

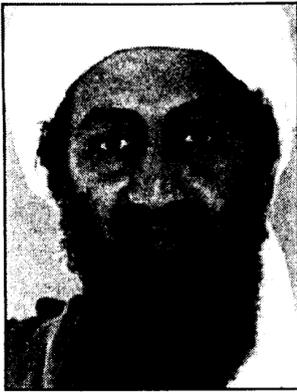
•SPECIAL REPORT•

TERRORISTS ATTACK AMERICA

Friday, September 14, 2001

The Behrend Beacon

Ex-ally bin Laden has been fighting U.S. for a decade



Profile: Osama bin Laden

- **1957:** Born in Saudi Arabia, to a Yemeni family; personal fortune from family construction business
- **1979:** Joined fight against Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; reported to have received training from CIA, which aided Afghan rebels.
- **1980s:** Founded al-Qaeda group to recruit forces globally for Afghan resistance; group later focused attacks on U.S. and its Mideast allies.
- **1991:** Expelled from Saudi Arabia for anti-government activities; lived in Sudan for five years until United States pressured Sudan to oust him.
- **Lives in Afghanistan as guest of the Taliban government.**

COMPILED FROM KRT, FBI SOURCES

1993:
Bombing of World Trade Center kills 6, injures 1,000

1995:
Car bomb in Saudi Arabia kills 5 U.S. military personnel.

1996:
Bombing of Saudi apartment building kills 19 U.S. military personnel, wounds 400.

1998:
Bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania kills 224, injures thousands

2000:
Suicide bombing of USS Cole in Yemen kills 17, injures 39.

by Steve Goldstein
Knight Ridder Newspapers

Once again, Osama bin Laden, the exiled Saudi militant, has risen to the top of a list of suspects in a terrorist attack against the United States.

The audacious plan to hijack passenger jets and employ them as massive bombs against symbols of American financial and military might bears bin Laden's "signature," said Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, who was briefed by FBI and intelligence officials. "Everything is pointing in the direction of Osama bin Laden."

This conclusion is based not on fo-

rensic evidence, but on speculation that only the wealthy Saudi exile has the combination of resources, expertise and zealous followers needed to mount such an assault.

But many experts caution that Tuesday's attack could not have been the work of one man, and that if bin Laden were involved, he had a vast network of international support.

Bin Laden, 44, has been wanted by U.S. law enforcement officials since 1998 for his suspected role in twin bomb attacks on the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, which killed 224 people and injured more than 4,000.

The U.S. Department of Justice has put a \$5 million bounty on bin Laden's head.

He is believed to be in hiding in Afghanistan.

He once was an American ally when he threw his considerable fortune behind Muslim fighters trying to expel Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

In 1988, he founded an Islamic group known as "al Qaeda," Arabic for "The Base," with a vision of establishing an Islamic government in Saudi Arabia and expelling American troops from the region.

In 1998, experts say al Qaeda began working with other militant Is-

lamic groups, including Egypt's notorious groups, al Jihad and al Gamaa al Islamiyah (Islamic Group), responsible for the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

These groups share the same ideology of overthrowing what they consider corrupt governments in the Middle East and replacing them with Islamic states.

CIA and State Department officials believe bin Laden operates at least a dozen camps in Afghanistan that have trained thousands of militants, who have formed cells, or independent units, in dozens of countries.

Investigators said Wednesday that as many as four different groups may have been involved in the attacks in New York and Washington.

Afghanistan's Taliban government as well as Islamic leaders with ties to bin Laden said he has denied any involvement in the attacks, although he welcomes them.

Bin Laden issued similar statements when he was accused of masterminding the October 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen that killed 17 sailors and injured 39 others.

"Osama bin Laden thanked Almighty Allah and bowed before him when he heard this news," said a man who identified himself as an aide to bin Laden in Pakistan.

Interviewed by Jamal Ismail, a television bureau chief in Islamabad, Pakistan, the man said bin Laden had no knowledge of the attack.

The Taliban, which condemned Tuesday's attack, has rebuffed U.S. efforts to expel bin Laden or turn him over to authorities.

Taliban officials say they have asked the United States to provide proof of bin Laden's involvement and they will either extradite him or try

him themselves in Afghanistan.

So far, neither the United States nor any other country has provided such evidence.

According to bin Laden's biographer, Yossef Bodansky: "Mysticism, militancy and the quest for perpetual jihad have become the rallying cry of the latest generation of Muslim militant leaders."

Jihad, which in Arabic means striving, has come to mean a holy war over contested lands, particularly those deemed Muslim lands occupied by non-Muslims.

Bin Laden's personal jihad has been raging for two decades.

He was born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, probably in 1957, according to Bodansky. His father, Muhammad, was a small-time builder and contractor whose business took off after the oil boom in the 1970s. He came into contact with the Saudi elite and soon the Bin Laden Corp. was a wealthy concern.

While restoring two mosques in 1973, Muhammad rediscovered his Muslim roots. Before then, he had been enjoying middle-class comforts and outings to the pleasure palaces in Beirut.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan rocked Osama's world. He joined the insurgency waged by Islamic rebels against the Soviets, which was covertly funded and supplied by the United States.

When the fighting ended with Moscow in retreat in 1989, bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia and found himself confronting the Saudi monarchy over its allowing U.S. troops into Saudi Arabia, the site of two of Islam's holiest places, Mecca and Medina.

When U.S. forces deployed in Saudi Arabia during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, bin Laden saw the Americans' presence as desecration of the

land of Islam. He saw the United States as slavish to Israel, which he blamed for the sufferings of the Palestinian people.

Saudi intelligence officials harassed and arrested bin Laden for criticizing their monarchy and in 1991, he left for Sudan where, under the protection of a hard-line Islamist ruler, he began to create the Al Qaeda network.

