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## Welcome to Terrorland: Mohamed Atta & the 9-11 Cover-up in Florida

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One reason for the widespread distrust of the official explanation of the 9/11 attack—there are dozens—is the truly shocking fact that the FBI never finished its 9/11 investigation. Less than a month after putting a 4,000-man FBI task force on the case, President Bush called off the FBI’s investigation into the 9/11 terrorist conspiracy, on the pretext that the manpower was needed to fight the anthrax threat, then in the headlines daily. When the anthrax scare was over, however, the FBI did not go back to finish its 9/11 investigation. After announcing their massive presence on the case, we never heard from the FBI in any meaningful way again.

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The plot was masterminded from Florida. What to make of this choice? Although media attention kept pointing away from the state—to Phoenix, San Diego, and Minneapolis—14 of the 19 hijackers voted with their feet and hung their terrorist shingle out in a state which has been governed since 1999, it must be said, by the current President’s brother. With an entire continent seemingly at their disposal, the terrorists chose Florida to be their American beachhead, and then base. Why did Mohamed Atta, a man described by many who met him as a really ‘natty dresser’ lead his cadre from a bustling European metropolis with an internationally-famous red light district to a retirement community in a place where the only “action” involves senior citizens lining up for the early bird special?

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Atta and his cadre of terrorists lived in Florida, drank in Florida, and stuffed \$20 bills down stripper's g-strings in skin joints all up and down the state. And they learned to fly in Florida, too, mostly in the tiny town of Venice. It made nary a ripple when news first surfaced, though only briefly, that three of the four terrorist pilots learned to fly in a retirement community on Florida's Gulf Coast. Mohamed Atta and sidekick and bodyguard Marwan Al-Shehhi were the ones identified as having been flight students there. Then it was reported—in a strangely muted tone for what was big news—that others of the terrorists had been in Venice as well, including Siad Jarrah, said to have been at the controls of the plane that went down in western Pennsylvania. Three of the four 9/11 pilots learned to fly at two flight schools at the tiny Venice Airport. A terrorist trifecta out at the Venice Airport. Venice, Florida is the biggest 9/11 crime scene that wasn't reduced to rubble. But it hasn't been treated that way. And no one has offered any reason why. Both flight schools were owned by Dutch nationals. Both had been recently purchased, at about the same time. A year later terrorists began to arrive, in numbers greater than we have so far been told. All of this must be just a freak coincidence, according to the FBI.

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How had the FBI known the exact identities of the hijackers less than 24 hours after the attack? If their files had been so readily in hand, why hadn't they apprehended them before they killed thousands? And when conscientious FBI agents did try to raise alarms about known Al Qaeda sympathizers at U.S. flight schools, why were they ignored? The only answer ever given by the FBI to why the terrorists came to the U.S. to learn to fly was 'because flight training is cheaper in the U.S.' But Atta and Marwan ended up paying more than double what flight training costs elsewhere, according to aviation experts. So price was apparently not the object. And besides, in Florida alone there are over 200 flight schools.

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Most of the key terrorists had Venice connections. Hamburg cadre member Ramzi bin al-Shibh, a candidate for 20th hijacker, was on his way to Venice until he was denied a visa. Ramzi's replacement as the so-called 20th hijacker, Zacarias Moussaoui, we discovered, had also been in Venice, with Arne Kruithof, one of the two Dutch national flight school owners.

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In fact, there were no investigative reporters nosing around in Venice. Speculation about why the terrorists found a tiny retirement community on Florida's Gulf Coast so congenial to their plans has not been voiced in the major media.

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Despite the elderly population, one thing felt familiar to Atta when he got to Venice, oddly enough. When he was a student at Technical University in Hamburg studying—supposedly—urban architecture and planning, he hung out at a place called Sharky’s Billiard Bar. After moving to Venice he hung out at a restaurant and bar just across from the Venice Airport, also called Sharky’s.

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When she ‘hooked-up’ with Atta, Amanda Keller was a willowy 20 year-old ‘lingerie model’ and stripper with spiky pink hair. She worked nights for an escort service called Fantasies & Lingerie which catered to a mixed crowd of politicians, judges, high-rollers and socialites of both sexes, just down the street from Cheetah’s, a strip club Atta was known to frequent in nearby Sarasota. Amanda was Mohamed Atta’s live-in girlfriend in Venice for more than two months. And while the full story of her experience awaits a later chapter, one supremely horrific experience should be brought up now, because it clearly shows Atta to have been someone capable of driving a Boeing 767 airliner into tons of steel and glass. The two went out almost every night,

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Two hours before terrorist hijackers began crashing airliners into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, four Arab men in a white van pulled up to the guard gate of the hotel where George W. Bush was spending the night, the Colony Beach Resort Hotel on Longboat Key in Sarasota, Florida, and launched an attempt to assassinate the President of the United States.

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The attempted assassination had very likely been coordinated by terrorist ringleader Mohamed Atta, just then passing through airport security 1000 miles away in Portland, Maine. Several days before Bush’s arrival in Sarasota, according to eyewitnesses, Atta had been meeting with co-conspirators at a Holiday Inn barely two miles down the beach from the hotel where Bush would be staying.

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The Special Agent in charge of the Presidential detail in Sarasota told reporter Yadov that the President was never in any danger, and the connection to the SPLA, and the warning that the Secret Service got before the terrorist attack, was all “just a coincidence.” For good measure the FBI weighed in, pooh-poohing the story to reporters asking about the significance of the warning. In the vague and wary way government spokespeople seem to have patented, FBI spokesman Sarah Oakes said, “Nationwide the FBI has received over 200,000 such tips, with more than 5,000 of the tips coming into the Tampa office alone.” The explanation would have to do. No one would have anything more to say. Another mystery averted by your friends in public service. When your credibility as an agency has already been shredded, as the FBI’s has, there’s not much left to lose. Their denial made no sense, but it served to stop further investigation into the predawn warning. Stopped it on a dime. Until reporter Yadov went looking for Hakim, the owner of the raided beauty supply store, and discovered that Hakim’s beauty supply store wasn’t there anymore. Hakim was missing, too. He left in something of a hurry after being released by the Secret Service, Yadov learned. Gone. No one knew where. And Hakim wasn’t the only witness to disappear in Sarasota. Zainelabdeen Omer was missing too. The man whose warning of imminent havoc had been right on the money was now unavailable for comment. He quit his job and left town, just ahead of reporter’s questions. Hakim and Omer joined the swelling ranks of 9/11 Missing Witnesses. We like to think of them as just all being on vacation together somewhere, maybe on an Island of Lost Witnesses. Some of Omer’s friends could still be found, however. One told Yadov: “Omer got in a lot of trouble with the law. All I know is he can’t leave town.” “So you think he’s still somewhere around?” she asked.

