

“Able Danger” & 9/11 Foreknowledge

The ongoing coverup concerning the secret Able Danger operation provides further evidence that the “war on terror” is a farce.

by William F. Jasper

There was nothing in outward appearance to draw attention to the four-bedroom apartment at 54 Marienstrasse. Nonetheless, the attention of the intelligence services of Germany, the U.S., Israel, and other Middle Eastern and European countries had been drawn to the nondescript flat in Hamburg, Germany, as early as 1998. That was when Mohammed Atta signed the lease and he and Ramzi bin al Shibh moved in. Soon thereafter, it was identified by intelligence agencies as a target of interest. It became known as the hub of al-Qaeda’s “Hamburg Cell.”

Over the next two and a half years, dozens of al-Qaeda operatives, including Khalid Sheik Mohammed, the reputed

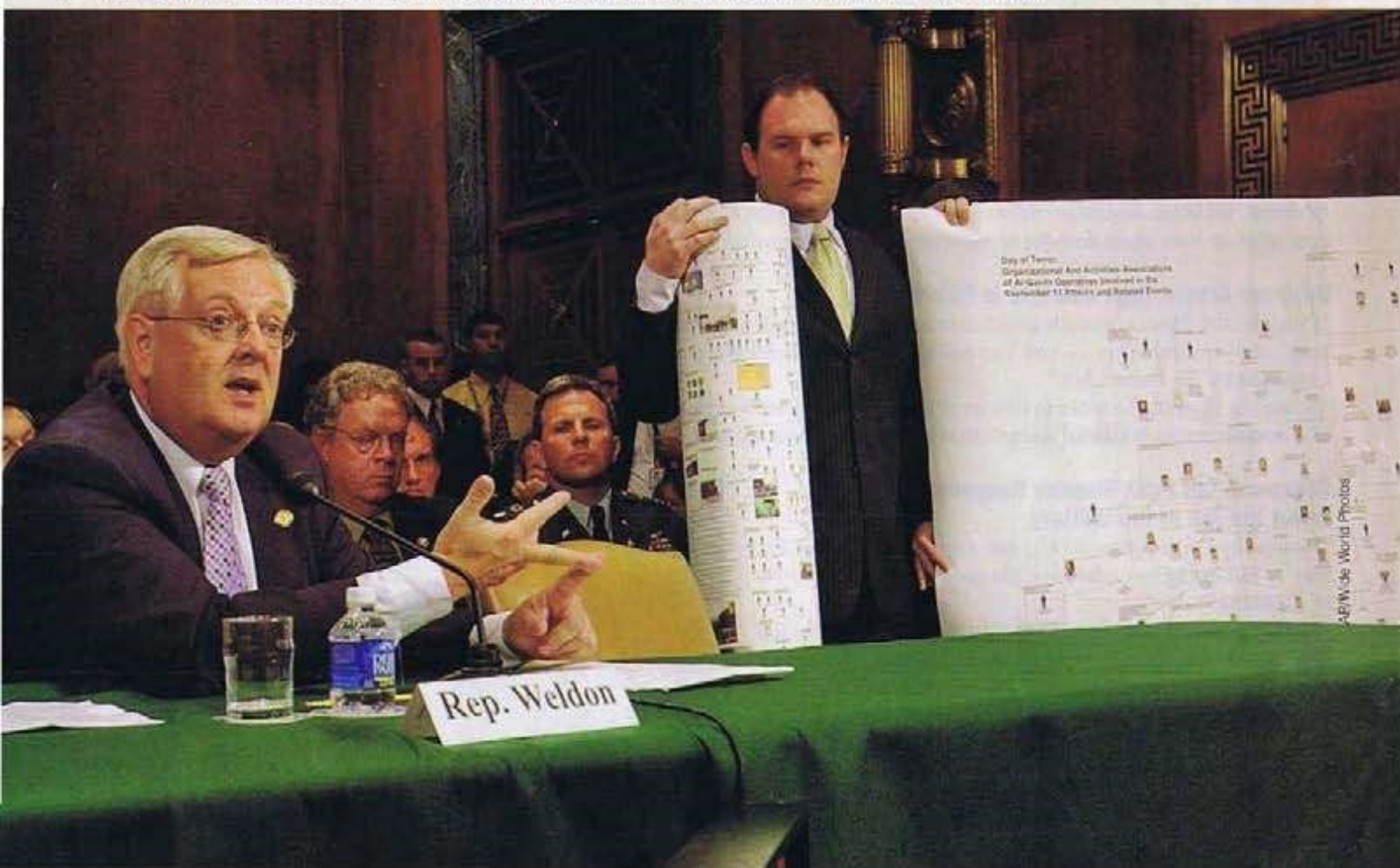
9/11 “mastermind,” passed through the 54 Marienstrasse apartment. Twenty-nine al-Qaeda recruits from the Middle East or Northern Africa listed it as their registered address. Mohammed Atta would later be labeled, after the fact, as the “ringleader” of the 9/11 terrorists who hijacked four jetliners to use as missiles against targets in New York City and Washington, D.C. Atta is believed to have been the suicide pilot who flew American Airlines Flight 11 into the north tower of the World Trade Center. His Hamburg roommate, Ramzi bin al Shibh, captured in Pakistan in 2002, has been described by U.S. officials as the al-Qaeda “coordinator and paymaster” for 9/11. In the months leading up to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda terror

