

From the details of this case, or from the other opportunities we catalogue in the text box, one can see how hard it is for the intelligence community to assemble enough of the puzzle pieces gathered by different agencies to make some sense of them and then develop a fully informed joint plan. Accomplishing all this is especially difficult in a transnational case. We sympathize with the working-level officers, drowning in information and trying to decide what is important or what needs to be done when no particular action has been requested of them.

Who had the job of managing the case to make sure these things were done? One answer is that everyone had the job. The CIA's deputy director for operations, James Pavitt, stressed to us that the responsibility resided with all involved. Above all he emphasized the primacy of the field. The field had the lead in managing operations. The job of headquarters, he stressed, was to support the field, and do so without delay. If the field asked for information or other support, the job of headquarters was to get it—right away.³⁴

This is a traditional perspective on operations and, traditionally, it has had great merit. It reminded us of the FBI's pre-9/11 emphasis on the primacy of its field offices. When asked about how this traditional structure would adapt to the challenge of managing a transnational case, one that hopped from place to place as this one did, the deputy director argued that all involved were

Operational Opportunities

1. January 2000: the CIA does not watchlist Khalid al Mihdhar or notify the FBI when it learned Mihdhar possessed a valid U.S. visa.
2. January 2000: the CIA does not develop a transnational plan for tracking Mihdhar and his associates so that they could be followed to Bangkok and onward, including the United States.
3. March 2000: the CIA does not watchlist Nawaf al Hazmi or notify the FBI when it learned that he possessed a U.S. visa and had flown to Los Angeles on January 15, 2000.
4. January 2001: the CIA does not inform the FBI that a source had identified Khallad, or Tawfiq bin Attash, a major figure in the October 2000 bombing of the USS *Cole*, as having attended the meeting in Kuala Lumpur with Khalid al Mihdhar.
5. May 2001: a CIA official does not notify the FBI about Mihdhar's U.S. visa, Hazmi's U.S. travel, or Khallad's having attended the Kuala Lumpur meeting (identified when he reviewed all of the relevant traffic because of the high level of threats).