

Fundamentally, the FBI consistently prized investigations and operations in its national security work and neglected long-term analysis of the sort that might have permitted agents to understand more about the pre-September 11 threat of terrorists using civil aviation. According to FBI Counterterrorism Division chief Dale Watson, counterterrorism work was “a relatively low-priority program” at the Bureau for many years. He has testified that it received more emphasis beginning in late 1998, but even this new emphasis grew out of the FBI’s *investigations* into the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing and the 1998 East African embassy attacks.¹³⁶ This emphasis does *not* seem to have changed the FBI’s disinterest in long-term strategic analytical work in support of the Bureau’s national security responsibilities.

As the Joint Inquiry Staff put it,

“At the FBI, our review found that, prior to September 11, 2001, support for ongoing investigations and operations was favored, in terms of allocating resources, over long-term, strategic analysis. We were told, during the course of our FBI interviews, that prevention occurs in the operational units, not through strategic analysis, and that, prior to September 11, the FBI had insufficient resources to do both.”¹³⁷

These problems were, in large part, an outgrowth of the “casefile” mentality that prevailed at the Bureau. According to the JIS,

¹³⁶ Dale Watson, written statement presented to SSCI/HPSCI joint hearing (September 26, 2002), at 3.

¹³⁷ JIS, written statement presented to SSCI/HPSCI joint hearing (September 18, 2002), at 28-29.