network were under intense scrutiny by intelligence services worldwide.

Cover Story Wearing Thin

Over the past several years, as more and more evidence has come out, it has grown more and more difficult for U.S. government officials to sustain the cover story that they had no way of anticipating the attacks. As it turns out, U.S. intelligence agencies and their foreign counterparts were almost tripping over each other as they shadowed the al-Qaeda network across the face of the planet. The FBI and CIA were tracking al-Qaeda operatives and their activities in the U.S. and overseas. The National Security Agency (NSA) was intercepting and recording the telephone calls of many al-Qaeda operatives, including Osama

Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Pa.) testifies on “Able Danger” before the Senate Judiciary Committee on September 21. The chart, a mock-up of one assembled by Able Danger prior to the 9/11 attacks, identifies five al-Qaeda cells and dozens of al-Qaeda terrorists.



bin Laden himself. More recently, it has come to light that a super-secret Pentagon operation, known as "Able Danger," was also tracking and monitoring al-Qaeda. Using advanced computer "data mining" capabilities, the Able Danger team reportedly identified Mohammed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi, Khalid al-Midhar, and Nawaf al-Hazmi as members of an al-Qaeda cell code-named "Brooklyn" because of its connections to New York City.

According to Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Pa.), in September 2000 the Able Danger team initiated at least three separate efforts to get its information on the hijackers to the FBI "so they could bring that cell in and take out the terrorists." That was one year before 9/11. Army Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Schaffer, one of the principal members of Able Danger, has stated in interviews given this past August that Able Danger had identified five al-Qaeda cells, including two of the three cells that ultimately would be used to pull off the 9/11 terror attacks. Lt. Col. Schaffer set up one Able Danger/FBI meeting in the fall of 2000. It was canceled — as were all other efforts to inform the FBI — per orders from higher-ups in the Department of Defense.

Was the intelligence developed by Able Danger of sufficient quality, specificity, and credibility that it could have and should have been used to prevent the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., that claimed almost 3,000 lives? We don't know the answer to that question since the executive branch has been blocking efforts by Congress and the public to gain access to information about Able Danger. This much we do know: first, the Clinton administration in 2000 and then the Bush administration in 2001 failed to heed the Able Danger warnings on al-Qaeda. Moreover, Clinton administration officials ordered the main Able Danger files destroyed in 2000; Bush administration officials ordered Lt. Col. Schaffer's duplicate Able Danger files destroyed in 2004. Both the Clinton administration and the Bush administration have attempted to cover up the existence of Able Danger and its findings. The official, bipartisan 9/11 Commission also covered up the existence of this operation and its findings. In recent months, members of the Able Danger team who have spoken out have been subjected to official harassment and intimidation.

Considerable effort is being expended by Donald Rumsfeld's minions in the Defense Department to keep all information about this operation under wraps.

The first major exposure of Able Danger came on June 27 of this year, when Rep. Curt Weldon, who is vice chairman of the Armed Services Committee and the Homeland Security Committee, delivered a 45-minute speech on the House floor outlining the nature of the operation and the data it had developed on al-Qaeda prior to 9/11. Since then, Operation Able Danger has been the subject of growing controversy and intense international interest. Congressional hearings on Able

Danger were scheduled, postponed, and rescheduled. Finally, on September 21, the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee held a long-awaited hearing on Able Danger. It was a letdown; the Pentagon blocked the star witnesses from testifying. Able Danger team members James D. Smith and Lt.