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On camera, Omer’s friend shrugs and says, “Should be. If he’s still alive.” It’s a chilling moment. If Omer’s still alive? Why wouldn’t he be? Where are the missing Sudanese men today? The Secret Service doesn’t know. Yadov checked with the INS. Was Omer being detained? The INS wouldn’t say. Their responses sounded a little cavalier, especially from people who take very seriously their job of protecting the President, unless by being part of a deliberate cover-up they thought they were protecting the President. But two years later? But if it was a cover-up. How could you tell? One sure way, we figured, would be to look for signs of witness intimidation. If authorities were actively discouraging people with firsthand knowledge from talking, then you can be pretty sure that something’s rotten in the state of Denmark. Or Florida. Was there evidence of witness intimidation? Yes... The eyewitness to the incident at the front gate of Bush’s hotel who came forward, Carroll Mooneyhan, was a Longboat Key Fire Marshal. He had been milling in the lobby of the Colony Beach Resort at 6 a.m. along with Secret Service agents waiting to accompany Bush on his morning run. When reporter Shay Sullivan of the Longboat



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The FBI states Mohamed Atta landed in America on June 3, 2000. We interviewed a good dozen credible eyewitnesses who could tell them they were wrong. Didn't they know that? They did. The logic is inescapable... if we knew it, we had to figure that they knew it as well. After all, they had a massive 4,000-man investigation team. They could put 3,999 more investigators on the street than we could.

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Okay, we think we've got the FBI's story, which goes like this: Atta arrives in the U.S. in early June, begins flight training at Huffman in Venice in July, then leaves Venice in December and moves gratefully on to the jazzier precincts of the Miami area. It is a simple, straight-forward timeline. Just for safety's sake, let's hear it one more time, in the sworn testimony of Huffman Aviation's Rudi Dekkers—the colorful and controversial Dutch national whose numerous post- 9/11 TV appearances made him a minor celebrity—before the House Judiciary Committee. “On July 1st, 2000,” Dekkers testified,

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When Mohamed Atta and his sidekick Marwan came to Venice, they first lived with a Huffman Aviation employee named Charlie Voss. They'd needed someplace to stay when they got into town, Voss told reporters. Later, flight school owner Rudi Dekkers testified to Congress that he gave the terrorist duo Charlie's number, an act of 'kindness' for which Charlie apparently still holds a grudge. Voss gave a stilted statement to reporters on his doorstep on the day after the attack, that sounds like something a Justice Dept. attorney wrote down for him and made him repeat until he had it memorized.

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The more we heard about Mohamed Atta, the more his image as an Islamic fundamentalist began to crumble. An Islamic fundamentalist who shacks up with women with pink hair fits no definition of 'Islamic fundamentalist' we've come across. Pink hair doesn't seem Wahabbi. But perhaps Atta wasn't who we've been told us he was... Considering the bombshell Stephanie Frederickson casually dropped into our conversation, between burpings of the baby. We already knew that Atta was a Kitten Killer. Now we learned he beat his girlfriend too.

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“Atta and his crew were always flush with lots and lots of money,” Stephanie replied promptly. “Those guys were all really party animals.” Although the six Arab men at the Sandpiper may have had money to burn, their living accommodations didn’t reflect it. “I lived next door to Amanda and Atta on the second floor, but then moved downstairs to my father’s apartment to help him, because he had had surgery and couldn’t climb stairs any longer,” says Frederickson. She remembered some of the crew of Middle Eastern men who took over her old apartment... like ‘Sid,’ a nice gentlemen with a red car. Sid was Siad Jarrah, she later learned. And the big guy named ‘Mahmouti’ was probably Marwan Al-Shehhi. He lived in Nokomis, where he had a cousin, Sara, a pharmacist.

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Far from leaving Venice, Florida, forever in December, Mohamed Atta had still been in the immediate vicinity, in North Port, in January and February 2001, and then in Venice with Amanda during March and April. What had he been doing there? And why was the FBI lying?

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There had been some initial confusion, authorities admitted. But Amanda Keller herself was now available to clear it up. “Keller said comments attributed to her in the Herald-Tribune on Saturday, saying that Atta lived in her apartment, were wrong. She said that it was this unidentified fifth man, also named Mohamed, that stayed in her home.” “In an interview at her mother’s house, Keller wouldn’t talk about the man who stayed on her couch. But she did say the attention she’s received from police and the media has been unwelcome.”

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As a lingerie model, Amanda was probably quite capable of dealing with unwanted attention. What to make of this Fifth Pilot Theory? We found the whole story strange. Was it plausible that someone—actually, a half-dozen people—had mistaken the man with the 1,000-yard stare whose picture had been seen everywhere around the world... for someone else? We thought a big clue was that the New York Times-owned Sarasota Herald-Tribune had pulled Earle Kimel, who'd discovered the connection, off the story. Were there any other crucial 9/11 witnesses who had conspicuously changed their stories? As a matter of fact, there were. In fact, there were several striking examples right in—where else?—Florida. Shuckum's is a dive bar in Ft. Lauderdale with the requisite nautical theme, complete with life-size shark mounted on an ocean-colored wall. Mohamed Atta and two of his henchmen were drinking heavily there six nights before the attack, reported Time, Newsweek and wire service stories reprinted worldwide. The networks all had correspondents 'go live' from Shuckum's. FBI Agents had shown up at Shuckums just 12 hours after the attack. They showed employees—especially manager Tony Amos and bartender Patricia Idrissi—photos of two men. Bartender Idrissi says FBI agents told her "they were on the plane and passed away." "We were able to recognize both gentlemen," Amos told reporters. He identified a man in a photo bearing the name Mohamed underneath, who, along with two other men, had each consumed at least several drinks.

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The guy, Mohamed, was drunk, Amos said. The two and another man "got wasted" in his place, he said, downing "chicken wings and cranberry juice, Stolichnaya and orange juice, and Captain Morgan's spiced rum and Coke." "Atta drank Stoli vodka for three straight hours," remembered bartender Idrissi. "The guy, Mohamed, was drunk. They were wasted."

