presentation to MI-5 but they

did not seem to know much. He added that MI-5 and MI-6 also don't share with each other enough.

In October 2000, Soufan was named co-case agent on the Cole bombing case. He traveled with John O'Neill to Yemen for the Cole investigation. When that case was transferred to Kevin Cruise's squad (IT-2), Soufan moved with it.

Analysts

Soufan thought that the Headquarters analysts were helpful. He has worked with [redacted] [redacted] Dina Corsi, [redacted] They were all TDY'ed to NYFO from Headquarters to work on UBL related matters. They would conduct research on various people, make spreadsheets, etc. He noted that in the field there are not really analysts. He believes that the field office analysts should be required to have a master's degrees like the Headquarters' analysts do. He claimed that qualified analysts do not want to be in the field offices because they cannot make enough money. He believes that the FBI is trying to recruit more qualified analysts and is giving the position higher grade levels to make that possible. He indicated that in the field the agents do most of the real analysis.

Soufan indicated that he was not interested in becoming an analyst. He would rather conduct interviews himself to obtain good information and then work with the analysts on it. He liked being "on the ground" in Yemen in the Cole case. He also liked debriefing individuals.

Soufan believes that analysts need to be assigned to particular squads instead of being centralized. He wants analysts to have continuity and a knowledge base and to specialize or he believes it will be a waste of time to use them. He agreed it would be acceptable to have a separate analytical division as long as there were specialists within it.

Access to information

Soufan has Intel Plus on his desktop, which is an FBI database of major cases, separate from ACS. He is waiting for a password for Intelink. Now the squad analyst, [redacted] [redacted] does the Intelink searches for them. He does not have direct access to DocEx. He has to go through Headquarters for this information. Although he indicated that Dan Coleman does have direct access.

Information sharing/dissemination

When Soufan was in Yemen the FBI passed information gleaned in Yemen and written in ECs [redacted] which sent the information back to FBI Headquarters through its own channels because the FBI did not have a means to communicate well. [redacted]

[redacted] Then Soufan would review and approve what they wrote [redacted] to make sure it was not inconsistent with FBI reporting because

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E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

of concerns regarding possible discovery issues. If the FBI had a meeting with the PSO in Yemen, [redacted] would invite itself to the meeting. But if [redacted] had meetings with the PSO, the FBI was not invited.

The CIA had some internal information problems [redacted]

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

This created a significant information dissemination problem for them.

Soufan indicated that he had started creating IIRs to disseminate information in his work. He created Abu Jandal IIRs that were disseminated. He claimed that three of his IIRs received the highest value rating.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

Relationship with CIA

Soufan believed that the FBI generally, and he specifically, had a good relationship with the CIA prior to September 11, 2001. He indicated that the FBI shared information with the CIA. [redacted]

[redacted] Soufan noted that he worked himself to exhaustion in Yemen after the Cole bombing which required his being hospitalized three times.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

[redacted] He believed that they would provide everything they had (“We complete each other”) but now he has changed his mind “completely.” If the FBI was present, the FBI wrote up the meeting.

Soufan was involved with debriefing Abu Zubaida (AZ). He claimed that he began clashing with the CIA analysts regarding how to debrief Zubaida. New analysts were then assigned. Soufan indicated that he and Steve Gaudin [NYFO] arrived on the ground before the CIA was even there. On his AQ organizational chart, Soufan has a dotted line between AZ and AQ because he believes that the connection was not as strong as others had characterized it.

Soufan has been excluded from most of the debriefings of the detainees. He argued that the CIA did not have the appropriate personnel conducting these debriefings because they are not adequately schooled in the nuances of AQ: For example, if a detainee claims he was trained by a particular person, then he must have had a specific mission. There were different people in charge of doing training for specific types missions. For example, all of the plots from AZ were with North Africans and there would be a specific camp for his people. Ressay had no explosives training so he was sent to the Al Farouk (sp?) camp. Those at that camp Soufan characterized as “regular dudes.” The FBI does not receive the results of the debriefings either. Soufan indicated that he had requested through

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

Headquarters the write-ups and/or TDs from the detainees but has not received much. He said there was not much of this reporting in Intellink.

