

On August 7, 2001, the Specialists in the two units decided that the matter should be closed. The Specialist in the UBLU told the Joint inquiry that she intended to return to the project once she had time to do additional research, but on September 11, she had not yet had an opportunity to do so. Both Specialists also said that they had considered assigning the Phoenix communication to a Headquarters analytic unit, but had decided against it.

The Chiefs of both the RFU and UBLU informed the Joint Inquiry that they did not see the Phoenix EC before September 11. They do not remember even hearing about the flight school issue until after September 11. An FBI audit of the central records system requested by the Joint Inquiry supports their statements.

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The Phoenix EC was also not shared with other agencies before September 11, although the former Chief of the FBI's International Terrorism Operations Section explained in testimony to the Joint Inquiry:

One of the great frustrations is that [the Phoenix Communication] talks about airlines—we have FAA people in the [International Terrorism Operations Section]; it talks about intelligence—we have CIA people; it talks about visas—there are State Department people and immigration people in that unit. That information should have been shared, if only for [informational] purposes, with all those people at our Headquarters. And it wasn't done, and it should have been done.

In fact, Transportation Security Administration Assistant Undersecretary for Intelligence Claudio Manno testified at a Joint Inquiry hearing that “the first time that we saw [the Phoenix EC] was when it was brought to our attention by [the Joint Inquiry Staff]. Had the FAA received the memo before September 11, Mr. Manno believes that:

[W]e would have started to ask a lot more probing questions of FBI as to what this was all about, to start with. There were a number of things that were done later to try to determine what connections these people may have had to flight schools by going back [to information] maintained by the FAA to try to identify additional people. . . . [I]n fact our process is whenever we get a threat, we open . . . an intelligence case file, and that is so we segregate that issue from the hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of other intelligence reports that we get and that we focus on it. And the work that may entail in trying to determine whether this is a credible threat, something that needs to be acted upon, maybe going back and working with FBI to try and get additional information. In some cases it can be working with the State Department or the CIA if it requires overseas work. So we make all efforts to try to get to the bottom of what this is all about.