Mohammed Atta, the alleged ringleader of the 9/11 hijackers, was a leader of the al-Qaeda "Hamburg Cell" under surveillance by German intelligence, the CIA, and FBI since 1998. The photos below were taken by an ATM camera in Portland, Maine, the night before the 9/11 attacks.

Fast Green ATM 9/10/01



AP/Wide World Photos

U.S. decision makers have allowed co-conspirators with the 9/11 terrorists to remain free. Instead of being penalized for their failures (or worse) in regard to 9/11, they have received promotions! The agents who tried to warn and protect the country have been muzzled.



Marwan al-Shehhi



Khalid al-Midhar



Nawaf al-Hamzi

Terrorists "R" Us get free ride en route to 9/11: Hijacker Marwan al-Shehhi met in Oklahoma with Moussaoui, Atta, and Menepta; Khalid al-Midhar and Nawaf al-Hamzi lived with FBI informant Abdusattar Shaikh in San Diego.

Col. Schaffer sat mute in the audience, prevented from testifying by the Bush/Rumsfeld Defense Department. Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and other committee members, both Republicans and Democrats, angrily accused the Defense Department of obstructing the Senate's investigation.

Stung by the congressional criticism and the unfavorable public and media reaction to its stonewalling and obstruction, the Pentagon suddenly became cooperative — or so it seemed. On September 23, Senator Specter announced that new Able Danger hearings had been rescheduled for October 5 and that now the Pentagon would allow the witnesses to testify. However, Mark Zaid, the attorney for Schaffer and Smith, said the Defense Department had told him that his clients *would not* be allowed to testify. Mr. Zaid turned out to be correct. The October 5 hearings were canceled. When THE NEW AMERICAN contacted Mr. Zaid on October 5, he expressed the hope that there would still be hearings before the end of the year, but he had no idea when they might be.

Unfettered hearings in which Able Danger members are allowed to testify freely might provide useful information about al-Qaeda as well as about who was responsible — in both the Clinton and Bush administrations — for failing to heed the warnings of the Able Danger staff. However, there are some false assumptions underlying the arguments of Rep. Weldon and other advocates of Able Danger. Chief among these is the assumption that if only the FBI and the CIA had been given Able Danger's data on the al-Qaeda cells, they would have "taken out" the terrorists — either overseas or in the U.S. — prior to 9/11.

This line of argument dovetails with the standard conclusion of virtually every other official "in-

vestigation," to wit, 9/11 was an "intelligence failure" that demonstrated "lack of coordination and cooperation" among U.S. agencies. And the solution to this problem, we have been told, is to reward incompetence by giving the agencies involved still larger budgets and more manpower, and to combine them all together in a new gargantuan super-bureaucracy, the Department of Homeland Security.

However, as we noted above and will detail further below, the failure to "take out" the al-Qaeda cells before the deadly 9/11 attacks was not due to a lack of information. Whatever useful data Able Danger might have been able to offer concerning Mohammed Atta and his associates would have been superfluous. The FBI and CIA had been tracking the al-Qaeda 9/11 conspirators very closely *for years* — both in the U.S. and overseas, using both technical means and human intelligence. Dedicated FBI and CIA field operatives had warned their superiors repeatedly and had urged them to authorize the arrest of the terrorists. Those sensible pleas by agents in the field were rejected repeatedly by decision makers at the top levels of the federal government. Even worse, as we will show, co-conspirators with the 9/11 terrorists have been allowed to remain free and roaming at large in the United States. Many U.S. decision makers, instead of being penalized for their failures (or worse) in regard to 9/11, have received *promotions!* The agents who tried to warn and protect the country have been muzzled.

Disturbing Pattern

The continuity of coverup and conspiracy from the Clinton administration to the Bush administration to suppress Able Danger follows a disturbing pattern that is demonstrated in these cases directly related to 9/11:

- **Hamburg Cell.** Mohammed Atta, Ramzi bin al Shibh, and their roommates in Hamburg came under surveillance by German intelligence and the CIA in 1998 because of their association with al-Qaeda operatives in Hamburg who had been linked to the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. Those operatives included Mamoun Darkazanli, Mohammad Haidar Zammar, Said Bahaji, and Mounir al-Motassadek. The CIA station chief in Hamburg, Tom Volz, who posed as a U.S.