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Along with other reports of heavy drinking which were surfacing, the report was at odds with the portrait—the official story—that was beginning to emerge of the terrorist ringleader, raising questions about whether Atta was really a fanatic and puritanical Islamic fundamentalist? Wahhabi desert dweller—or just a guy who knows the importance of Stoli's authentic Russian heritage when you're letting the night unfold. Were they sure he was Islamic Fundamentalist? Maybe Atta was Islamic Stolichnaya. Then a witness's conspicuous retraction came to the rescue of the official story. Night manager Amos changed his story. Mohamed Atta drank nothing stronger than cranberry juice that evening at Shuckum's Bar, Tony Amos now said. He was sitting quietly by himself. It had been Atta's companion Marwan and a third man that did all the drinking. Case closed. Everyone by this time had seen the brooding mug shot of Mohamed Atta, complete with unnerving icy stare. Is it at all plausible that Atta could be mistaken for someone else? For the teddy bear, Marwan? We wanted to ask Tony Amos. But when we stopped at Shuckum's we discovered that neither he nor bartender Idrissi were there any longer. No one knew where they'd gone. The current bartender, before she realized she said too much, indicated their leave-taking had been somehow 9/11 related. Amos and Idrissi had purchased tickets to the Island of Lost Witnesses. Hopefully round trip.

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Marwan was with a short blonde, said the paper, while Atta was with a six foot tall busty brunette in her late twenties. This has the ring of truth. Sidekicks don't get to pick first. The Mail reported both of the women were known locally as "regular companions of high-rollers." Are there Islamic fundamentalist high-rollers? If the truth can be so easily manipulated as the incident at Shuckum's seems to show, then 'inconvenient knowledge' about the hijackers might contain information that would force a reappraisal of just who, in fact, our enemy was. What remained were sanitized reports, like the Sept. 22 Washington Post: "The Friday night before the attacks, Atta and two other men—one of them another suspected hijacker, Marwan Al-Shehhi—spent 3 1/2 hours at a sports bar in Hollywood, Fla., called Shuckums. Atta played video games, a pursuit out of line with fundamentalist beliefs. But the manager on duty that night has said that he doesn't recall seeing Atta drink alcohol." Were we witnessing evidence of a federal 'clean-up crew' in action? Were they 'scrubbing down' Florida and sanitizing the public record of inconvenient knowledge? We knew one thing. We still wanted



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Another big surprise: their trip to Key West mixed business with pleasure. Atta and his German pals had a dinner meeting which Amanda said she wasn't allowed to attend. "We went to Sloppy Joe's, went to Rick's Rooftop Bar, and took a boat ride to see the dolphins, me and Linda did, while Peter, Stephan and Mohamed went to the Hard Rock to meet some people for dinner. They just said they had to meet with some people at Hard Rock. They didn't tell me who it was." Who was Mohamed Atta meeting in Key West? All Amanda knows is that they flew in just to meet Atta... "Somebody had flown in to meet with them in a single-engine plane—to come speak to them. When they came back, they met up with us on the dock, and everybody was somber-looking and kind of quiet."

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"So we went by Diva's, and it was the first time I ever saw a drag queen, and I was standing there talking to them. They had their pictures taken with a drag queen. Peter, Mohamed and Stephan were all standing next to the drag queen, who stuffed his hand down all their pants in the pictures, and Peter and Stephan both laughed it off, but Mohamed got really angry," said Amanda. The truth is always stranger than fiction. Somewhere there are photographs of terrorist ringleader Mohamed Atta being groped by a drag-queen in Key West. This is startling, and not a little surreal. But given numerous accounts of Atta's proclivities, which included frequent visits to strip clubs, it's not at all unbelievable.

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Still, this is crucial information. What Amanda said next shed even more light: "He told me that he went to different countries and studied. He had pilot's licenses from several different countries. But all the pictures looked different. All the names were different. He had a license to fly from just about every country he had been to. He went to pilot's school in all these countries." "He said no matter where he decided to live, he could always fly," she said, "because he said it was his path, he had always wanted to be a pilot." "I asked him, and he told me his last name was spelled different in different languages, but he always kept the first name Mohamed. There was one (pilot's license) from France, one from Germany... He also had one in the Homeland, he called it," she said.

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'Homeland' is a word we've all grown used to since 9/11. But it was strange to hear that Atta used it too. What Mohamed Atta told Amanda Keller about himself was what a spy tells a civilian: a cover story, a legend. He probably had a number of them... "He said his father was a commercial jet pilot from France," said Amanda.

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The most famous of the terrorists who have been identified as having trained there is Zacarias Moussaoui, the French national and so-called “20th hijacker” accused of conspiracy in the Sept. 11 terror attacks, who spent three months there during 2001. Yet the Oklahoma school’s involvement with Al Qaeda terrorists begins much earlier than that... At the trial of four men charged with the 1998 bombing of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, prosecutors introduced evidence that an Orlando, Florida, cabdriver named Ihab Ali, bin Laden’s personal pilot, trained at Airman Flight School in the early 90’s. Ali was indicted for refusing to answer questions about his ties to the bin Laden organization, including his “pilot training in Oklahoma,” according to court papers. There is something strange about the FBI’s relationship with Airman Flight School. It provides a striking example of what looks like willful failure—despite specific warnings—to detect the terror threat before it happened. Since the FBI was aware that a number of suspected terrorists had attended the Oklahoma facility, a reasonable assumption would be that agents must have taken extra-special interest in the school, and especially its Arab students. Nothing could be further from the truth. “Two agents were sent to Moussaoui’s Airman Flight School in Oklahoma to investigate,” said a September 25 2002 story in the New York Daily News, “including one who had been sent to the same school two years earlier, to check on someone identified as Osama Bin Laden’s personal pilot. The agent said he had forgotten about the connection.” Two weeks before the 9/11 attack, an FBI agent arrived at Airman Flight School to investigate Moussaoui. The same agent had been to the school two years earlier on a case involving Osama bin Laden’s personal pilot, but claims to have forgotten when visiting the school the second time. Does this pass the ‘smell’ test? If your answer is “no, it does not,” join the growing ranks of those who doubt the government’s explanations for the 9/11 disaster. It is arguably the biggest “dropped ball” in American investigative history. Even the top Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee felt the stirrings of something otherworldly going on. Calling for hearings to look into whether U.S. intelligence missed warnings that could have prevented the attacks, Republican of Alabama Sen. Richard Shelby told reporters, “You go back and see what was the evidence ... that maybe we missed.” “Maybe they didn’t miss it. Maybe they didn’t go after it.”

