



## Unleashing a Terrorist

FBI Special Agent Jack Cloonan, a lead investigator in the bureau's "bin Laden Unit," was in Yemen on September 11, 2001 when airliners began crashing into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. As soon as he could get a flight, Cloonan flew back to New York. His first order of business upon his return was to go see a very special inmate who was being held in the secret section of a federal prison. The prisoner was Ali Mohamed, who, for at least a decade and a half, had been Osama bin Laden's (shown) and Ayman al-Zawahiri's top spy inside the U.S. government.



Cloonan had reason to believe Ali Mohamed could provide details about the 9/11 terror attacks. "I walked in and I had him pulled out," Cloonan told Peter Lance, author of [Triple Cross](#), the explosive exposé of Ali Mohamed and the federal agencies and officials who covered up his lethal penetration of our top national security institutions. "I said, 'How'd they do it?' and he wrote the whole thing out — the attack, as if he knew every detail of it," Cloonan recounted.

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Ali Mohamed *did* know every detail of the operation because for many years, in addition to being al-Qaeda's chief mole in the U.S. military and intelligence circles, he was also al-Qaeda's chief instructor in terror tactics. Agent Cloonan continued explaining Ali Mohamed's 9/11 prison admission:

He [had] conducted training for al Qaeda on how to hijack a plane. He ran practical exercises in Pakistan and he said, "This is how you get a box cutter on board. You take the knife, you remove the blade and you wrap it in [word blacked out] and put it in your carry-on luggage." They'd read the FAA regulations. They knew four inches wouldn't go through. "This is how you position yourself," he said. "I taught people how to sit in first class. You sit here and some sit here." He wrote the whole thing out.

Did Ali Mohamed know each of the hijackers and the precise date, time, and flight numbers of the airliners used in the 9/11 attacks? That is not likely, since he had been in federal custody since September 10, 1998 — almost three years to the day prior to the 9/11 attacks. Nevertheless, it boggles the mind that the FBI's bin Laden Unit, the outfit claiming the greatest expertise on the world's "most wanted terrorist," could have failed to have asked the talkative and boastful Ali Mohamed the logical leading questions that would have drawn out the hijacking details *before* they were employed in the 9/11 plot. This failure is all the more mind-boggling when one realizes that U.S. officials had received *repeated* prior warnings of al-Qaeda plans to use airliners as missiles, and that the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the White House had been specifically named as targets.

Of course, in the aftermath of 9/11, U.S. officials claimed otherwise. In May 2002, Condoleezza Rice, then President Bush's national security adviser, uttered the excuse that would be repeated as a mantra by other officials in the weeks and years to come. "I don't think that anybody could have predicted that



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these ... people would take an airplane and slam it into the World Trade Center ... that they would try to use an airplane as a missile," she said.

That assertion was patently false, as Condoleezza Rice and top officials of the FBI, CIA, and Defense and Justice Departments knew full well. First of all, they had in their possession the laptop of Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Yousef, who had escaped the United States after the WTC bombing, had left the computer behind in his Manila apartment in 1995 when his bomb-making materials caught on fire, forcing him to flee the Philippines. The entire airliners-as-missiles hijacking scheme was on his laptop, as noted by the Philippines National Police (PNP) when they turned over the computer to U.S. authorities in 1995. And a 1995 FBI memo on Ramzi Yousef notes that Yousef was planning to use airliners in the United States and had asked his associates "to identify possible targets." The same FBI memo also states that Yousef had asked co-conspirator Abdul Hakim Murad "while he [Murad] was in the U.S. for pilot training, to choose an appropriate site for an attack. Murad chose the WTC building."

