Khalid al @-@ Mihdhar

Khalid Muhammad Abdallah al @-@ Mihdhar (Arabic : ???? ??????? , Kh?lid al @-@ Mi???r ; also transliterated as Almihdhar) (May 16 , 1975 ? September 11 , 2001) was one of five hijackers of American Airlines Flight 77 , which was flown into the Pentagon as part of the September 11 attacks .

Mihdhar was born in Saudi Arabia and fought in the Bosnian War during the 1990s . In early 1999 , he traveled to Afghanistan where , as an experienced and respected jihadist , he was selected by Osama bin Laden to participate in the attacks . Mihdhar arrived in California with fellow hijacker Nawaf al @-@ Hazmi in January 2000 , after traveling to Malaysia for the Kuala Lumpur al @-@ Qaeda Summit . At this point , the CIA was aware of Mihdhar , and he was photographed in Malaysia with another al @-@ Qaeda member who was involved in the USS Cole bombing . The CIA did not inform the FBI when it learned that Mihdhar and Hazmi had entered the United States , and Mihdhar was not placed on any watchlists until late August 2001 .

Upon arriving in San Diego , California , Mihdhar and Hazmi were to train as pilots , but spoke English poorly and did not do well with flight lessons . In June 2000 , Mihdhar left the United States for Yemen , leaving Hazmi behind in San Diego . Mihdhar spent some time in Afghanistan in early 2001 and returned to the United States in early July 2001 . He stayed in New Jersey in July and August , before arriving in the Washington , D.C. area at the beginning of September .

On the morning of September 11 , 2001 , Mihdhar boarded American Airlines Flight 77 , which was hijacked approximately 30 minutes after take off . The plane was deliberately crashed into the Pentagon , killing all 64 people aboard the flight , along with 125 on the ground .

Background

Khalid al @-@ Mihdhar was born on May 16 , 1975 in Mecca , Saudi Arabia to a prominent family , related to the Quraysh tribe of Mecca . Little is known about his life before the age of 20 , when he and childhood friend Nawaf al @-@ Hazmi went to Bosnia to fight with the mujahideen in the Bosnian War . After the war , Mihdhar and Hazmi went to Afghanistan where they fought alongside the Taliban against the Northern Alliance , and al @-@ Qaeda would later dub Nawaf his " second in command " . In 1997 , Mihdhar told his family that he was leaving to fight in Chechnya , though it is not certain that he actually went to Chechnya . The same year , both men attracted the attention of Saudi intelligence , who believed they were involved in arms smuggling , and the following year they were eyed as possible collaborators in the 1998 United States embassy bombings in East Africa after it emerged that Mohamed Rashed Daoud Al @-@ Owhali had given the FBI the phone number of Mihdhar 's father @-@ in @-@ law ; 967 @-@ 1 @-@ 200578 , which turned out to be a key communications hub for al @-@ Qaeda militants , and eventually tipped off the Americans about the upcoming Kuala Lumpur al @-@ Qaeda Summit .

In the late 1990s , Mihdhar married Hoda al @-@ Hada , who was the sister of a comrade from Yemen , and they had two daughters . Through marriage , Mihdhar was related to a number of individuals involved with al @-@ Qaeda in some way . Mihdhar 's father @-@ in @-@ law , Ahmad Mohammad Ali al @-@ Hada , helped facilitate al @-@ Qaeda communications in Yemen , and in late 2001 , Mihdhar 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , Ahmed al @-@ Darbi , was captured in Azerbaijan and sent to Guantanamo Bay on charges of supporting a plot to bomb ships in the Strait of Hormuz .

Selection for the attacks

In Spring 1999 , al @-@ Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden committed to support the 9 / 11 attacks plot , which was largely organized by prominent al @-@ Qaeda member Khalid Sheikh Mohammed . Mihdhar and Hazmi were among the first group of participants selected for the operation , along with Tawfiq bin Attash and Abu Bara al Yemeni , al @-@ Qaeda members from Yemen . Mihdhar , who had spent time in al @-@ Qaeda camps in the 1990s , was known and highly regarded by Bin

Laden . Mihdhar was so eager to participate in jihad operations in the United States that he had already obtained a one @-@ year B @-@ 1 / B @-@ 2 (tourist / business) multiple @-@ entry visa from the consulate in Jeddah , Saudi Arabia on April 7 , 1999 , one day after obtaining a new passport . Mihdhar listed the Los Angeles Sheraton as his intended destination .