Soufan also wrote the EC regarding Al Shari (sp?) to get Saudis to allow an interrogation of the individual. [redacted] Al Shari was in the hospital. The CIA hired a psychiatrist who did not know anything about interrogation. The psychiatrist was a consultant. His techniques and theories created a storm with the FBI agents. There was a large difference in style between the Agency approach and Soufan's approach. Young analysts were coming in and out of the debriefing which caused things to be done. They did not want to hear any advice from an FBI agent who they considered to be just "a cop."

There were also disputes over whether Bin al Shibh was cooperating. The Agency said he was cooperating. Soufan said he was not cooperating. Soufan had approximately 45 minutes with Bin al Shibh as they flew on an Agency plane together. The Agency personnel told CIA Headquarters that they were obtaining cooperation from Bin al Shibh and shut down the FBI's access to him.

Around November or December some Agency personnel decided they did not want to work with Soufan. In January, however, he received a telephone call that the agency wanted Soufan to go to Afghanistan to conduct an interview. The detainee had been in Agency custody for two months but the Agency interrogators had been unable to get any information from the detainee. The DCI was going to be briefing the President about this individual, however, and so they wanted to have some information to report. Soufan went and obtained information from the detainee. Soufan does not know whether it was Agency managers who made the request for his assistance. Soufan indicated that he has heard from acquaintances at the Agency that there have been meetings where he has been discussed and some people want him involved in debriefing detainees and others have overruled the suggestion.

Soufan believes that the person debriefing Khalid Shayk Mohammad (KSM) does not know anything about who KSM was and therefore cannot be as effective at debriefing him like Frank Pellegrino could.

Soufan argued that KSM, Khallad, and Nashiri know a lot about al Qaeda's operations and plans and if the CIA's debriefing techniques are so good and are working, then we should be arresting a lot of people. He asked whether it could be that there are no al Qaeda cells in the United States. He opined probably not, but if that is the case we should stop scaring people. He would like access to these people but understands politics but he wants to see results.

Soufan said he does not receive much from the CIA representative on the NYFO JTTF. He has been called to the SCIF only twice and it was only recently. Someone who was arrested was an unindicted co-conspirator in one of his cases and there was relevant information for him to review.

Soufan indicated that he was angry with CIA as an institution, not with individuals there. He does not believe that he was a poor judge of character when he worked with CIA personnel in previous years. As of October 2002, he became aware of the CIA "campaign" against him. Soufan indicated that he had always been upfront with them and shared information – the Gitmo debriefs for example – yet everyday there appears to be a new attack on him. He is very disappointed in them. He hears claims that he is aggressive and not a team player. But he says they will not put any of these claims on paper. There is a CIA cable that alleges that he "screwed things up" in al-Mirqualla (sp?). The fact was he said he had never been there and so could not have done the things the cable claimed he had done there. His ASAC demanded proof from the CIA about the things they were saying about him or an apology. Apparently the CIA apologized to a small audience through Mark Rossini [note: an FBI detailee to the CTC].

In January 2003, Soufan took a week off from work. Then he received a call from the CIA asking him to travel immediately, which he did. He believed the trip went well but when he returned the campaign against him began again. In another instance he was asked to conduct some interviews of Abu Zubaida. On the first day only Soufan, Steve Gaudin (NYFO), and Deputy Chief of Station. Soufan was supposed only to be an observer but the Deputy COS said go ahead and interview. Soufan wrote cables and gave them to the CIA to disseminate. When the DCI heard about the information that was obtained he was pleased and told his people to congratulate the CIA officers who were there. When he learned that it was FBI that had gotten the information and not the CIA, the DCI was "pissed."

In October 2002 the CIA started campaigning against him he claims. At one point [date?] Headquarters asked to have Soufan participate in debriefings of al-Rimi [reported by Quso as having been a fund mover/provider for various operations, including Cole bombing.]. The CIA refused, saying it was solely an intelligence matter. A CIA person at the meeting said the FBI should know better than to ask for Ali Soufan to travel.

Soufan wrote what he refers to as the "crystal ball" EC regarding an attack on a French naval ship. McFadden briefed this up DOD channels. Two weeks later the Lindbergh bombing happened. The CIA initially claimed it was not a terrorist attack.