Murad, who had been arrested at the time of the Manila apartment fire, had given up more details of the 9/11 hijacking plot during questioning by PNP Col. Rodolfo Mendoza. Murad, who was a member of al-Qaeda's Filipino terrorist offshoot group, Abu Sayyef, revealed that in addition to the WTC, Pentagon, CIA, and White House, the plan also targeted the Transamerica Tower in San Francisco, the Sears Tower in Chicago, and a nuclear power plant. Besides Col. Mendoza, other Philippine officials involved with the case, such as Gen. Avelino Razon and Senior Inspector Aida Fariscal, have publicly insisted that they fully informed the FBI and CIA about the hijacking plans and the details Murad had provided about the hijackers taking pilot lessons in the United States.

### **Inexplicable "Ineptitude"**

Those warnings from the Philippines came six years before 9/11. Additionally, U.S. authorities had multiple three-alarm warnings in the days and weeks preceding the September 11, 2001, attacks. The arrest of al-Qaeda's would-be hijacker Zacarias Moussaoui in August at a Minnesota flight school by alert FBI Special Agent Harry Samit was one of those screamingly obvious clues that could have been used to prevent the impending attacks. FBI officials did everything possible to turn Moussaoui loose, and would have, except for the tenacity of agents Samit and Colleen Rowley.

At the time of the 9/11 attacks, U.S. officials not only had the complete airliners-as-missiles plot, as detailed on Yousef's computer and in Murad's confession, but they also had both Yousef and Murad in custody. They knew from prison informant Gregory Scarpa, Jr. that Yousef was still obsessed with completing his job of destroying the World Trade Center. And they knew that while in prison Yousef was in contact with his uncle, Khalid Sheik Mohammed, who would later become known as the "mastermind" of the 9/11 plot.

But even more important than Ramzi Yousef, the top U.S. officials tasked with protecting our country against terrorist attacks had in their custody Ali Mohamed, the man who tied together the first WTC bombing in 1993 with the 9/11 attacks. It was Ali Mohamed who trained the al-Qaeda terrorists that assisted Ramzi Yousef in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Ali Mohamed was a central actor in major terrorist events of the 1980s and '90s. He is the *key* to many of the nagging questions about our nation's repeated, spectacular, inexplicable security lapses with regard to terrorist threats. And for the past several years, the federal government has been going to incredible lengths to cover up all information about Ali Mohamed. Why?



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## **Working Within U.S. Agencies**

For more than a decade and half — from the early 1980s to the late 1990s — Ali Abdelsaoud Mohamed served Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri as one of their highest (if not *the* highest) al-Qaeda operatives in the United States. During that same time period, Ali Mohamed traveled to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, and other parts of the world to provide al-Qaeda with top-level intelligence, plan terrorist events, set up liaison with the Hezbollah terrorist organization, assist in fundraising, and train al-Qaeda terrorists — including bin Laden’s personal bodyguards and even bin Laden himself. U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, prosecutor of some of the biggest terrorist and organized-crime cases, once said of him: “This is the most dangerous man I’ve ever met.”

The most amazing thing about Ali Mohamed’s story is that he carried out his audacious, deadly role as globe-trotting spy master/terrorist while working with, and inside, the very U.S. government organizations that are supposed to be protecting us from the likes of him: the CIA, the U.S. Army Special Forces, the FBI, and the Justice Department. And he carried out this long-running ruse in spite of numerous tip-offs from foreign governments and warnings from alert personnel within our own agencies.

Since his arrest in 1998, Ali Mohamed has been hidden away in a federal “witness protection” program, with most of his court records sealed. As Benjamin Weiser of the *New York Times* put it, Ali Mohamed has been buried “under a cloak of secrecy rarely seen in the public courts.”

Incredibly, in spite of his central role in a global terror wave that has taken thousands of lives, Mohamed cut a plea deal in 2000 that would possibly set him free on “supervised release” within *five years*! Quite possibly, he has already been released.

## **Coming to America**

Ali Mohamed first showed up on the radar in 1981 as a 29-year-old Egyptian Army Special Forces officer who was at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, training with U.S. Special Forces. He was at Fort Bragg when fellow Egyptian soldiers who were members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) terror group assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Mohamed stunned American soldiers by expressing approval of the assassination.

