

and evade airport security. However, the agent told the Joint Inquiry that, in writing the EC, he never imagined terrorists using airplanes as was done on September 11.

The Phoenix EC focused on ten individuals who were subjects of FBI investigations, Sunni Muslims from Kenya, Pakistan, Algeria, the United Arab Emirates, India, and Saudi Arabia. Not all were in flight training; several were aeronautical engineering students, and one was studying international aviation security.

The Phoenix agent testified that in April 2000 he interviewed the primary subject of the EC. In the agent's experience, young foreign nationals who are subjects of interviews tend to be somewhat intimidated in their first contact with the FBI. By contrast, this subject told the agent that he considered the U.S. Government and military to be legitimate targets of Islam. The agent noticed a poster of Bin Ladin and another poster of wounded Chechen mujahideen fighters in the subject's apartment. He was also concerned that the subject, who was taking expensive aviation training, was from a poor Middle Eastern country and had not studied aviation before his arrival in the United States.

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The agent described to the Joint Inquiry another incident that increased his suspicion about Middle Eastern flight students in the Phoenix area. During a physical surveillance, the agent determined that the primary subject of the Phoenix EC was using a vehicle registered to another person, who in 1999 had been detained with a third person after trying to gain access to the cockpit of a commercial airliner on a domestic flight. The two told FBI agents who questioned them that they thought the cockpit was the bathroom, and they accused the Bureau of racism. After an investigation, they were released and the case was closed. In November 2000, the subject's name was added to the State Department's watchlist after intelligence information was received that he may have received explosive and car bomb training in Afghanistan. In August 2001, the same person applied for a visa to re-enter the United States and, as a result of the watchlisting, was denied entry.

Finally, the Phoenix agent's concern about Middle Eastern flight students in Arizona was fueled by suspicion that al-Qa'ida had an active presence in Arizona. Several Bin Ladin operatives had lived and traveled to the Phoenix area, and one of them -- Wadih El-Hage, a Bin