The U.S. decision to send troops to Somalia in late 1992 and 1993 as part of a United Nations relief mission also angered bin Laden. Al Qaeda began issuing edicts that directed its followers to attack American interests. U.S. intelligence officials now believe that Al Qaeda played a role in the ambush of U.S. troops in Somalia that killed 18 Americans.

The 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center and the 1996 bombing of U.S. military housing in Saudi Arabia are also believed to be tied to bin Laden's organization.

In 1996, Sudan yielded to intense pressure from the United States and asked bin Laden to leave. Accompanied by 200 followers and three wives, he moved to Afghanistan and joined old guerrilla colleagues from the anti-Soviet insurgency.

Bin Laden has never claimed responsibility for terrorist attacks, preferring to let Westerners draw their own conclusions, which ratchets up the fear factor and creates an aura of omnipotence, said terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman of the RAND Corp.

But at the wedding of his son in southern Afghanistan in February, bin Laden made a rare public appearance and alluded to the 17 U.S. seamen who died in the Cole attack. "The pieces of the bodies of infidels were flying like dust particles," he said. "If you would have seen it with your own eyes, you would have been very pleased, and your heart would have been filled with joy."

Investigators focusing on theory of 20 hijackers

by Warren P. Strobel,
Lenny Savino, and Daniel de Vise
Knight Ridder Newspapers

Launching perhaps the largest criminal investigation in U.S. history, federal and state authorities raided hotel rooms and searched for vehicles from Maine to Florida on Wednesday as they began uncovering the complex plot that led to the deadly terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Investigators in the FBI-led probe tracked down hundreds of potential leads on their first full day, scouring clues left behind by the suicide terrorists, from rental cars and hotel rooms to Arabic-language piloting manuals.

The early evidence indicated that 20 or more hijackers commandeered the four jetliners and steered them into the seats of U.S. economic and military power. The terrorists may have been divided into separate, self-contained groups, some crossing into the United States from Canada recently. Others may have been here for some time, law enforcement authorities said.

Among them was a 33-year-old man who was on the passenger list of one of the hijacked planes. He had also been taking flying lessons in South Florida.

"A number of the suspected hijackers were trained as pilots in the United States," Attorney General John Ashcroft told a news conference.

"The four planes were hijacked by between three and six individuals per plane, using knives and box-cutters, and in some cases making bomb threats," Ashcroft said. "Our government has credible evidence that the White House and Air Force One were targets."

FBI Director Robert Mueller said law enforcement authorities have identified many of the hijackers by name, and efforts are now under way to find their associates.

Mueller said the investigation involves 4,000 of the bureau's agents, 3,000 support staff and 400 lab tech-

nicians. Some people have been held on immigration violations, but no one had been arrested Wednesday in the hijackings, the FBI chief said.

Justice Department spokeswoman Mindy Tucker said Wednesday night that investigators have about a dozen search warrants. Some are still under seal and have not been executed, the others were used to conduct searches in Massachusetts, New Jersey and Florida.

Tucker said some of the hijackers attended flying school and some got commercial pilots' licenses, though she provided no further detail. They used cash and credit cards to buy tickets on the Tuesday flights, she said.

In South Florida, investigators focused on Mohamed Atta, 33, who was on the passenger list of one of the two flights that took off from Boston's Logan International Airport and slammed into the World Trade Center. Records show he once had a driver's license in Egypt.

The FBI in Miami also is looking for two cars. Florida Division of Motor Vehicle records show one of them, a 1989 red Pontiac, was registered to Atta.

From July to November 2000, Atta and another man trained at Huffman Aviation, a pilot school that operates out of the airport in Venice, on Florida's west coast.

Charlie Voss, a former Huffman employee, said the men told him they had just arrived from Germany and wanted to take flight training at the school.

A Venice couple told FBI agents Wednesday morning that they'd leased a bedroom in their home to Atta and a second man, Marwan Alshehhi, for about a week in July 2000.

Investigators got passport information on the two men from Huffman's records.

FBI agents and local police officers searched the Coral Springs apartment that Atta had been renting, but apparently found little there.

Investigators also talked with the manager of a local bar, Shuckums, who told them that Atta had identi-

fied himself as an American Airlines pilot after having several drinks there Friday night.

Another focus of the terrorism probe was in New England. Law enforcement authorities said they were investigating whether one group of hijackers crossed into the United States from Canada before traveling to Boston's Logan International Airport, departure point for the two jetliners that struck the World Trade Center.

Osama bin Laden, the prime suspect behind the attacks, tried once before to pull off a terrorism extravaganza during the worldwide millennium celebrations, when his operatives also tried to cross into the United States from Canada but were caught by police.

Mueller said several individuals were interviewed in the Boston area and that some were being detained for apparent immigration violations.

In Maine, FBI agents reviewing security camera photos taken at Portland International Jetport focused on one photo of two men in their mid-to late 30s carrying small shoulder bags, according to Portland's police chief, Michael Chitwood, who also viewed the photo. They had black hair and were casually but neatly dressed, he said.

Chitwood said the FBI learned that one or both of the men had stayed Monday night, the eve of the hijackings, at a Comfort Inn outside Portland.

Chitwood also said investigators using a bomb-sniffing dog searched a rented late-model blue Nissan Altima with Massachusetts plates, parked at Portland International Jetport. The car was towed to a state police crime lab and FBI agents also took away a cigarette butt lying next to the car.

And in Boston itself, heavily armed FBI agents searched the Westin Hotel in the city's Back Bay section. A room at the hotel is believed to have been used by one of the hijackers of the two flights out of Boston.

Here today, gone forever



Building Seven at the World Trade Center as it appeared mid-day Thursday.

DAVID SWANSON/PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER