

executives have acknowledged that the handling of the EC illustrates important weaknesses before September 11. For example, Director Mueller told the Joint Inquiry:

. . . the Phoenix memo should have been disseminated to all field offices and to our sister agencies, and it should have triggered a broader analytical approach. . . . These incidents . . . have informed us on needed changes, particularly the need to improve accountability, analytic capacity and resources, information sharing and technology, to name but a few.

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The Joint Inquiry found that the FBI's strategic, analytic, and technological problems were the primary weaknesses demonstrated by the handling of the Phoenix EC. As a supervisory Headquarters agent testified: "when you want to look at systemic problems, . . . clearly you are going to be focused in on strategic analysis and you are going to be focused in on technology; and to run a national program you have to do both."

The Phoenix EC demonstrates how strategic analysis took a back seat to operational priorities at the Bureau before September 11. Many people throughout the government and the FBI believed that an attack was imminent in Summer 2001, but this led only to further de-emphasis of strategic analysis. For example, the Specialist in the UBL unit who handled the Phoenix EC was primarily concerned with a person in the EC connected to persons arrested overseas and paid less attention to the flight school theories.

The RFU Chief told the Joint Inquiry that because he could not keep up with the approximately one hundred pieces of mail he saw daily, he assigned responsibility for reviewing intelligence reports to an Intelligence Operations Specialist in the unit. Even the FBI analytic unit responsible for strategic analysis was largely producing tactical products to satisfy the operational section. There was no system for handling projects with nationwide impact, such as the Phoenix EC, differently than other matters. In fact, the Phoenix agent testified that he recognized the possibility that his EC might not receive a great deal of attention.

I am also a realist. I understand that the people at FBI Headquarters are terribly overworked and understaffed, and they have been for years. And at the time that I am sending this in, having worked this stuff for thirteen years, and watched the unit in action over the years, I knew that this was going to be at the bottom of the pile, so to speak, because they were dealing with real-time threats, real-time issues trying to render fugitives back to the United States from overseas for justice.