In 1984, Mohamed was discharged from the Egyptian Army for his radical Islamist views. He soon began conducting intelligence operations for EIJ founder Ayman al-Zawahiri. Al-Zawahiri, who would later join his EIJ to Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda, tasked Ali Mohamed with trying to infiltrate the CIA. Mohamed offered his services to the CIA’s Cairo office. In spite of warnings from the Egyptian government about his Islamic Jihad ties, the CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, approved taking him on as an asset to infiltrate a Hezbollah ring in Hamburg, Germany. When it became evident that Ali Mohamed was actually in cahoots with the Hamburg Hezbollah cell and was “playing” the CIA, the agency claimed to have dismissed him. Ali Mohamed also reportedly was put on the State Department’s Watch List at that time to prevent his reentry into the United States.

Nevertheless, the following year, in 1985, Mohamed easily entered the United States on a commercial flight, unhindered by the Watch List status. This was the beginning of what would become a long list of troubling “anomalies” lending support to speculation that Ali Mohamed is a “protected” asset of the CIA or another U.S. intelligence agency. Time and again invisible hands seemed to intervene to allow him to continue his deadly course of penetrating our nation’s vital organs. While many U.S. officials and journalists attribute Ali Mohamed’s incredible successes to audacity, intelligence, and steel nerves on



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his part, and stunning ineptitude on the part of U.S. intelligence agencies, other observers have rightfully noted that the succession of FBI, CIA, and Defense Department “failures” regarding Mohamed is so extensive and outrageous as to defy probability.

Ali Mohamed did not waste any time. During his 1985 flight into the United States, he charmed his way into the good graces of a passenger, a California woman, whom he soon married, setting him on the road to obtaining U.S. citizenship. In 1986, Mohamed enlisted in the U.S. Army and was transferred to Ft. Bragg’s JFK Special Warfare Center. Over the next several years, he stole many top-secret documents, including weapons manuals and bomb-making manuals. He translated them into Arabic, thus turning America’s most secret Special Forces manuals into deadly handbooks for al-Qaeda. One top-secret document he apparently obtained at Ft. Bragg was a Joint Chiefs of Staff memo containing the locations of all Special Forces and Navy SEAL units worldwide. Now, that is information that obviously would be of great value to Osama bin Laden, and just as obviously of deadly consequence to our commandos who might be hunting him.

In 1988, a telling incident occurred that fortifies suspicions of Ali Mohamed’s protected status. Mohamed arrogantly announced that he was going to Afghanistan to train Islamic Mujahedeen. His commander at Ft. Bragg, Lt. Col. Robert Anderson, refused permission and directly ordered him not to go. Defying Army regulations and Lt. Col. Anderson’s direct order, Mohamed went anyway. When he returned from Afghanistan, Mohamed smugly taunted Anderson, who requested that he be court-martialed. “It’s pretty much unthinkable that an American soldier would go unpunished after fighting in a foreign war,” Anderson later said. But even though Anderson tried repeatedly to get action, Mohamed was never prosecuted. This sent an unmistakable signal that Mohamed was operating under protection of higher authorities. Lt. Col. Anderson thinks it was the FBI. “I believe that there was an agent that controlled Ali Mohamed’s actions,” Anderson later said. “I can’t prove that, but I believe it.”

Ali Mohamed’s activities the following year would provide plenty of substantiation for Anderson’s suspicions. In 1989, Mohamed made a series of trips from Ft. Bragg to New York to train the al-Qaeda cell members who would later be convicted in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the foiled Day of Terror Plot later that year to blow up multiple New York City targets. Incredibly, an FBI team was monitoring the training and actually filmed Mohamed’s trainees firing thousands of rounds from illegal AK-47 automatic weapons at a firing range on Long Island. But neither Mohamed nor his trainees were arrested, and no alarm was sounded.