Once selected , Mihdhar and Hazmi were sent to the Mes Aynak training camp in Afghanistan . In late 1999 , Hazmi , Attash and Yemeni went to Karachi , Pakistan to see Mohammed , who instructed them on Western culture and travel ; however , Mihdhar did not go to Karachi , instead returning to Yemen . He was known as Sinaan during the preparations .

= = 2000 = =

= = = Malaysia summit = = =

The CIA was aware of Mihdhar and Hazmi 's involvement with al @-@ Qaeda , having been informed by Saudi intelligence during a 1999 meeting in Riyadh . Based on information uncovered by the FBI in the 1998 United States embassy bombings case , the National Security Agency (NSA) began tracking the communications of Hada , Mihdhar 's father @-@ in @-@ law . In late 1999 , the NSA informed the CIA of an upcoming meeting in Malaysia , which Hada mentioned would involve " Khalid " , " Nawaf " , and " Salem " , who was Hazmi 's younger brother , Salem al @-@ Hazmi .

On January 4 , 2000 , Mihdhar left Yemen and flew to Dubai , United Arab Emirates , where he spent the night . The CIA broke into his hotel room and photocopied his passport , which gave them his full name , birth information and passport number for the first time , and alerted them that he held an entry visa to the United States . The photocopy was sent to the CIA 's Alec Station , which was tracking al @-@ Qaeda .

On January 5 , 2000 , Mihdhar traveled to Kuala Lumpur , where he joined Hazmi , Attash and Yemeni , who were all arriving from Pakistan . Hamburg cell member Ramzi bin al @-@ Shibh was also at the summit , and Mohammed possibly attended . The group was in Malaysia to meet with Hambali , the leader of Jemaah Islamiyah , an Asian al @-@ Qaeda affiliate . During the Kuala Lumpur al @-@ Qaeda Summit , many key details of the 9 / 11 attacks may have been arranged . At the time , the attacks plot had an additional component involving hijacking aircraft in Asia , as well as in the United States . Attash and Yemeni were slated for this part of the plot , however , it was later canceled by Bin Laden for being too difficult to coordinate with United States operations .

In Malaysia , the group stayed with Yazid Sufaat , a local Jemaah Islamiyah member , who provided accommodation at Hambali 's request . Both Mihdhar and Hazmi were secretly photographed at the meeting by Malaysian authorities , whom the CIA had asked to provide surveillance . The Malaysians reported that Mihdhar spoke at length with Attash , and he met with Fahd al @-@ Quso and others who were later involved in the USS Cole bombing . After the meeting , Mihdhar and Hazmi traveled to Bangkok , Thailand on January 8 and left a week later on January 15 for the United States .

= = = United States entry = = =

On January 15 , 2000 , Mihdhar and Hazmi arrived at Los Angeles International Airport from Bangkok and were admitted as tourists for a period of six months . Immediately after entering the country , Mihdhar and Hazmi met Omar al @-@ Bayoumi in an airport restaurant . Bayoumi claimed he was merely being charitable in assisting the two seemingly out @-@ of @-@ place Muslims with moving to San Diego , where he helped them find an apartment near his own , co @-@ signed their lease , and gave them $ 1 @,@ 500 to help pay their rent . Mohammed later claimed that he suggested San Diego as their destination , based on information gleaned from a San Diego phone book that listed language and flight schools . Mohammed also recommended that the two seek assistance from the local Muslim community , since neither spoke English nor had experience with

Western culture .