FBI photos

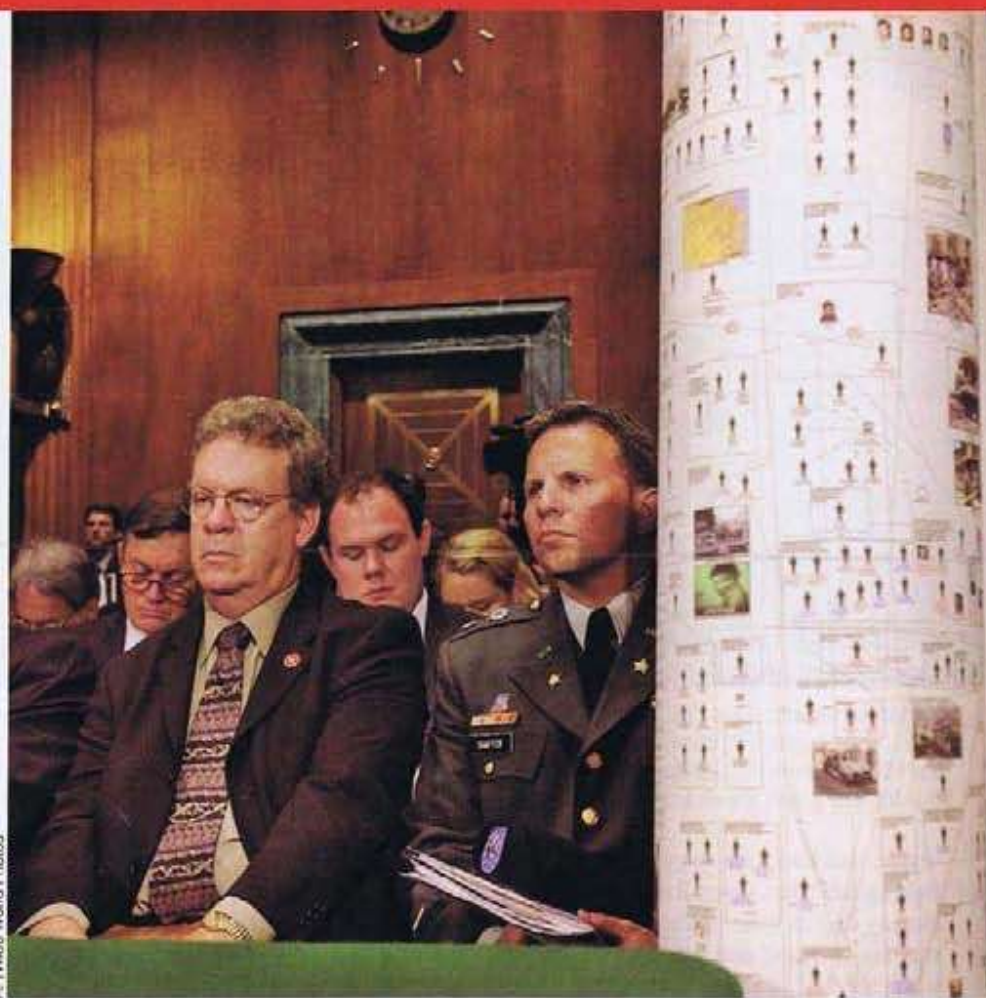
embassy employee, actually tried to recruit Darkazanli as an informant in late 1999 and 2000. CIA agent David Edger shadowed the Hamburg Cell for several years, before returning to the U.S. in 2001 to take a professorship of political science at Oklahoma University at Norman, coincidentally, just a few blocks from an apartment where an al-Qaeda cell operated that included 9/11 terrorists Mohammed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi, and Zacarias Moussaoui.

• **San Diego Cell.** Even the 9/11 Commission Report, which whitewashed federal government failures, acknowledged that the failure to identify hijackers Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Midhar when they entered the U.S. was one of the biggest "lost opportunities." The CIA had tracked both men to the "secret" al-Qaeda planning meeting for 9/11 in Malaysia, where they and other participants were photographed and videotaped by the CIA and Malaysian intelligence. The FBI claims that the CIA didn't inform them about the two men, so they had no way of knowing about them.