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This is shocking stuff. Shelby appears to be suggesting deliberate malfeasance. During the emotional chaos in the aftermath of the attack, no one noticed that the Airman Flight Schools director gave a description of the so-called ‘20th hijacker’ which used the same verbiage Huffman Aviation’s Rudi Dekkers used when speaking to reporters about Mohamed Atta. “He was pretty bad in the plane. He was just difficult to teach,” she told reporters. “Every conversation with him was difficult. He was demanding and arrogant—not a nice guy.” Both Dekkers and his Oklahoma counterpart stressed that their terrorist students had a bad attitude. Their message seemed to be “terrorists are not nice people.” No one questioned why these two particular flight schools had done such land office business with Osama bin Laden’s henchmen.

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Even in his sworn testimony before the House Judiciary Committee on March 19, 2002, Dekkers is vague about the earlier flight school attended by Atta and Al-Shehhi. This time he places it ‘up North.’ “They had stated they were unhappy with a flying school they attended up North,” Dekkers told the Committee. None of the members of Congress in attendance asked about this first school. It’s as if the Warren Commission had said Lee Harvey Oswald lived some place before moving to Dallas... and left it at that. What remains unclear is how Atta and Al-Shehhi qualified for flight instruction in the first place. As foreigners, while studying at Huffman Aviation the men would have been required to obtain student visas.

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While Mohamed Atta and his band of terrorists were making themselves at home in Florida, some of their American ‘hosts’ were preying on the flood of Arab flight students turning up in large numbers, joining the ranks of German and Dutch flight trainees. When Professional Aviation went bankrupt a number of Arab student pilots there, including many of the dozens of Tunisian students who had paid as much as \$25,000 upfront for flight training, moved up the road to begin attending flight school in Venice. Mohamed Atta was one of them. It marked the third occasion he and Marwan returned to Venice. The FBI says they were only there once. So Amanda Keller’s testimony that Atta was living for two months in North Port, close to the Charlotte County Airport, before moving into the Sandpiper Apartments across from the Venice Airport in early March with her, dovetails perfectly with these accounts of Arab students moving up to Venice in March 2001 after Professional Aviation ceased operations. In the flush of full disclosure Sheriff Clement had told reporters that Atta had been in flight training at the Charlotte County Airport. Though news accounts noted the flight schools denied he had been there, the connection had been made.

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Three of the Tunisian students who had attended Professional Aviation were taken into custody during the week after the attack. One of them was 21 year-old Maryem Bedoui. Bedoui had been one of the Tunisians who moved to Venice when Professional Aviation went under. There she studied at Dutch national Arne Kruithof's Florida Flight Training Center, a block from Huffman Aviation. During a deportation hearing in Bradenton, Florida, three months after the attack, Bedoui told the Judge that she was friends with one of Atta's roommates, but she denied knowing Atta, and denied as well any involvement or knowledge of the 9/11 plot. However, the FBI noted in a letter to the immigration judge about the case that Bedoui attended flight schools in Punta Gorda and Venice, Florida, at the same time that hijackers Atta and Marwan Al-Shehhi trained at a nearby flight school, inadvertently revealing information indicating they have knowingly fabricated their own chronology of Atta's time in the U.S. Presenting evidence for why Bedoui should be deported, the FBI's letter stated Bedoui had attended Florida Flight Training Center in Venice at the same time that Atta and Al-Shehhi were just blocks away at another school. But Maryem Bedoui didn't enter the U.S. until 2001. And according to the FBI's chronology Atta and Al-Shehhi were at Huffman only from July to December 2000. So according to the FBI's own reckoning Atta was in Venice months after they say he left for good. The Sun-Herald reporter noted the contradiction, and went to federal authorities seeking answers to give their readers.

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There are strong similarities between Professional Aviation in Charlotte County and Huffman Aviation in Venice, each supposedly a free-standing business in competition with the other. Professional Aviation had been going bankrupt at exactly the same time that Huffman Aviation's Rudi Dekkers was generating embarrassing coverage in the local press for his inability to pay his rent at the Venice Airport. Numerous witnesses at the Charlotte County Airport had confirmed reports that Mohamed Atta was there during a time when the FBI says he was somewhere else. What was going on? Why didn't the FBI just quietly change their chronology to accommodate the facts? Why were they ignoring an elephant in the living room? What were they trying to hide? We discovered that they weren't trying to hide an elephant. That would be silly. They were trying to hide an Ark.



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When it landed at Charlotte County Airport on March 16, 1987, it was seized by the DEA. An address book found aboard contained the Virginia telephone number of Robert Owen, Oliver North's courier. In a memo to North, Owens said that Moss's "DC-6 which is being used for runs [to supply the Contras] out of New Orleans is probably used for drug runs into the US." Moss had been under investigation for narcotics offenses since 1979, it turned out, by no less than ten different law enforcement agencies. But America is the land of the second chance, and thus Moss was one of the first pilots chosen to fly Contra supply missions. He was there at the inception of the "contra cocaine" business run with the tacit approval of shadowy government figures like then-CIA Director Bill Casey. Moss also regularly dropped duffel bags—military issue, natch—filled with contra cocaine onto the Louisiana 'farm' of Barry Seal, the biggest drug smuggler in American history, according to the U.S. Government. Besides being big in the drug business, Seal was a life-long CIA operative, something which quickly became 'inconvenient knowledge' during Iran Contra and, later, the Clinton Scandals, where the Wall Street Journal called him the "ghost haunting Whitewater." Both Charlotte County Airport, and Venice 40 miles to the north were unlikely hotbeds of covert activity, and it is no doubt just another 'freak coincidence' that Barry Seal's Iran Contra buddies have their fingerprints all over operations at two tiny airports frequented by the terrorists. Still, Atta had hung out in both places... What was up with that?