While in San Diego , witnesses told the FBI he and Hazmi had a close relationship with Anwar Al Awlaki , an imam who served as their spiritual advisor . Authorities say the two regularly attended the Masjid Ar @-@ Ribat al @-@ Islami mosque Awlaki led in San Diego , and Awlaki had many closed @-@ door meetings with them , which led investigators to believe Awlaki knew about the 9 / 11 attacks in advance .

In early February 2000 , Mihdhar and Hazmi rented an apartment at the Parkwood Apartments complex in the Clairemont Mesa area of San Diego , and Mihdhar purchased a used 1988 Toyota Corolla . Neighbors thought that Mihdhar and Hazmi were odd because months passed without the men getting any furniture , and they slept on mattresses on the floor , yet they carried briefcases , were frequently on their mobile phones , and were occasionally picked up by a limousine . Those who met Mihdhar in San Diego described him as " dark and brooding , with a disdain for American culture " . Neighbors also said that the pair constantly played flight simulator games .

Mihdhar and Hazmi took flight lessons on May 5 , 2000 at the Sorbi Flying Club in San Diego , with Mihdhar flying an aircraft for 42 minutes . They took additional lessons on May 10 ; however , with poor English skills , they did not do well with flight lessons . Mihdhar and Hazmi raised some suspicion when they offered extra money to their flight instructor , Richard Garza , if he would train them to fly jets . Garza refused the offer but did not report them to authorities . After the 9 / 11 attacks , Garza described the two men as " impatient students " who " wanted to learn to fly jets , specifically Boeings " .

= = = Return to Yemen = = =

Mihdhar and Hazmi moved out of the Parkwood Apartments at the end of May 2000 , and Mihdhar transferred registration for the Toyota Corolla to Hazmi . On June 10 , 2000 , Mihdhar left the United States and returned to Yemen to visit his wife , against the wishes of Mohammed who wanted him to remain in the United States to help Hazmi adapt . Mohammed was so angered by this that he decided to remove Mihdhar from the 9 / 11 plot , but he was overruled by Bin Laden . Mihdhar remained part of the plot as a muscle hijacker , who would help take over the aircraft . On October 12 , 2000 , the USS Cole was bombed by a small boat laden with explosives . After the bombing , Yemeni Prime Minister Abdul Karim al @-@ Iryani reported that Mihdhar had been one of the key planners of the attack and had been in the country at the time of the attacks . In late 2000 , Mihdhar was back in Saudi Arabia , staying with a cousin in Mecca .

= = 2001 = =

In February 2001 , Mihdhar returned to Afghanistan for several months , possibly entering across the Iranian border after a flight from Syria . FBI director Robert Mueller later stated his belief that Mihdhar served as the coordinator and organizer for the muscle hijackers . He was the last of the muscle hijackers to return to the United States . On June 10 , he returned to Saudi Arabia for a month , where he applied to re @-@ enter the United States through the Visa Express program , indicating that he intended to stay at a Marriott hotel in New York City . On his visa application , Mihdhar falsely stated that he had never previously traveled to the United States .

On July 4 , Mihdhar returned to the United States , arriving at New York City 's John F. Kennedy International Airport , using a new passport obtained the previous month . A digital copy of one of Mihdhar 's passports was later recovered during a search of an al @-@ Qaeda safe house in Afghanistan , which held indicators , such as fake or altered passport stamps , that Mihdhar was a member of a known terrorist group . At the time when Mihdhar was admitted to the United States , immigration inspectors had not been trained to look for such indicators . Upon arriving , Mihdhar did not check into the Marriott but instead spent a night at another hotel in the city .

Mihdhar bought a fake ID on July 10 from All Services Plus in Passaic County , New Jersey , which was in the business of selling counterfeit documents , including another ID to Flight 11 hijacker Abdulaziz al @-@ Omari . On August 1 , Mihdhar and fellow Flight 77 hijacker Hani Hanjour drove

to Virginia in order to obtain driver 's licenses . Once they arrived , they scouted out a 7 @-@ Eleven convenience store and a dollar store in Falls Church , and found two Salvadoran immigrants who , for $ 50 each , were willing to vouch for Mihdhar and Hanjour as Virginia residents . With notarized residency forms , Mihdhar and Hanjour were able to obtain driver 's licenses at a Virginia motor vehicle office . Flight 77 hijackers Salem al @-@ Hazmi and Majed Moqed , and United Airlines Flight 93 hijacker Ziad Jarrah used the same addresses obtained from the Salvadorans to obtain Virginia driver 's licenses .