That won't wash. Available evidence shows the FBI had multiple tails on the duo in San Diego, where Hazmi and Midhar lived with former San Diego State professor Abdussattar Shaikh, *an acknowledged longtime undercover asset of the FBI!* What's more, the two terrorists had regular contacts with several other area jihadists who had long been under FBI surveillance, including Omar al-Bayoumi, an agent of the Saudi government whom federal authorities acknowledge as a primary financial conduit for Hazmi and Midhar. Hazmi worked (illegally) at a San Diego convenience store/gas station owned by Osama Mustafa, a militant who had been under FBI surveillance since 1994 because of his violent threats and his membership in the PLO and PFLP terrorist groups.

These and a host of other red flags had caused FBI Agent Stephen Butler to press his superiors to take action against Hazmi and Midhar, but they refused. "He saw a pattern, a trail, and he told his supervisors, but it ended there," said one congressional investigator of Butler's predicament. FBI officials have blocked Butler from testifying before any of the 9/11 investigations.

• **Phoenix Cell.** FBI informant Aukai Collins, who monitored Middle East terrorist suspects for the FBI for four years in Phoenix, claims to have told the FBI about



Disabled witnesses: Able Danger team members James Smith (left) and Lt. Col. Anthony Schaffer listen during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Able Danger on September 21. Both men were ordered by the Pentagon not to testify. An al-Qaeda organizational chart stands next to them.

9/11 hijacker Hani Hanjour while Hanjour was in flight training in Phoenix. Collins said the FBI knew Hanjour lived in Phoenix, knew his exact address, his phone number, and even what car he drove. "They knew everything about the guy," Collins claims. In July 2001, Phoenix FBI agent Ken Williams sent an electronic memo to FBI headquarters in Washington outlining his investigation into area flight schools that led him to believe al-Qaeda may be using U.S. flight schools to train terrorists as pilots. He recommended that the FBI should conduct an investigation of flight schools nationally to see if this was happening. His memo was never acted on.

• **Brooklyn Cell.** The official 9/11 Commission Report has this to say about Ali Mohamed and his terrorist cell: "As early as December 1993, a team of al Qaeda operatives had begun casing targets in Nairobi for future attacks. It was led by Ali Mohamed, a former Egyptian army offi-

cer who had moved to the United States in the mid-1980s, enlisted in the U.S. Army, and became an instructor at Fort Bragg. He had provided guidance and training to extremists at the Farouq mosque in Brooklyn, including some who were subsequently convicted in the February 1993 attack on the World Trade Center." Known as "Al Qaeda's California connection," Mohamed worked for the FBI's Sacramento office, while training terrorists and escorting top al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri on a fundraising tour of the Golden State in 1995.

Mohamed pleaded guilty to terrorism charges in 2000 and was held in U.S. custody. Incredibly, he has been released and is now again on the streets. He can hardly be anything except a government *agent provocateur*.

• **Minnesota.** Zacarias Moussaoui, the so-called "20th hijacker," would have gotten away scot-free if FBI officials in Wash-



Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman



Ali Mohamed



Zacarias Moussaoui



Melvin Lattimore

Protected assets: (From left to right) Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman, convicted ringleader of the 1993 World Trade Center (WTC) bombing, was given a U.S. visas by the CIA; convicted terrorist Ali Mohamed worked for FBI and U.S. Special Forces, trained the 1993 WTC bombers, and helped plan the 1998 al-Qaeda U.S. embassy bombings; federal officials repeatedly tried to release Zacarias Moussaoui before 9/11 and have dragged out his trial for four years; Melvin Lattimore/Menepta, a key figure in several terrorist attacks, recently was released from prison — again.

ington had had their way. Thanks to FBI field agents like Coleen Rowley, who tenaciously dug in their heels on the issue, he was not released and was still in custody when the 9/11 attacks occurred.

• **Norman Cell.** In addition to Mohammed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi, and Zacarias Moussaoui, the al-Qaeda cell that operated out of Norman, Oklahoma, included convicted felon Melvin Lattimore, a convert to militant Islam who now goes by the name Majahid Abdulquadir Menepta.

