

FBI agents also cited to the Joint Inquiry the requirement for prior DCI approval of FBI source travel abroad as a roadblock to sending sources overseas for operational purposes. Several FBI agents expressed the opinion to the Joint Inquiry that the CIA took advantage of this requirement to prevent FBI sources from operating overseas. Another FBI agent complained that FBI Headquarters management did not readily approve overseas travel for sources because of its belief that the FBI should focus on activity within the United States. When FBI management did approve overseas travel for assets, it often declined to allow the responsible agents to accompany the sources during such travel. These decisions, according to FBI agents in Joint Inquiry interviews, significantly diminished the quality of the operations

The FBI also apparently did not use those counterterrorism sources that had been identified in the most effective and coordinated manner. The FBI generally focused source reporting on cases and subjects within the jurisdiction of specific field offices and did not adequately use sources to support a national counterterrorism intelligence program. For example, the FBI received intelligence in 1999 that a terrorist organization was planning to send students to the United States for aviation training. While an operational unit at FBI Headquarters instructed twenty-four field offices to “task sources” for information, it appears that no FBI sources were in fact asked about the matter.

In addition, when the Phoenix FBI agent reported to FBI Headquarters in July 2001 his concern that Middle Eastern students were coming to the United States for civil aviation-related training, there was no effort by either FBI Headquarters or the field office that was advised of his concern by FBI Headquarters to task counterterrorism sources for any relevant information. Similarly, when Minneapolis FBI field office agents detained Zacarias Moussaoui in August 2001, they were concerned that he might be part of a larger conspiracy. Nonetheless, neither the Minneapolis field office nor FBI Headquarters asked any FBI sources whether they knew anything about Moussaoui or the existence of any larger plot.

[Page 101]

[Finally, in August 2001, the FBI learned from the CIA that terrorist suspects Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar were in the United States. Neither the FBI field offices that were involved in the search nor FBI Headquarters thought to ask FBI field