

Detainee Interrogation Reports

Chapters 5 and 7 rely heavily on information obtained from captured al Qaeda members. A number of these “detainees” have firsthand knowledge of the 9/11 plot.

Assessing the truth of statements by these witnesses—sworn enemies of the United States—is challenging. Our access to them has been limited to the review of intelligence reports based on communications received from the locations where the actual interrogations take place. We submitted questions for use in the interrogations, but had no control over whether, when, or how questions of particular interest would be asked. Nor were we allowed to talk to the interrogators so that we could better judge the credibility of the detainees and clarify ambiguities in the reporting. We were told that our requests might disrupt the sensitive interrogation process.

We have nonetheless decided to include information from captured 9/11 conspirators and al Qaeda members in our report. We have evaluated their statements carefully and have attempted to corroborate them with documents and statements of others. In this report, we indicate where such statements provide the foundation for our narrative. We have been authorized to identify by name only ten detainees whose custody has been confirmed officially by the U.S. government.²

school, KSM left Kuwait to enroll at Chowan College, a small Baptist school in Murfreesboro, North Carolina. After a semester at Chowan, KSM transferred to North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, which he attended with Yousef’s brother, another future al Qaeda member. KSM earned a degree in mechanical engineering in December 1986.³

Although he apparently did not attract attention for extreme Islamist beliefs or activities while in the United States, KSM plunged into the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad soon after graduating from college. Visiting Pakistan for the first time in early 1987, he traveled to Peshawar, where his brother Zahid introduced him to the famous Afghan *mujahid* Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, head of the Hizbul-Ittihad El-Islami (Islamic Union Party). Sayyaf became KSM’s mentor and provided KSM with military training at Sayyaf’s Sada camp. KSM claims he then fought the Soviets and remained at the front for three months before being summoned to perform administrative duties for Abdullah Azzam. KSM next took a job working for an electronics firm that catered to the communications needs of Afghan groups, where he learned about drills used to excavate caves in Afghanistan.⁴

Between 1988 and 1992, KSM helped run a nongovernmental organization