

The failure of several of the terrorist hijackers, including the ringleader, Mohammed Atta, to completely fill out their applications provided ample reason for denying the visas. Only one of the 15 terrorists who were from Saudi Arabia provided an actual address; the rest listed only general locations, such as “California,” “New York,” “Hotel D.C.” and “Hotel.”²⁹ Only three of the 15 provided the name and street address of present employer or school as required on the application. Only one of these applications had additional documentation or explanatory notes provided by a consular officer that addressed any discrepancy or problem with the original application.

It was the official position of the State Department’s Bureau of Consular Affairs for over a year, that 13 of the 15 terrorists from Saudi Arabia had been personally interviewed and that there was nothing in their visa applications or in the interviews that should have prevented issuance of their visas. According to the GAO, however, only two of the Saudi applicants were actually interviewed, and all 19 hijackers had substantial omissions and inconsistencies on their visa applications that should have raised concerns about why they wanted visas.

²⁹ “Visas for Terrorists,” Joel Mowbray, National Review, October 28, 2002.