In 1990, another major security failure “coincidence” occurred: Omar Abdul Rahman, the Egyptian “Blind Sheik,” was allowed into the United States, despite being on the State Department’s Watch List because of his radical beliefs and terror connections. As in the case of Ali Mohamed, the evidence suggests Sheik Rahman circumvented the Watch List roadblock thanks to a CIA-approved visa. Sheik Rahman’s presence stirred Islamic fundamentalists throughout the country to new levels of fervor, especially at the Alkifah Center in Brooklyn, which Ali Mohamed frequented. In November of 1990, Jewish Rabbi Meier Kahane was assassinated in New York City by El Sayyid Nosair, a disciple of Sheik Rahman and one of Ali Mohamed’s trainees who was filmed by the FBI at the firing range. Dozens of boxes of evidence were confiscated from Nosair’s apartment, including documents that should have led the FBI to Ali Mohamed and his trainees, who would later be convicted along with Ramzi Yousef for the first World Trade Center bombing. Bungling and bureaucratic wrangling between the FBI and the NYPD are usually cited as excuses for the mysterious failure to follow up on the Nosair evidence, an excuse that becomes maddeningly trite through overuse in the Ali Mohamed case.



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Over the next several years, Ali Mohamed moved ever higher into al-Qaeda's inner circle, repeatedly setting off alarms that drew the concern of alert intelligence agents, but which were inexplicably disregarded by top U.S. officials. The following are but a few examples:

- **1991-92:** While working as an FBI informant, Ali Mohamed made many trips abroad, including to Afghanistan, where he personally handled security for bin Laden and his top-level al-Qaeda entourage as they made a dangerous move to Sudan.
- **1993:** With the help of Ali Mohamed's trainees, master bomb-maker Ramzi Yousef carried out the first attack on the World Trade Center, killing five and injuring more than 1,000. Months later, Ali Mohamed was arrested by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police while trying to bring al-Qaeda terrorist Essam Marzouk into Canada. Mohamed had the RCMP call FBI Supervisor John Zent, who secured his release. Mohamed went on to broker a historic meeting in Sudan between bin Laden and Hezbollah leader Imad Mugniyah, thus helping establish an historic Sunni-Shia terror alliance. Jihadists trained by Mohamed and sent to Somalia by bin Laden were among the enemy forces in the "Black Hawk Down" incident that resulted in the deaths of 18 U.S. Army Rangers and Delta Force commandos.
- **1994:** Ali Mohamed went to Nairobi, Kenya, to plan the deadly U.S. embassy bombing that took place four years later. He personally delivered surveillance photographs of the embassy to bin Laden. He also brought EIJ-al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri into the United States on a fake passport and escorted him on a fundraising tour of mosques from California to North Carolina. Mohamed was named in a sealed indictment as an unindicted co-conspirator in the Day of Terror trial, and defense attorneys attempted to find and subpoena him to testify. U.S. Attorney Andrew McCarthy and FBI Special Agent Harlan Bell secretly met Mohamed in an apparent move to help him elude the subpoena.
- **1995:** Ali Mohamed obtained a copy of the sealed list of 172 unindicted co-conspirators in the Day of Terror trial, which included himself and Osama bin Laden. Some suspect that Andrew McCarthy gave him the list. Mohamed passed the list on to bin Laden, alerting him and the others named that they were being sought. Mohamed smuggled al-Zawahiri into the United States for a second terror fundraising tour.
- **1997:** The FBI raided the New York home of Wadi El-Hage, Osama bin Laden's personal secretary. They found contact information for Ali Mohamed, who had been closely associated with El-Hage for years and stayed at El-Hage's home. El-Hage was arrested but was unexplainably released. Months later he helped execute the al-Qaeda terror bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Mohamed brazenly told the FBI he knew who did the bombing and how. (He knew because he planned it for bin Laden.) Unbelievably, the FBI still did not arrest him or search his house.
- **2000:** Operation Able Danger, a secret high-powered computer data mining operation for the Department of Defense, identified a bonanza of al-Qaeda operatives (including many of the future 9/11 hijackers) with links to Ali Mohamed, al-Zawahiri, and bin Laden. If followed up by the FBI, this information could have averted the 9/11 plot. The Able Danger data was ordered destroyed in April 2000. A massive coverup ensued to deny that the data identified the 9/11 hijackers.