Mr. Lattimore/Menepta's credit card was used to help finance the 1993 World Trade Center bombing masterminded by Ramzi Yousef. He was identified by an FBI informant as a top suspect in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and was identified by witnesses interviewed by this magazine as being in the company of Timothy McVeigh in Oklahoma City. Menepta's roommate Hussain al-Attas drove Moussaoui to Minnesota. According to FBI documents, 9/11 hijacker Salem al-Hazmi was also seen at Menepta's apartment, and when FBI agents visited the apartment *three weeks before 9/11*, they saw several men fleeing through the back door of the apartment. The airline ticket for 9/11 hijacker Ziad Jarrah (United Airlines Flight 93) was purchased from an Oklahoma University computer terminal just a few

blocks from Menepta's apartment.

Like Ali Mohamed, Mr. Lattimore/Menepta is almost certainly a federal *agent provocateur*. As we have reported in a previous article ("Al-Qaeda's OKC-9/11 Ties," July 26, 2004), it is almost impossible rationally to explain his record in any other way. When Menepta was picked up and prosecuted, it was for only a minor weapons violation. He was sentenced to a few months in prison and is now back on the streets. Thus, a man who has been tied to the three most important terrorist attacks in U.S. history — 1993 WTC, 1995 OKC, and 9/11 — has been purposely set loose.

The current coverup of the terrorist bombing in Norman, Oklahoma, outside the stadium during the Oklahoma University-Kansas State football game on October 1 is yet another wake-up call. The 85,000 fans inside the stadium — and a national television audience — were the intended targets. Fortunately, the suicide bomber was unable to get inside the stadium and took only his own life. However, federal authorities have rushed to cover up all evidence that the bombing was a terrorist effort involving foreign nationals.

The official story is that the bomber was a mentally unstable student, Joel Henry Hinrichs III, with no ties to Islamic

jihadists. However, news organizations and confidential sources in Oklahoma have challenged that account, producing contradictory evidence showing that Hinrichs was indeed involved with a ring of Pakistanis who were Islamic fanatics. (See article on page 19.)

Time for Truth, Not Partisan Politics

Predictably, Republicans and Democrats are both trying to use the Able Danger revelations for partisan purposes, to portray the opposition as weak and irresponsible on terrorism and national security. But like the Oklahoma football bombing and a number of other incidents, the ongoing Able Danger stonewalling demonstrates a continuity of pernicious policy that transcends party lines.

According to Rep. Weldon, two weeks after 9/11 he was provided with data from Able Danger that included "an extensive analysis chart of Al Qaeda, which I immediately took to the White House and personally delivered to then-Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley. Mr. Hadley was extremely interested in the chart and said that he would take it to the President."

During his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee on September 21, Rep. Weldon said: "And I can tell you this

— I talked to Mr. Hadley three months ago when I briefed him on another issue, and I said, remember that chart that I gave you? And he said, yes, I remember it.” However, Mr. Hadley, who has since been promoted to national security adviser, has been mum on the issue of that meeting.

One of the peripheral issues that has become a main bone of contention in the whole matter is whether or not the chart provided to Hadley actually included a photo of Mohammed Atta. According to Lt. Col. Schaffer and other Able Danger team members, the chart (roughly four-and-a-half feet by five feet) included a photo of Atta and showed his linkage to the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the blind sheik Omar Abdul-Rahman, who was convicted and sent to prison on bombing conspiracy charges.

The Pentagon’s story on the chart evolved through several stages. Initially, Defense Department officials claimed that there was no evidence that a chart ever

existed. Then the chart’s existence was acknowledged, but it was alleged that the data on it was non-specific. Then it was asserted that the chart had not included a photo of Atta. But on September 2, Rep. Weldon announced that on the previous day he had been to a Pentagon briefing in which officials “confirmed that five credible witnesses did see the 9/11 ringleader, Mohammad Atta, in data produced by Able Danger prior to the 9/11 attacks.”

That “official” line could change again, of course, if an investigation proceeds. But Lt. Col. Schaffer and other Able Danger members are being pressured to drop the matter.

