

attack. Abu Hafs the Mauritanian reportedly even wrote Bin Ladin a message basing opposition to the attacks on the Qur'an.¹⁸³

According to KSM, in late August, when the operation was fully planned, Bin Ladin formally notified the al Qaeda Shura Council that a major attack against the United States would take place in the coming weeks. When some council members objected, Bin Ladin countered that Mullah Omar lacked authority to prevent al Qaeda from conducting jihad outside Afghanistan. Though most of the Shura Council reportedly disagreed, Bin Ladin persisted. The attacks went forward.¹⁸⁴

The story of dissension within al Qaeda regarding the 9/11 attacks is probably incomplete. The information on which the account is based comes from sources who were not privy to the full scope of al Qaeda and Taliban planning. Bin Ladin and Atef, however, probably would have known, at least, that

- The general Taliban offensive against the Northern Alliance would rely on al Qaeda military support.
- Another significant al Qaeda operation was making progress during the summer—a plot to assassinate the Northern Alliance leader, Ahmed Shah Massoud. The operatives, disguised as journalists, were in Massoud's camp and prepared to kill him sometime in August. Their appointment to see him was delayed.¹⁸⁵

But on September 9, the Massoud assassination took place. The delayed Taliban offensive against the Northern Alliance was apparently coordinated to begin as soon as he was killed, and it got under way on September 10.¹⁸⁶

As they deliberated earlier in the year, Bin Ladin and Atef would likely have remembered that Mullah Omar was dependent on them for the Massoud assassination and for vital support in the Taliban military operations. KSM remembers Atef telling him that al Qaeda had an agreement with the Taliban to eliminate Massoud, after which the Taliban would begin an offensive to take over Afghanistan. Atef hoped Massoud's death would also appease the Taliban when the 9/11 attacks happened. There are also some scant indications that Omar may have been reconciled to the 9/11 attacks by the time they occurred.¹⁸⁷

Moving to Departure Positions

In the days just before 9/11, the hijackers returned leftover funds to al Qaeda and assembled in their departure cities. They sent the excess funds by wire transfer to Hawsawi in the UAE, about \$26,000 altogether.¹⁸⁸

The hijackers targeting American Airlines Flight 77, to depart from Dulles, migrated from New Jersey to Laurel, Maryland, about 20 miles from Washington, D.C. They stayed in a motel during the first week in September and spent