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Jamie Hill had been a target of the Charlotte County Sheriff investigation, we'd learned. "He's got seven helicopters sitting on his property today that don't belong to him," one local law enforcement source stated. "He's got millions of dollars of aircraft parts with the numbers filed out." Jamie Hill's partner in the company strongly suspected of having been a conduit for the disappearance of 23 helicopters from the County Sheriff's Air Wing turns out to be another notorious covert operative with a significant presence at the Charlotte County Airport. Dietrich Reinhardt's name, which could have been lifted straight out of transcripts of the Iran Contra Hearings, had also been linked with Barry Seal's infamous Mena, Arkansas cocaine smuggling. We discovered that one of Reinhardt's companies active at the Charlotte County Airport, Caribe Air, had been doing business with Rudi Dekkers' Huffman Aviation. Caribe Air was an especially notorious CIA proprietary whose past included 'blemishes' like having all its aircraft seized at Mena, Arkansas after government prosecutors accused the company of using its planes to transport cocaine worth billions of dollars into the U.S. It was beginning to feel like Old Home Week in Charlotte County. Reinhardt—apparently not content with the distinction of being business partners with a man suspected of making helicopters disappear—was linked to the man who trained both pilots who crashed airliners into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. Dekkers had had a 'maintenance contract' with Reinhardt's company. This is no doubt just another freak coincidence. Why would Dietrich Reinhardt know Rudi Dekkers? What would they have to talk about? Maybe Dekkers' 'maintenance contract' involved vacuuming out the planes. You wouldn't want to trust that kind of job to just anybody. Reinhardt had also operated the now-defunct St. Lucia Airways, referred to as a CIA proprietary company in a Senate intelligence committee report. Reports in The Washington Post linked St. Lucia planes to the delivery of Hawk and TOW missiles to Tehran, Iran in 1985 and 1986 as part the covert arms-for-hostages deal between the United States and Iran.

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But busy guys like Dietrich are hard to get on the phone. The Post reported, "Attempts to reach Reinhardt by telephone in Frankfurt, Germany, were unsuccessful. His telephone had been disconnected." Was Dietrich Reinhardt German? Reinhardt's St. Lucia flew a C-130 military cargo plane often seen delivering arms to a remote airstrip in Zaire in 1986. The New York Times reported the weapons were on their way to Angolan rebels. But Reinhardt denied any involvement in arms shipments to Angola, saying the cargo was relief goods for Zaire. Zaire is one of the African countries said to have been involved in blood diamonds, supposedly a bin Laden organization specialty. Is it just coincidence that the Florida airports where Mohamed Atta spent the most time are both linked to American covert operations? We remembered a question we'd asked

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Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the FBI has been as silent as Mullah Omar about the milieu which Atta and his Hamburg cadre slipped into as smoothly as a harem girl into pajamas. And it wasn't just these two S.W. Florida locations, we soon hear; instead, the entire stretch of coastline from Naples in the south to Sarasota in the north on close examination looks like some kind of international pirate's domain, filled with men flying the jolly roger. We were alarmed at how many of the people in Florida's 'cowboy flyboy' world that the terrorist ringleader moved in had also been shadow players in a spook-filled world, whose lives and careers seemed to be bound up in an awful lot of America's recent secret history.

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Were they bound up with Mohamed Atta's as well?

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Busy with everything from smuggling aircraft into the U.S. over the Arctic to sabotaging planes and helicopters to crash. We met ex-KGB Colonels in Miami working for the Russian Mob; heard about a Saudi Prince and his entourage at loose ends at an Air Force base near Pensacola while a helicopter that President Roosevelt gave his father, King Faisal, was repaired; we learned of wineries in South Africa owned by members of the family of the Prime Minister of the Bahamas, and million dollar 'loans' to televangelist Jerry Falwell that he'd forgotten to repay. Bugged phones, double agents, a mysterious Pakistani with State Department connections flying daily to Havana, and an ex-CIA pilot who used to fly U-2s over Russia... Atta's U.S. associates were responsible for or involved in: a Lear jet seized in Orlando by Uzi-toting DEA agents with 43 lbs. of heroin onboard with it's pilot talking unconcernedly on his cell phone while agents leveled their guns; suspected skulduggery in the Mormon Temple in Orlando; a gold mine in the Caribbean; high technology smuggling out of southwest Florida; missionary flights to Havana carrying—not the word of God—but bag-fulls of gold Rolexes for sympathetic Cuban officials who already had Bibles; the interesting part-time job of the chief pilot for Venezuela's Air Force One; robot planes at the Venice Airport; and a "really tall blond woman whose parents were KGB."

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According to the Post, seven of the suspected hijackers had been in the U.S. receiving military training. Newsweek said U.S. military officials gave the FBI information suggesting that five of the alleged hijackers received training in the 1990's at secure U.S. military installations. Three of them listed their address on driver licenses and car registrations as an address on the base of the Pensacola Naval Air Station which houses foreign-military flight trainees. "Pentagon spokesman, Colonel Ken McClellan, said a man named Mohamed Atta had once attended the International Officer's School at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama," reported USA Today. Mohamed Atta attended International Officers School at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. An Islamic fundamentalist learning snappy salutes in the Officer's Club? This is a huge chunk of inconvenient knowledge. There were going to be a lot of questions. Someone was going to have to answer... for a lot.

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Authorities immediately denied that the Mohamed Atta who masterminded the demolition of the World Trade Center was the same Mohamed Atta who, fifteen years earlier, had blown up an Israeli bus. There were two separate Arab terrorists named Mohamed Atta, they said, one who bombed a bus in 1986, and a second who flew a commercial airliner into the World Trade Center Towers. We found a May 21, 1987 story from Damascus on the Chinese Xinhua Overseas News Service with a headline reading "SYRIA ACCUSES U.S. OF DETERIORATING BILATERAL RELATIONS." "Abu Nidal, head of the Fatah revolutionary committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization threatened to sabotage American interests all over the world if Washington decided to hand over Mohamed Atta, a Palestinian arrested in New York, to the Israeli authorities on trial for murdering a bus driver in Israel." The context was a recently announced U.S. decision not to send back its ambassador to Damascus unless Syria's Hafez Assad took steps first to prove that his government was no longer supporting terrorism. "American accusations of Syrian support for terrorism were baseless," declared the Xinhua report. La plus ca change. 'Future terrorist ringleader' Atta was eighteen at the time of the bus bombing—an age when youthful idealism is often perverted into violence—but a quick search through newspaper indexes revealed that 'bus bomber Mohamed Atta,' also known as 'Mahmoud Atta,' was indeed much older, thirty-three in '86. He'd be fifty-ish today. "Mahmoud Mahmoud Atta, 33, charged in the firebombing of a crowded bus on Israel's occupied West Bank on April 12, 1986, that killed one civilian and injured three others, was held Thursday without bail until the policy issues can be addressed," UPI reported on May 8, 1987. That seemed to settle the question: Bus bomber Atta is a much older man than the terrorist hijacker. Smoke. No fire. It happens. By pursuing the story we'd gained a little incidental knowledge: "Mahmoud" is another way of saying "Mohamed," the same way men named 'John' are sometimes called 'Jack.'



