

Unfortunately, this combination of organizational, cultural, and technological impediments has led the FBI into a recurring pattern of information dysfunction. Time after time during the past few years, the Bureau has distinguished itself by its inability to assess what is in its own files – much less to make productive analytical use of such information. This occurred, for instance, in 1997 when the FBI misplaced vital information in its own files linking the People’s Republic of China to illicit political influence operations during the 1996 U.S. Presidential campaign.¹⁵⁴ It happened with the belated discovery of thousands of pages of documents related to convicted Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh – just days before his execution.¹⁵⁵ It happened on several occasions during the FBI’s botched handling of the Wen-Ho Lee nuclear espionage investigation, when agents in the Albuquerque field office or at FBI Headquarters misplaced or failed to pass along crucial information that might have permitted agents to discover Lee’s unlawful removal of nuclear secrets from the Los Alamos National Laboratory months or years before they finally did.¹⁵⁶

As detailed by the JIS in the present inquiry, the same thing happened with the Phoenix EC and the many tidbits of information in the FBI’s possession relating to terrorists’ interest in U.S. flight schools. It also happened in the FBI’s belated revelation to the Joint Inquiry in the late summer of 2002 of certain information relating to the activities of September 11 hijackers

¹⁵⁴ See U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General, *The Handling of FBI Intelligence Information Related to the Justice Department’s Campaign Finance Investigation* (July 1999) [unclassified Executive Summary], available at <http://www.usdoj.gov:80/oig/fbicfi/fbicfi.1.htm>.

¹⁵⁵ See, e.g., David Johnson, “Citing FBI Lapse, Ashcroft Delays McVeigh Execution,” *New York Times* (May 12, 2001), at A1.

¹⁵⁶ See Thompson & Lieberman, *supra*, at 3-4 & 11.