  In August 2001 , Mihdhar and Hazmi made several visits to the library at William Paterson University in Wayne , New Jersey , where they used computers to look up travel information and book flights . On August 22 , Mihdhar and Hazmi tried to purchase flight tickets from the American Airlines online ticket @-@ merchant , but had technical difficulties and gave up . Mihdhar and Moqed were able to make flight reservations for Flight 77 on August 25 , using Moqed 's credit card ; however , the transaction did not fully go through because the billing address and the shipment address for the tickets did not match .

  On August 31 , Mihdhar closed an account at Hudson United Bank in New Jersey , having opened the account when he arrived in July , and was with Hanjour when he made a withdrawal from an ATM in Paterson on September 1 . The next day , Mihdhar , Moqed and Hanjour traveled to Maryland , where they stayed at budget motels in Laurel . Mihdhar was among the muscle hijackers who worked out at a Gold 's Gym in Greenbelt in early September . On September 5 , Mihdhar and Moqed went to the American Airlines ticket counter at Baltimore @-@ Washington International Airport to pick up their tickets for Flight 77 , paying $ 2 @,@ 300 in cash .

  = = = Intelligence leads = = =

  Mihdhar was placed on a CIA watchlist on August 21 , 2001 , and a note was sent on August 23 to the Department of State and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) suggesting that Mihdhar and Hazmi be added to their watchlists . The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) was not notified about the two men . On August 23 , the CIA informed the FBI that Mihdhar had obtained a U.S. visa in Jeddah . The FBI headquarters received a copy of the Visa Express application from the Jeddah embassy on August 24 , showing the New York Marriott as Mihdhar 's destination .

  On August 28 , the FBI New York field office requested that a criminal case be opened to determine whether Mihdhar was still in the United States , but the request was refused . The FBI ended up treating Mihdhar as an intelligence case , which meant that the FBI 's criminal investigators could not work on the case , due to the barrier separating intelligence and criminal case operations . An agent in the New York office sent an e @-@ mail to FBI headquarters saying , " Whatever has happened to this , someday someone will die , and the public will not understand why we were not more effective and throwing every resource we had at certain ' problems . ' " The reply from headquarters was , " we [at headquarters] are all frustrated with this issue ... [t] hese are the rules . NSLU does not make them up . "

  The FBI contacted Marriott on August 30 , requesting that they check guest records , and on September 5 , they reported that no Marriott hotels had any record of Mihdhar checking in . The day before the attacks , Robert Fuller of the New York office requested that the Los Angeles FBI office check all local Sheraton Hotels , as well as Lufthansa and United Airlines bookings , because those were the two airlines Mihdhar had used to enter the country . Neither the Treasury Department 's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network nor the FBI 's Financial Review Group , which have access to credit card and other private financial records , were notified about Mihdhar prior to September 11 .

  Regarding the CIA 's refusal to inform the FBI about Mihdhar and Hazmi , author Lawrence Wright suggests the CIA wanted to protect its turf and was concerned about giving sensitive intelligence to FBI Agent John P. O 'Neill , who Alec Station chief Michael Scheuer described as duplicitous . Wright also speculates that the CIA may have been protecting intelligence operations overseas , and might have been eying Mihdhar and Hazmi as recruitment targets to obtain intelligence on al @-@ Qaeda , although the CIA was not authorized to operate in the United States and might have

been leaving them for Saudi intelligence to recruit .