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Here's the Big Question. If the name "Mohamed Atta" was on a federal watch list of people tied to terrorist activity because of 'bus-bomber Atta,' why didn't this fact get 'hijacker Atta's' ass caught before the attack? Were they that incompetent? NBC anchor Brian Williams—he of the oft-remarked unnatural tan—gave voice to it first, the night after the attack. "There will be many people asking tonight," he said, right over the public airwaves, "just what it is we are getting for all those tens of billions of dollars being spent on intelligence." Could that be it? Simple incompetence? Why didn't they catch Atta if he was running in and out of the country with a notorious name? They had ample opportunity. For example, the terrorist ringleader had had police on his tail late on the night of April 26 in Broward County, Florida. Red and blue flashing lights and a police siren beckoned him to pull over. Atta pulled his red Grand Am to the curb, and was arrested during the traffic stop for not having a driving license, but he easily bailed out and drove away. Street cops aren't looking for international terrorists during routine traffic stops. Not before 9/11, they weren't, anyway. But what explains the fact that Atta was able to fly from Miami to Madrid and back, with no hassles... despite the fact that he had overstayed his visa. "At least one of the Boston hijackers, Mohamed Atta, was able to enter the United States despite having been implicated in a 1986 bus bombing in Israel, according to federal sources," the Boston Globe reported three days after the attack. Officials said Atta's name was on a federal watch list. Yet the INS readmitted him with no problem upon his return to the U.S. Simple incompetence? Or something more sinister...

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Atta wasn't the only one in Venice with Saudi Cover.' He had 'friends' at Huffman who were covered too. Saudi links to the owners of Huffman Aviation began to be uncovered shortly after the attack, in a story in the Tampa Tribune about bin Laden family members in the U.S. flying out of the country while all other aviation except military traffic had been grounded. "The twin-engine Lear jet streaked into the afternoon sky, leaving Tampa behind but revealing a glimpse of international intrigue in the aftermath of terrorist attacks on America," the paper reported. "The federal government says the flight never took place. But the two armed bodyguards hired to chaperon their clients out of the state recall the 100-minute trip Sept. 13 quite vividly." The paper's headline was "Phantom Flight from Florida," maybe because the federal government says the flight never took place. It carried a Saudi Arabian prince, the son of that nation's defense minister, as well as the son of a Saudi army commander, from Tampa to Lexington, Kentucky, where other Saudi princes had been purchasing racehorses in Bluegrass Country. From there, they flew a private 747 out of the country. A spokesman for the Federal Aviation Administration's regional office in Atlanta told reporters, "It's not in our logs... it didn't occur." No one in the government would acknowledge to the Tampa Tribune what had happened. The White House referred questions on the trip to the State Department, which denied involvement, the paper reported, and the National Security Council, which did not return messages. But two armed bodyguards hired to get their clients out of the state remembered the trip vividly: Dan Grossi, a retired Tampa cop who had worked in internal affairs and homicide, and Manuel Perez, a retired FBI agent involved in counter-terrorism. The men also provide security for the National Football League at Raymond James Stadium. 'They said it was happening,' Grossi told

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Hilliard of course is the financier who purchased Huffman Aviation for Rudi Dekkers, and it had been the terrorist's American beachhead. So not only had Hilliard financed the operation which trained Mohamed Atta and assorted other members of his terrorist cadre to fly, but he apparently also owned a Lear jet used to extricate Saudis from the Raytheon facility in Tampa. Tampa, of course, is also home to the Pentagon's Central Command (CentCom). It was the place from which the war in Afghanistan was run. "Everyone's got deals with the Saudis," protested a retired Special Forces Commander at McDill AFB pressed back into service for the Afghan war, when we brought the Lear flight up to him. "Why point a finger at this one incident?"

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There was no speculation in the media, however, about why young men with a pronounced weakness for lingerie models and strippers had chosen a sleepy enclave filled with widows with blue hair, so far from the pleasures of infidel flesh. Take this pop quiz. Multiple choice. You've only got a year to live. Would you go move to Leisure World? Or head to Vegas? While Dekkers insisted the terrorist pilots had only the most fleeting of associations with his flight school, and hotly denied being anything other than a victimized businessman, questions remained. There were over 200 flight schools, just in Florida alone. Yet somehow the hijackers leaned towards one or the other of the two schools in Venice. The twin Venice flight schools were the terrorist's American beachhead. Rudi Dekkers' Huffman Aviation was the terrorist's Omaha Beach. What had made these two schools so popular with the terrorist cadre? No one asked. The only investigation being conducted pointed a finger directly at an obscure outfit most had never even heard of called Al Qaeda, The Base. While the FBI was, presumably, actively looking for any international networks that might have assisted the terrorists, were any likely suspects overlooked? Maybe even protected from scrutiny? Maybe the FBI should have taken a peek closer to home. Because it did not seem like the FBI was looking too deeply or too hard. We interviewed numerous material eyewitnesses with important information who were never contacted by the FBI, which supposedly fielded 400 agents in Florida until the anthrax attack changed their focus. "The FBI came down almost immediately after September 11," said Huffman office manager Sue DeSantis, the employee who let the FBI into the school at 2.30 in the morning. She later told us. "It just totally amazed me that they took everything Rudi said as the truth." Could the FBI be, somehow, institutionally incurious? Or maybe they didn't need to investigate Rudi Dekkers because they already knew who he was. Danielle Clarke was the office manager at Ambassador Aviation in Naples. "The first thing I noticed on Sept. 11 when I walked into Ambassador was they had all these TV's on, one big one in reception, and another in the student room, and they had never been on before," she told us. Clarke said she noticed something strange about the way the FBI agent who was there talked to Rudi. "I could hear them in the other office. The FBI agent was coaching Rudi on what to tell the reporters outside." For some reason, a lack of enthusiasm permeated the FBI's investigation of Rudi Dekkers, the man who ran the FBO (fixed base operation) at the tiny airport as well as the flight school. Forty years ago, the Bureau displayed a similar lack of enthusiasm in investigating another man who ran an FBO, CIA agent David Ferrie in New Orleans. A researcher called to say that Dekkers sounded phony to her when she'd seen him on TV. "The

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We found it bizarre that no one in the media questioned Dekkers publicly about what role he may have played, or what he may have done to facilitate what happened on September 11. If the FBI was buying his explanations, however, it wasn't on account of his sterling reputation. Two weeks before the World Trade Center attack, Nicole Antini, an employee of Dekkers, filed suit to enforce settlement of a sexual harassment suit against him. "I tolerated Rudi's advances because I needed to keep my job," said the former Dekkers' employee in court documents.