One of the more extraordinary incidents to come to light is the October 1997 "dinner date" between Ali Mohamed, U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, and FBI Special Agent Jack Cloonan at a swanky restaurant in Sacramento, California. The two feds met with Mohamed in an alleged effort to get him to confess to his terrorist activities. Instead, Mohamed was defiant and arrogantly told them that he could disappear any time he wanted to and that they would never be able to find him. Fitzgerald told Cloonan that





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Mohamed “is the most dangerous man I’ve ever met. We cannot let this man out on the street,” despite his known connections to al-Qaeda and terrorism, including the information assembled in this article. *But*, incredibly, they did precisely that: Mohamed was allowed to remain free for nearly a year, until *after* the deadly U.S. embassy bombings.

### **Exposure and High Anxiety**

Since the 9/11 terror spree, a steady trickle of revelations by an array of independent journalists and researchers has been forcing some very explosive evidence to the surface concerning Ali Mohamed’s function in planning the 9/11 terrorist attacks and earlier terrorist events. Court records, interviews with inside players, and government documents obtained through the Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) have been filling in many of the gaps in Mohamed’s mysterious vita. This, no doubt, is causing great anxiety in high government circles. Well-known figures and top agency officials spanning the administrations of George Bush, Sr., Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush stand to face not only public embarrassment but potential criminal indictment, if their actions (and failures to act) regarding Ali Mohamed become widely known.

The information uncovered by Peter Lance, John M. Berger’s Intelwire.com, and other independent researchers has unveiled shocking actions and inaction by government officials that permitted terrorists repeatedly to attack America. The information also indicts many officials who engaged in a series of massive coverups to thwart disclosure of their culpability. More importantly, the evidence now available in the case of Ali Mohamed confirms an alarming truth that has emerged from many other troubling cases. It shows that far from being safer from terrorist attacks since the supposed “reforms” enacted after 9/11, the American people are more in danger than ever. The officials who should have been held accountable — not only for their failures on 9/11, but for similar failures regarding earlier terrorist attacks that led up to it — not only have gotten off scot-free, but actually have been *promoted* (in the case of some individuals, more than once) to positions where they can cause even greater harm to our national security.

If widespread exposure of the Ali Mohamed travesty is headed off, do not be surprised to find out at some future date that the master terrorist is again on the loose. In an interview with the National Geographic Channel, Ali Mohamed’s defense attorney makes a very chilling prophecy. “I think the most likely thing that will happen,” says attorney David Ruhnke, “is he’ll be released and he’ll be given a new name, a new identity, and he’ll pick up a life some place.”

The basis for that opinion can be seen in the court transcript of Ali Mohamed’s plea hearing, in which he pled guilty to “conspiracy to kill nationals of the United States, conspiracy to murder, kidnap and maim.” Judge Leonard B. Sand asked Mohamed if he understood that pleading guilty could subject him to life imprisonment plus a term of *supervised release of five years*. “Yes, your honor,” Mohamed answered.

Of course, a “life” sentence is a cruel joke; it can be whittled down to time served, if the government declares that Ali Mohamed’s “cooperation” is sufficiently valuable. That appears to be in the works. In fact, there is no publicly available information from the court record to show that Ali Mohamed *was ever sentenced*. Although he has been held in a prison, he has been in the witness protection section.

“Mohamed has made some kind of deal with the government, that will surely have him out of prison on some date certain that he knows about,” says attorney David Ruhnke. That would surely be an atrocious crime against justice — and a sure promise of more terror to come from one who has already proven



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himself to be the master terrorist. However, a massive public outcry can cause the guilty to be exposed and swept from power, and can ensure that Ali Mohamed never again will have the opportunity to harm another soul.

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