= = September 11th attacks = =

 On September 10 , 2001 , Mihdhar and the other hijackers checked into the Marriott Residence Inn in Herndon , Virginia , near Washington Dulles International Airport . Saleh Ibn Abdul Rahman Hussayen , a prominent Saudi government official , was staying at the same hotel that night , although there is no evidence that they met or knew of each other 's presence .
 At 06 : 22 on September 11 , 2001 , the group checked out of the hotel and headed to Dulles airport . At 07 : 15 , Mihdhar and Moqed checked in at the American Airlines ticket counter and arrived at the passenger security checkpoint at 07 : 20 . Both men set off the metal detector and were put through secondary screening . Security video footage later released shows that Moqed was wanded , but the screener did not identify what set off the alarm , and both Moqed and Mihdhar were able to proceed without further hindrance . Mihdhar was also selected by the Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System (CAPPS) , which involved extra screening of his luggage ; however , because Mihdhar did not check any luggage , this had no effect . By 07 : 50 , Mihdhar and the other hijackers , carrying knives and box cutters , had made it through the airport security checkpoint and boarded Flight 77 to Los Angeles . Mihdhar was seated in seat 12B , next to Moqed .
 The flight was scheduled to depart from Gate D26 at 08 : 10 but was delayed by 10 minutes . The last routine radio communication from the plane to air traffic control occurred at 08 : 50 : 51 . At 08 : 54 , Flight 77 deviated from its assigned flight path and began to turn south , at which point the hijackers set the flight 's autopilot setting for Washington , D.C. Passenger Barbara Olson called her husband , United States Solicitor General Ted Olson (who 's 61st birthday was on that day) , and reported that the plane had been hijacked . At 09 : 37 : 45 , Flight 77 crashed into the west facade of the Pentagon , killing all 64 people aboard , along with 125 in the Pentagon . In the recovery process , remains of the five hijackers were identified through a process of elimination , since their DNA did not match any from the victims , and put into the custody of the FBI .

= = Aftermath = =

 After the attacks , the identification of Mihdhar was one of the first links suggesting that Bin Laden had played a role in their organization , since Mihdhar had been seen at the Malaysian conference speaking to Bin Laden 's associates . The FBI interrogated Quso , who was arrested following the USS Cole bombing and in custody in Yemen . Quso was able to identify Mihdhar , Hazmi and Attash in photos provided by the FBI , and he also knew Marwan al @-@ Shehhi , a hijacker aboard United Airlines Flight 175 . From Quso , the FBI was able to establish an al @-@ Qaeda link to the attacks .

 On September 12 , 2001 , the Toyota Corolla purchased by Mihdhar was found in Dulles International Airport 's hourly parking lot . Inside the vehicle , authorities found a letter written by Mohamed Atta , a hijacker aboard American Airlines Flight 11 ; maps of Washington , D.C. and New York City ; a cashier 's check made out to a Phoenix , Arizona flight school ; four drawings of a Boeing 757 cockpit ; a box cutter ; and a page with notes and phone numbers , which contained evidence that led investigators to San Diego .
 On September 19 , 2001 , the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) distributed a special alert that listed Mihdhar as still alive , and other reports began suggesting that a number of the alleged hijackers were likewise still alive . For instance , on September 23 , 2001 , the BBC published an article that suggested Mihdhar and others named as hijackers were still at large . The German magazine Der Spiegel later investigated the BBC 's claims of " living " hijackers and reported they were cases of mistaken identities . In 2002 , Saudi officials stated that the names of the hijackers were correct and that 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi . In 2006 , in response to 9 / 11 conspiracy theories surrounding its original news story , the BBC said that confusion had arisen with the common Arabic names , and that its later reports on the hijackers superseded its original story .

In 2005 , Army Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer and Congressman Curt Weldon alleged that the Defense Department data mining project Able Danger identified Mihdhar , Hazmi , Shehhi and Atta as members of a Brooklyn @-@ based al @-@ Qaeda cell in early 2000 . Shaffer largely based his allegations on the recollections of Navy Captain Scott Phillpott , who later recanted his recollection , telling investigators that he was " convinced that Atta was not on the chart that we had " . Phillpott said that Shaffer was " relying on my recollection 100 percent " , and the Defense Department Inspector General 's report indicated that Philpott strongly supported the social network analysis techniques used in Able Danger , and might have exaggerated claims of identifying the hijackers .