Soufan argued that they needed to better define FBI/CIA roles post 9/11. He complained that now when the FBI plans to travel overseas it needs DCI concurrence. Previously he just needed FBI Headquarters' approval and to notify CIA. In fact, he says if he wants to travel to the FBI Legat in London, he needs CIA permission. Soufan believes that there are some excellent CIA case officers and working together they "complete each other." They are in a joint war and thus need to work together. He argued that there needs to be institutionalized sharing of information – to make sure that they receive all of the relevant cables. He argued that al Qaeda is all over the place and they need to work together to defeat them.

DOD relationship

Relationship with DOD is phenomenal. They have granted him access to Gitmo detainees.

History of Al Qaeda

During the August 26, 2003, interview Soufan presented a Powerpoint presentation regarding the structure of al Qaeda that he prepared based on a variety of documents. [note: the Commission has subsequently obtained copies of the slides of this presentation.] Soufan went through what was known about the formation of al Qaeda and its evolving structure.

Al Qaeda was initially formed as administrative records of who came to fight in Afghanistan – “the base” of the mujahadeen. In 1989 after the jihad in the war of Afghanistan against Russia, Arabs met together and decided that they should continue jihad in a united fashion and that the mujahadeen should be the base of such jihad.

According to Soufan, 1979 was a key year. In February there was the Irani revolution and Khomeinis speech was leaked to Egypt. There was the Camp David accord signed by Sadat. In November 1979 200 Wahhabi Saudis took over Mecca and declared rebellion against the king. December 1979 was a gift to the Muslim countries with problems because Russia invaded Afghanistan and so the rebellious forces decided to go fight the communists instead of their own leaders.

In 1989 the Soviets were out of Afghanistan and the Arab factions began fighting with each other. Certain groups stayed in Afghanistan because they could not go home. The NGOs that were created liked this. At the time UBL was supporting the Yemenis coming back to win South Yemen.

When UBL was in Afghanistan he was not a warrior but was considered a rich kid. Once he started criticizing the Saudi king he lost popularity. AQ became an umbrella for lots of groups that lacked a structure.

The East Africa bombings marked a new chapter in AQ. Soufan immediately believed that UBL was responsible for these bombings because the statements claiming responsibility for the bombings used some of the same phrases Bin Laden had used previously and which had been noted in the materials Soufan had previously gathered. Soufan noted that there is a semitic culture “thing” about warning three times before taking action. Here there was the 1996 declaration of war, the 1998 fatwa, and then the June 1998 interview with John Miller in which UBL warned of upcoming attacks. Shortly after the interview with these warnings was aired the Embassy bombings happened. Soufan went to the command post to tell SAC John O’Neill about his beliefs. Soufan ended up staying in the ops center with O’Neill for a time and they became close. Soufan later went with O’Neill to Yemen after the Cole bombing. Then there was a claim

of responsibility that proved he was correct. Soufan then took his old EC regarding UBL and did a teletype demonstrating that UBL was responsible. Because NYFO already had UBL under indictment, it was assigned as office of origin on the East African bombings case.

Soufan wrote the opening EC on Nashiri and Khallad. Fahd al-Quso was the first witness to identify Khallad for them. Quso and Nibras had pledged bayat to UBL in Afghanistan so that was why they were trusted to carry the money to Bangkok for Khallad.

Cole bombing

Soufan commented regarding the well known bad relations between SAC John O'Neill and U.S. Ambassador to Yemen Barbara Bodine. Soufan thought that Bodine and O'Neill must have had a past because things were off on the wrong foot from day 1, initially regarding how O'Neill pronounced Yemen. Soufan noted that he got along fine with Bodine and acted as a buffer between Bodine and O'Neill. He noted she did not have the same poor relations with others, it was only with O'Neill.

Soufan was in Yemen in summer of 2001. They first moved from Aden to Sana'a when they received a specific threat that a group of people were going to assassinate FBI agents, the Defense Attache, the Ambassador and [redacted]. They got out of Aden in a military jet. Then in Sana'a received another direct threat. They left their equipment at the embassy in Sana'a. They did not wait for tickets. A private jet was used to evacuate them. When he got to New York he was not told about general threats but [redacted] told him "the big one was coming."

