

contacts “ in the United States. In an undated draft analysis based on information available as of November 2001, the FBI’s Investigative Services Division concluded:

Initial reporting from observers cast the hijackers as loners who stayed aloof from those around them. While these characterizations remain an accurate appraisal of the hijackers’ general orientations toward most persons they came into contact with in the United States, more intensive scrutiny reveals that the hijackers – in particular, the six leaders/facilitators – were involved with a much greater number of associates than was originally suspected. In addition to frequent and sustained interaction between and among the hijackers of the various flights before September 11, the group maintained a web of contacts both in the United States and abroad. These associates, ranging in degrees of closeness, include friends and associates from universities and flight schools, former roommates, people they knew through mosques and religious activities, and employment contacts. Other contacts provided legal, logistical, or financial assistance, facilitated U.S. entry and flight school enrollment, or were known from UBL-related activities or training.

A. U.S. Intelligence Community Knowledge of Support Networks prior to September 11

The Intelligence Community had information before September 11 suggesting the existence of a radical Islamic network in the United States that could support al-Qa’ida and other terrorist operatives. The FBI had focused sources and investigative work to some degree on radical Islamic extremists within the United States before September 11. However, according to former National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, the Bureau believed that “al-Qa’ida had limited capacity to operate in the United States and [that] any presence here was under [FBI] surveillance.”

An August 2001 Senior Executive Intelligence Brief, provided to senior U.S. Government officials at the time, noted that al-Qa’ida members, including some U.S. citizens, resided in or traveled [page 180] to the United States for years and apparently maintained a support structure here. According to CIA documents, [—————] in June 2001 [——] al-Qa’ida operative Khalid Shaikh Mohammed was recruiting persons to travel to the United States and engage in planning terrorist-related activity here. [—————], these persons would be “expected to establish contact with colleagues already living there.” In short, before September 11, the Intelligence Community recognized that a radical Islamic network that could provide support to al-Qa’ida operatives probably existed in the United States.