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"As long as I have worked at Huffman Aviation, I have been subjected to sexual harassment by Rudi Dekkers," she stated. Court documents revealed that this wasn't just garden variety sexual harassment. No inadvertent touch or misunderstood word. The employee was eighteen. Her employer, Rudi Dekkers, had apparently gotten a thrill from sticking broom handles up the back of her dress when she wasn't looking. Several months later, he would be invited to testify before the Congress of the United States of America on preventing future terrorist attacks.

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So Dekkers wasn't being shielded from serious scrutiny because he sang loud in church. What, then? Why was Rudi Dekkers protected? And by whom? Flight school owners don't have juice like that. Where did he get his stroke? Rudi Dekkers was covered, we discovered, by the same umbrella his flight student Mohamed Atta huddled under. Rudi was a grateful beneficiary of 'Saudi Cover.' While Dekkers had been minimizing his involvement with the terrorists in front of reporters in Venice the day after the attack, across the state in Vero Beach, CNN reported, FBI agents were searching houses occupied by Saudi pilots they found suspicious who said they were on a 15-month pilot's course at Huffman Aviation.

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News accounts reported the same thing. One said, "Some of the kamikaze pilots had pilot licenses that indicated they were sponsored or employed by Saudi Arabian Airlines, which is owned by the Saudi government." Not a single reporter pressed Dekkers on his Saudi connections, He got a pass. The story of his cozy Saudi relations doesn't end there. It goes right to the bin Laden family itself. By three weeks after the attack, people were standing clear of Rudi Dekkers on the tarmac at the Venice Airport. Former associates pled ignorance. Key employees declined comment, saying they were "no longer with the company."



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Others disagree. “Two Dutch boys buying adjacent flight schools which shortly thereafter get ‘overrun’ by terrorists is one damn Dutch boy too many,” growled one nationally-known law enforcement figure. “Its untidy.” “It seemed kind of odd when Dekkers bought his flight school here,” said Coy Jacobs, owner of Mooney Aviation, “because the only other flight school in town is owned by Arne Kruithof, and he’s Dutch too and the odds of that are pretty slim.” Bob Mudge is the genial editor of the local Venice Gondolier. He told us: “I’ve heard a lot of rumors that I haven’t been able to substantiate about connections between them and other businesses here and entities and agencies outside the area. It’s certainly something you have to say is a very interesting coincidence.” If the appearance of two Dutch nationals purchasing flight schools months apart isn’t just a freak coincidence belonging in Ripley’s Believe it Or Not, then the FBI is covering up something in Venice. Were Rudi Dekkers and Arne Kruithof acting as ‘cut-outs’ in an effort to provide that ever-popular ‘plausible deniability?’ Was Huffman funneling their trainees into further training? Could the CIA have been running a covert operation in Venice? Training pilots for Osama bin Laden, in an effort to penetrate his organization that somehow had gone horribly wrong?

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Dekkers and Kruithof insisted they had never met each other until they separately decided running a flight school in Venice seemed a good idea. The truth, however, would turn out to be an altogether different proposition. “I knew Rudi Dekkers,” said Tom Hammersley, former chief flight instructor at Kruithof’s school. “My former employer, Arne Kruithof, and Rudi Dekkers, they are both Dutch. They go back a long time.” So Dekkers was lying. When people lie, its usually for a reason. Another odd link between Dekkers and Kruithof was a German named Pascal Schreier, who had recruited students for them in, among other places, Hamburg, where Atta’s Hamburg cadre was based. Probably just a freak coincidence. “I know Pascal Schreier, too,” Hammersley told us, when we asked about him. “I worked with him as part of Florida Flight Training Center. He’s a German boy, and he did a lot of recruiting of students over in Europe, sending them over to Arne.” Although the two Venice Dutch Boys ran what were supposedly competing flight schools, strangely, Pascal Schreier appears to have been in business with both of them. He was an officer of a company called Florida Sunrise Aviation at the Venice Airport. Dekkers was an officer in a company at the same airport called Sunrise Aviation. Another freak coincidence? Rudi Dekkers said Atta and his sidekick just showed up at his facility one day. He had, instead, been actively marketing his flight school in Germany at the exact time Mohamed Atta and his terrorist cell left Hamburg and moved to Florida. Dekkers began an aggressive European marketing campaign right after purchasing Huffman, said a story headlined “New owners of Huffman Aviation have global presence,” in the Venice Gondolier. Dekkers talked to the paper about his plans for the newly-purchased company. “The world is my working place,” he boasted. “I won’t forget Venice, but I’m going to market throughout the world, Germany, France, Belgium. That’s our goal, to get people to come in here from all over the world.”



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Rudi Dekkers, as we've seen, had 'Saudi Cover.' But it went well beyond a contract with Saudi Arabian Airlines. The French newspaper Le Monde reported that Osama bin Laden's Geneva, Switzerland-based brother Yeslam had also been sending student pilots to Venice for training. Yeslam bin Laden is one of three half brothers of Osama bin Laden who head the Saudi Bin Laden Group, the parent company of the family's far-flung business ventures, which include construction, telecommunications and finance. He has been called a key figure in the family's business empire.

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Then we learned that, incredibly, four additional 9/11 terrorist suspects at Dekkers schools had fled the U.S. in haste just days before the attack. Three of the fleeing students were Saudi nationals. All four had been training at one of Dekkers' two flight schools. Aviation observers at the airport shook their heads. It heightened the sense of intrigue which swirled around the controversial Dekkers. News of the additional terror suspects schools broke in accounts of FBI raids on a house in the Miami area. FBI agents spent two days in South Florida searching an unoccupied Palm Beach County home which had been hastily abandoned by a Saudi family just two days before the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

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But that was clearly all right with him, because when they bought Huffman Aviation, they were already losing sizable amounts of money every month at the first flight school they'd purchased, in Naples. "When they bought Huffman, they were already losing \$40,000 a month on the Naples school," said Stuart Burchill, a former Hilliard accountant. "It was ridiculous. No one could understand why they'd want to double the pain." Their decision, to their own accountant, made no business sense. Whatever Dekkers and Hilliard were doing together during the two years and six months between the purchase of Huffman and the 9/11 attack, had nothing to do with prospering in business.