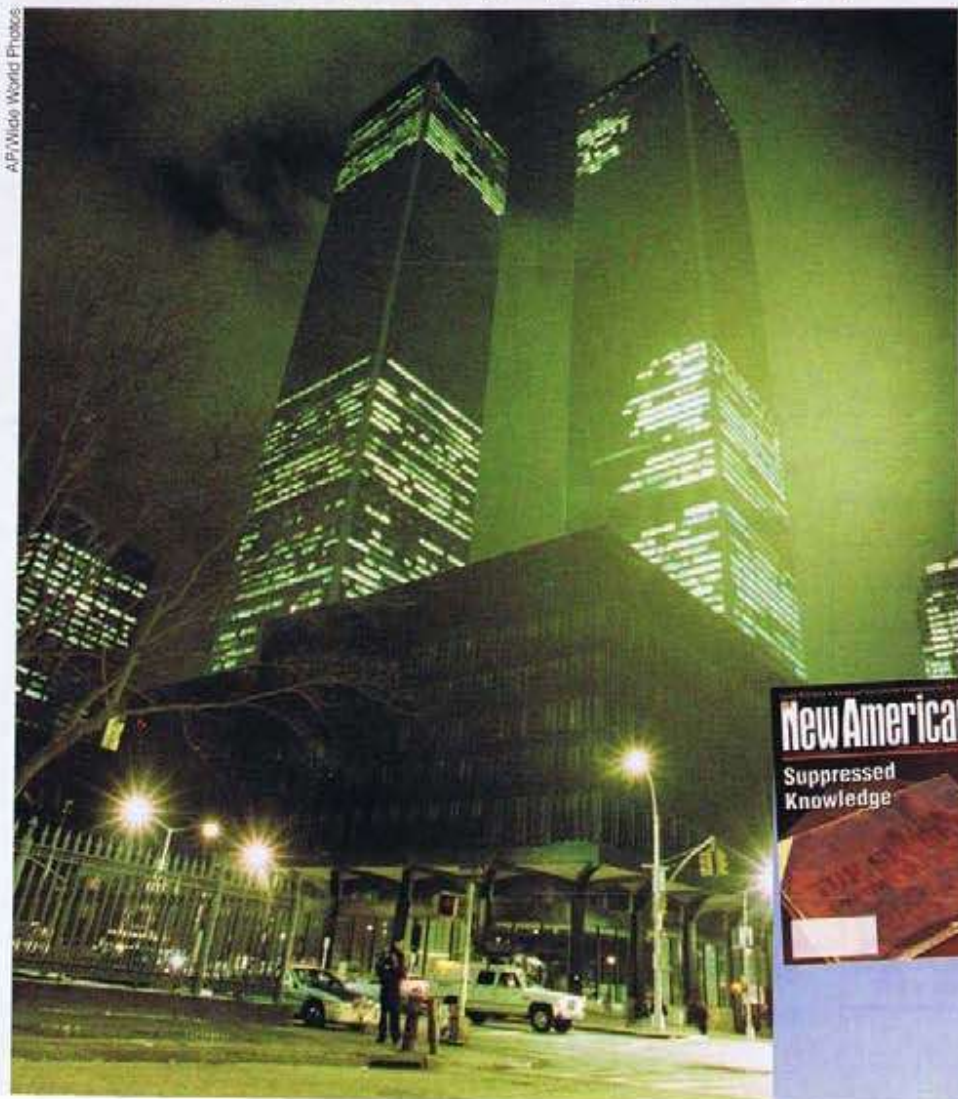
Likely as a penalty for not keeping silent, Schaffer’s security clearance has been revoked. In October 2003, while

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stationed in Afghanistan, Schaffer briefed Philip Zelikow, the executive director of the 9/11 Commission, and other Commission staff members on Able Danger. According to Schaffer, Zelikow stated that this was very important information, gave Schaffer his card, and told him to get back in touch when he returned to Washington, D.C. However, Schaffer says that when he called Zelikow’s office in January 2004 to set up an appointment, he was given the brush off. When he called again, he was told Dr. Zelikow had all the information he needed on Able Danger and there was no need for a meeting. Shortly thereafter he was hit out of the blue with charges that he had run up unauthorized telephone charges, to the tune of \$67. According to Schaffer, the Pentagon spent “in our estimation \$400,000 to investigate all these issues simply to drum up this information.” That fits a pattern of retaliation against other government whistleblowers who have been faced with similar charges.

Many additional examples could be cited to amplify this pattern. It is a pattern that reflects not incompetence or “lack of coordination” but something much worse. It is a pattern of conscious, purposeful action aimed at thwarting those who are tasked with defending America in the “war on terror.” It is a pattern that is being carried out by policymakers at the highest levels of our government, and it is time to ask why. ■

First attack: The twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City are shown in the aftermath of a terrorist bombing that occurred in the underground parking garage on February 26, 1993.



AP/Wide World Photos



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