

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. 7  
DECLASSIFICATION DATE: July 8, 2015

NOTES ON 11/12/03 ALI SOUFAN INTERVIEW

[Others need to insert their parts]

Mr. Soufan has not seen all the detainee reports, so his information may be contradicted by reports of which he is unaware.

Mr. Soufan believes that the Kuala Lumpur meeting in January 2000 was related to the September 11 attacks, and not to the failed attack against the USS Sullivans or the subsequent attack against the USS Cole. According to Mr. Soufan, Ramzi bin al Shibh attended the Kuala Lumpur meeting. Moreover, Mr. Soufan believes that Khallad's travel to Bangkok after the Kuala Lumpur meeting and his receipt of \$35,000 from two Yemeni couriers in Bangkok were all part of the 9/11 plot – however, he acknowledges that there is no hard evidence of this.

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Mr. Soufan first heard of Khallad from a source [redacted] in Islamabad. He views Khallad and the two Yemeni couriers (Quso and Nibrass) as inept, because they failed to check on pertinent visa requirements and, as a result, had difficulty organizing and executing the money transfer, which originally had been slated for Singapore.

Mr. Soufan stated that the United States knew of Al Qaida operational planner Nashiri before the Cole bombing. Nashiri had previously been tied to the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings (in which his cousin was one of the suicide bombers), and to an attempt to smuggle Sager missiles into Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Soufan spoke of the evolution of Al Qaeda. He said that after the Soviets were defeated in Afghanistan, the mujahideen came to a fork in the road. One of the options, which Bin Laden favored, was to take on the United States. The Gulf War strengthened Bin Laden's position.

In Sudan, Al Qaeda took the form of a business operation, which served as a cover for the Islamic Army that Bin Laden was creating. Bin Laden made a lot of money in Sudan. He also established operational cells in Kenya, and sent operatives to Somalia to train al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI).

Even while Al Qaeda was headquartered in Sudan, it retained some infrastructure in Afghanistan, including al Farook Camp. Abu Atta was in charge of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Al Qaeda was very small during the Sudan period. One of its primary goals was to assist other jihadi groups, e.g., the 1995 attempt by Egyptian terrorists to assassinate President Mubarak in Ethiopia. Egyptians were prominent in Al Qaeda because they could not return to Egypt without facing retribution from the Egyptian government.

Al Qaeda's main focus was to force the United States to leave Saudi Arabia, and Sudan was in fact chosen as Al Qaeda's headquarters because it was close to Saudi

Arabia. Bin Laden gave interviews to media outlets in Sudan and threatened the United States. Mr. Soufan referenced the contents of a Baku computer that was seized in 1998 as relevant to this period in al Qaeda's history.

In the middle of 1996, bin Laden gave his people in Sudan a choice to either go to Afghanistan with him, or to stay behind. Many Libyans, in particular, stayed behind in Sudan and left al Qaeda.

Also during this period, the war in Bosnia came to an end, and jihadists needed a place to go. Bin Laden picked up some recruits from this pool of jihadists.

Bin Laden arrived in Jalalabad in 1996 with his major associates, and built up a camp structure over time (Jihadwal Camp in Jalalabad; Farook camp in Khost; another camp in Gardez). Mr. Soufan believes that bin Laden later moved to Kandahar because Mullah Omar was in Kandahar, Kandahar served as the Taliban's religious center, and bin Laden had allied himself with the Taliban and Mullah Omar. Bin Ladin himself publicly swore bayat to Mullah Omar in 1996 or 1997.

When Bin Laden established himself in Afghanistan, his organization was able to utilize pre-existing, established routes for mujahideen to enter and exit Afghanistan through Pakistan. Also, Saudis would travel on Yemeni passports to Pakistan, because Yemeni passports were easy to get. Recruits and operatives would be smuggled into Afghanistan from Peshawar; later, Quetta was substituted for Peshawar.

In 1999 or 2000, the Taliban ordered the closure of all non-AQ training camps. Farook Camp moved to Kandahar, and became the training camp in Afghanistan. Khaldan Camp closed, as did Abu Khabab's camp in Derunta.

When asked about weapons of mass destruction (WMD), Mr. Soufan responded that obtaining WMD was more an AQ aspiration than a reality. He said that Abu Khabab's poison camps, which were funded by bin Laden but also by others, were not very sophisticated.

Mr. Soufan elaborated on his theory that, around the time of 9/11, specific Al Qaeda operatives had responsibility for specific geographic regions: Nashiri for attacks in the Arabian Peninsula; Khalid Sheik Mohammed for attacks on the US (where he had gone to college) and Southeast Asia (since he knew Hambali and was familiar with the region); and Abu Zubayda, for Europe and North Africa. Notwithstanding the latter's protestations that he was not part of AQ, Soufan opined that Zubayda was a close associate of bin Laden and, at some point, started working for the AQ agenda. It was convenient for Abu Zubayda to deny AQ membership since he worked with North Africans, many of whom were not interested in Al Qaeda's agenda.

Like Abu Zubayda, Ibn Sheikh al Libi was a close associate of UBL, at some point began working for the Al Qaeda agenda, and, by his own admission, had provided training on how to bomb a U.S. Embassy.



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Mr. Soufan also stated that Khallad was involved all in all major operations – e.g., he videotaped suicide bombers in the Embassy bombings, was involved in the Cole attack, and attended the Kuala Lumpur meeting – and was described by FBI source [ ] as Bin Laden’s “eyes and ears.”

Mr. Soufan also discussed when the USG determined that Al Qaeda was behind the Cole bombing. He stated that the USG knew of Nashiri’s and Al Qaeda’s involvement in the bombing by November 2000, at the latest.

Mr. Soufan noted that Al Qaeda produced a recruiting tape based on the Cole that came out a couple of months after 9/11, and the tape was produced in numerous languages. Al-Bahlul (sp.?), UBL’s personal secretary, produced the tape, and Mr. Soufan has interviewed him.

Mr. Soufan thinks that Abu Hajer al Iraqi was still part of Al Qaeda when he was arrested in Germany in 1998.