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And while the 70 year-old Wally Hilliard is a pilot, he has an unfortunate 'tic' that would seem to indicate that he could find a more suitable hobby than flying... He suffers from a narcoleptic condition which causes him to fall asleep at irregular intervals—while at the controls of airplanes he is flying, for example. So whatever their motivation for turning up at the Venice Airport as new owners of Huffman Aviation, they weren't just two entrepreneurs looking to share in the glorious promise of free enterprise. The fact is, Rudi Dekkers never made a dime teaching people to fly airplanes, and the 'legend' of Rudi Dekkers as 'flight school owner' is a sham. This is important information in any real understanding of what happened on 9/11, because the controversial Dekkers is not just a run-of-the-mill con-man and quick-fading historical footnote. Dekkers was at the critical nexus of the terrorist conspiracy. When Atta and Marwan made their fateful journey to America, when they arrived in Venice it was Rudi Dekkers assigning bunks on this side of the Big Pond. Records from his flight school were deemed sensitive enough to have merited being escorted back to Washington by Florida Governor Jeb Bush aboard a C-130 cargo plane which left Sarasota less than 24 hours after the September 11 attack.

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The answer is simple, straightforward, and, we think, ultimately inescapable: Rudi Dekkers and Wally Hilliard used owning the two flight schools as cover for their other activities. The first person we asked about Dekkers when we first arrived in Florida was a man who had just recently been pressed back into service, out of nearby McDill Air Force Base in Tampa, because his experience in the early '80's running 'Northern Alliance guys' in Afghanistan was deemed useful. He had also been a 'trouble-shooter' during the Presidency of Ronald Reagan. What he told us was chilling. "Rudi's greedy, and when you're greedy you can be used for something," he muttered darkly. He would offer nothing further.

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The only reputation Rudi Dekkers enjoyed in Naples was as a deadbeat and occasional scumbag. Rudi wasn't an unknown quantity there at all. He had a tarnished history, which the Venice City Manager could have learned by picking up the phone and asking a few questions, as we did. Time after time, we discovered that government entities had inexplicably smiled on the fortunes of Dekkers and Hilliard's aviation partnership, until it began to seem as if they had a 'rich uncle' in government somewhere. The FAA, for example, protected Dekkers on a number of occasions. An aviation mechanic who worked for him told of criminal acts Dekkers committed which the mechanic had been forced by law to report to the FAA eighteen thousand feet in the air, safety is an important consideration... At least its supposed to be.

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“A New York cop? You tell me: How does a Dutch con artist get a plaque claiming he’s an officer with the New York Police Department?” His question has been ringing in our ears for a long time. It was also, perhaps just coincidentally, the second reference to the NYPD we’d heard recently in South West Florida. The first had been when Amanda Keller recommended someone who could confirm a story about Mohamed Atta harassing her at work. “The bouncer at Fantasies & Lingerie was a big bald guy named Nick, a retired NY City detective,” she said. “You could talk to him.” But, Rudi Dekkers was not the only Dutch national flight school owner at the Venice Airport with curious and unexplained associations. The second ‘Magic Dutch Boy’ could be equally mysterious, according to Coy Jacob. “Arne Kruithof sat across from my desk one day and told me he had trained at a U.S. military installation in southeast Missouri,” said Jacob. “I’m from Missouri, and there aren’t any military bases there training foreign nationals that I know of. But the thing I kept wondering was” ‘What’s a Dutch national doing training at a secure U.S. military facility?’” Dekkers had a specific objective in mind when he came to Venice, witnesses said. He wanted to operate in complete privacy... “I know that he (Dekkers) wanted to buy out everybody on the block, so to speak, and he wanted to have a monopoly on the airport,” chief flight instructor Hammersley told us. “That was one of his goals. Then, I just saw it as a short Dutch man with a French complex, called a Napoleon complex.” Dekkers and Hilliard exhibited a peculiar secretiveness, unusual in small town businessmen. “I flew down to Naples one day, and the deputy in charge of airport security said something funny,” Coy Jacob told us. “He said, ‘Wally and Rudi never talk inside a building, they go out to an airplane and talk inside the plane.’” But

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When, less than a month before the September 11th tragedy, Rudi Dekkers finally paid Huffman Aviation’s rent, even that was considered newsworthy. “Huffman pays rent,” the paper headlined. It must have been good for a chuckle. But back when the Gondolier was highlighting Rudi Dekkers’ shortfalls, it wasn’t of interest, except locally. No one thought to question Dekkers about how he came to be suddenly flush with cash. He wasn’t notorious, yet. But when we first learned the ‘news’—months after 9/11—that he had finally managed to pay Huffman Aviation’s rent on time, our blood went cold. Because where did he come up with the money? If something changed in Rudi Dekkers financial condition just three weeks before the attack, we wanted to see him hauled in for questioning.

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Less than a month before the September 11th attack, things changed for the better for ‘flight school owner’ Dekkers. Rudi finally got caught up on his rent. Imagine that.

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We had confirmation from Florida State's Attorney Jonathan Greene that it was true. Dekkers had been under suspicion of illegal exportation of high technology, Greene had said. So a man wanted in his home country, and also the target of a multi-agency federal investigation, was invited to testify in front of the Congress of the United States of America, where he was free with tips on preventing future terrorist attacks. How was this possible? Even more importantly, after the 9/11 attack Rudi Dekkers had been seemingly instantly relieved of suspicion. No journalist inquired about whether he had been engaging in illegal activity at the same time the terrorist conspiracy was making use of his facilities.

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He was a criminal. He had been caught by federal authorities back in the mid-90's. But he had never been charged. Why not? The answer is simple, and yet stunning: Rudi Dekkers had 'rolled,' and become a government 'confidential informant.' He was, in criminal parlance, "working off a beef." In the dozens of sound bites he fed to the world's media about Atta and Marwan in the days after the attack, he lied, and lied effectively... for the people for whom he worked. They even coached him on what to say. This explains how two Dutch nationals, Kruithof and Dekkers, could each buy flight training schools at the off-the-beaten-track Venice Airport, and not face questioning about it later when three of their students are found to be piloting planes used as guided missiles on a September morning. There were people taken into Federal custody whose connections with the terrorists were far less suspicious than theirs. Plus, both men were foreign nationals presumed to be flight risks as a matter of law. Yet neither was being held.

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