

Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) told the Joint Inquiry that, before September 11, they had the capacity to develop leads on terrorist suspects and link them to other terrorists by examining funding sources. The FBI Financial Crimes Section Chief also explained his belief that he would have been able to locate hijackers Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar, if asked, through credit card and banking transactions.

FinCEN started doing linkage analysis of terrorist financing in April 1999 and first identified an account with a direct link to Bin Ladin in February 2001. FinCEN has the advantage of being able to work with law enforcement and intelligence information, which it [page 325] combines with Bank Secrecy Act information and commercial data to produce a product useful to the Department of Treasury and others in seizing, blocking, and freezing terrorist assets. These capabilities and databases at FinCEN, the Drug Information Center, and across the Intelligence Community enabled the FBI and FinCEN to connect almost all 19 hijackers within days after September 11 by linking their bank accounts, credit cards, debit cards, addresses, and telephone numbers.

B. Financial Tracking after September 11

Since September 11, 2001, the federal government has taken actions to block and seize terrorist assets such as smuggled cash, to arrest and indict terrorist financiers, and to shut down front companies, charities, banks, and hawala conglomerates that offer financial support to al-Qa'ida. On September 24, 2001, four days after signing an Executive Order blocking terrorist funds, President Bush gave a new priority to the effort: "We will starve the terrorists of funding." The Treasury General Counsel described to the Joint Inquiry the change in the government's strategy: "the difference between the activity before 9/11 and after 9/11 is the difference between a mule and an 8-cylinder Chevy."

V. Khalid Shaykh Mohammed: The Mastermind Of September 11

[Khalid Shaykh Mohammed (KSM) is one of al-Qa'ida's most senior leaders and is believed to be the mastermind behind the September 11 attacks. Although the Intelligence