

cousin's ensuing effort to persuade Jarrah to depart from "the path he was taking" proved unavailing.¹⁰¹ Yet Jarrah clearly differed from the other hijackers in that he maintained much closer contact with his family and continued his intimate relationship with Senguen. These ties may well have caused him to harbor some doubts about going through with the plot, even as late as the summer of 2001, as discussed in chapter 7.

After leaving Afghanistan, the four began researching flight schools and aviation training. In early January 2000, Ali Abdul Aziz Ali—a nephew of KSM living in the UAE who would become an important facilitator in the plot—used Shehhi's credit card to order a Boeing 747-400 flight simulator program and a Boeing 767 flight deck video, together with attendant literature; Ali had all these items shipped to his employer's address. Jarrah soon decided that the schools in Germany were not acceptable and that he would have to learn to fly in the United States. Binalshibh also researched flight schools in Europe, and in the Netherlands he met a flight school director who recommended flight schools in the United States because they were less expensive and required shorter training periods.¹⁰²

In March 2000, Atta emailed 31 different U.S. flight schools on behalf of a small group of men from various Arab countries studying in Germany who, while lacking prior training, were interested in learning to fly in the United States. Atta requested information about the cost of the training, potential financing, and accommodations.¹⁰³

Before seeking visas to enter the United States, Atta, Shehhi, and Jarrah obtained new passports, each claiming that his old passport had been lost. Presumably they were concerned that the Pakistani visas in their old passports would raise suspicions about possible travel to Afghanistan. Shehhi obtained his visa on January 18, 2000; Atta, on May 18; and Jarrah, on May 25.¹⁰⁴ Binalshibh's visa request was rejected, however, as were his three subsequent applications.¹⁰⁵ Binalshibh proved unable to obtain a visa, a victim of the generalized suspicion that visa applicants from Yemen—especially young men applying in another country (Binalshibh first applied in Berlin)—might join the ranks of undocumented aliens seeking work in the United States. Before 9/11, security concerns were not a major factor in visa issuance unless the applicant already was on a terrorist watchlist, and none of these four men was. Concerns that Binalshibh intended to immigrate to the United States doomed his chances to participate firsthand in the 9/11 attacks. Although Binalshibh had to remain behind, he would provide critical assistance from abroad to his co-conspirators.

Once again, the need for travel documents dictated al Qaeda's plans.

Travel

It should by now be apparent how significant travel was in the planning undertaken by a terrorist organization as far-flung as al Qaeda. The story of the plot includes references to dozens of international trips. Operations required travel,