

agencies today are hard-working, capable, and dedicated, but often lack the resources and tools they need to gather, process, analyze, and use information in today's digital environment. In my view, these workers deserve the trust and appreciation of Congress and the nation, and should be encouraged and empowered to be imaginative, innovative, and collaborative in order to protect us from future attacks.

Information Sharing

The investigation revealed that significant intelligence leads about some of the hijackers were available but did not get widely shared. This was less a willful refusal to share information than it was a failure to grasp its significance. For example, the CIA and NSA had collected information on hijackers al Hazmi and al Mihdhar that connected them to bin Laden, the East Africa Embassy bombings, and the attack on the USS Cole. The agencies also had information indicating that both men were in the United States. The al Hazmi and al Mihdhar story shows what many analysts had claimed for years—the raw databases of CIA and NSA contain extremely valuable information that does not get noticed, shared, integrated, or acted upon.

Entities within the agencies that collect signals and human intelligence guard their “raw” data; few outside analysts are allowed access. The NSA and CIA's Directorate of Operations typically insist that they alone, not even all-source intelligence analysts or other sophisticated consumers, possess the special expertise required to evaluate human or signals intelligence data. Before sharing information, these entities go through an internal analysis process that “filters” out everything that does not seem to the analyst sufficiently important or reliable to report. But as the al Hazmi and al Mihdhar cases demonstrate, analysts can fail to appreciate what might be important to potential consumers, who bring different perspectives and other sources of information.

There are powerful reasons why the entities within the CIA, NSA, and FBI that collect the raw data are so unwilling to allow access to outside analysts – even those within their parent agency. Compartmentation of classified information is sometimes needed to protect sensitive sources and methods. There is also a need to protect constitutionally-protected privacy rights. For example,