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E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

Islamabad source

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

The Confidential Informant (CI) in Islamabad [redacted] provided them with significant information. [redacted] gave the FBI good information regarding Khallad. It was the FBI who told the Yemenis about Khallad when they asked whether the FBI had heard of him because they (the Yemenis) had not. Soufan described [redacted] important source of information. [redacted] did not know the very top guys, he knew Khallad and Abu Zubaida. [redacted] had told Soufan about Khallad and Jandal prior to the Cole bombing.

Soufan indicated that [redacted] met with the FBI regarding [redacted] prior to the Cole bombing. They agreed that he would be worked jointly even [redacted]

Finally, [redacted] after he was brought to the FBI [redacted] [redacted] He knew the second tier people. Soufan said he was not involved in the decision [redacted] [redacted] but was involved in the debate. [redacted]

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

[redacted]
[redacted] [note: Other sources indicate that this promise was not kept.]

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

Soufan indicated that he got good information from [redacted] when he interviewed [redacted] directly. [redacted]
[redacted] He says the CIA says they need to protect its sources and methods, even regarding people who Soufan brought to them, so they claim they cannot share the traffic with him. They classify it as Humint and then say Soufan does not have Humint [he now does] so he could not read CIA reports of his own interviews.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

At the time [redacted] identified Khallad's photograph Khallad was considered the mastermind of the Cole bombing. Despite this, Soufan had seen no CIA reporting re: Khallad, including the [redacted] reporting. The photograph [redacted] identified was the photograph of Khallad that Soufan had given to the agency for showing to [redacted].

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

Soufan indicated that he has a big concern regarding FBI and CIA jointly dealing with sources such as [redacted]. Soufan said that the FBI needs to make sure that the FBI and the CIA are reporting the same things and meeting with the source together because of discovery issues and because the FBI might want to use the sources down the road. Soufan says he "always" warned the CIA of the possibility of a witness being used as a witness at a trial. He warned them that they needed always to have meetings of the witness with both agencies present and that the FBI needs to see the CIA's reporting to make sure identical to the FBI reporting.

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E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

Soufan indicated that [redacted] is now solely a CIA source. Soufan did not know when the last time the FBI spoke to [redacted] [redacted] who was the ALAT who made [redacted] a source, is no longer in Islamabad. Soufan noted that the new ALAT [redacted] does not speak Arabic either and thus would not be able to communicate with [redacted].

Quso

In late January 2001 Soufan was given the opportunity to interview Fahd al-Quso directly. Before then the PSO conducted the interviews and merely allowed the FBI to submit questions to them. When he conducted the interview of Quso (over several consecutive days) he read Quso his rights. Quso acknowledged receiving and understanding his rights but refused to sign the form. Soufan indicated that he got more information from Quso than the PSO did. For example, Quso told the PSO that he took \$7000 to Khallad in Bangkok for an artificial limb while Soufan got Quso to admit it was actually \$35,000.

On September 12, 2001, Soufan was in Yemen. There he finally received the "whole story" on the Kuala Lumpur meetings. He re-interviewed al-Quso and got some of the hijackers' names from Quso. Soufan said he was not aware of the KL meetings when he interviewed Quso in January 2001 or else he would have asked different questions.

Kuala Lumpur meeting

Soufan did not become aware of the Kuala Lumpur meeting and any connection to Khallad until late June 2001. He was in Yemen that summer then was evacuated because of a direct threat to the FBI in Yemen. He returned to New York and heard about the Kuala Lumpur meeting from the rest of his squad. Soufan was out of the country at the time of the June 11, 2001 meeting and so did not see the photographs shown at that meeting. Soufan claimed that no one in NYFO was even aware of the Kuala Lumpur until June 2001, although he believes that FBI HQ was aware of it in January 2000, when it was briefed to the FBI Director. Ali finally got the whole story on Kuala Lumpur meetings on 9/12/01.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

Need for language capable personnel

Soufan noted that there were few agents who had Arabic language skills. In NY he was the only one. WFO has [redacted] also spoke Arabic

He also indicated that there is at Headquarters a former WFO ASAC named Bassam Yousef who speaks Arabic. He noted that the FBI needs to find someone in the Arab community to help it recruit Arab FBI Special Agents. No one has asked him how best to do it.

Miscellaneous

Soufan said he had never been told not to investigate a particular person, i.e., UBL's brothers. He said if he had been so ordered he would have been "pissed off."