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[Europe](#)

[The Americas](#)

[Economy](#)

[Earnings Focus](#)

[Politics & Policy](#)

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[Table of Contents](#)

[Headlines](#)

[Business Index](#)

[Search](#)

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[Past Editions](#)

[Briefing Books](#)

[Quotes](#)

Tools:

October 16, 2001

## A Careful Sequence of Mundane Dealings Sows a Day of Bloody Terror for Hijackers

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On June 11, Americans were finally turning the page on the deadliest act of domestic terrorism in U.S. history. That morning, Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh was executed. Only hours later, Florida real-estate agent Gloria Irish was helping Marwan al-Shehhi and Hamza Alghamdi scout apartments.

Mr. al-Shehhi told Mrs. Irish he was visiting the U.S. for pilot training. He and his friend were looking for three-month rentals. She soon found a two-bedroom unit near a local gym, just as Mr. Alghamdi wanted. But to her embarrassment, the owner refused to rent it to him.

Advertisement

"I figured it was because of his first and last name," Mrs. Irish recalls. "I thought way to show people what Americans are like."

The embarrassment proved only temporary. Within a couple of days, she had four visitors apartments in separate Delray Beach country-club communities. The men showed up with \$6,000 in cash and even walked Mrs. Irish to the bank to deposit



Those were just two of the countless transactions by which the hijackers would turn the commonplace features of 21st century life into instruments of murder on a scale that would dwarf Mr. al-Shehhi's savagery. The hijackers preyed precisely on "what Americans value: their welcoming borders, their ubiquitous technology, their thriving commerce, their mobility. The hijackers came tantalizingly close on a few occasions to drawing the attention of law-enforcement agencies. But then they slipped through cracks in the system that were not obvious before Sept. 11.

They often displayed a conspicuous clumsiness. As student pilots, some of them were dismissed as instructors as hopelessly incompetent and obstinate. But in the face of obstacles, they showed uncanny persistence. They moved on to other flight schools. They learned what they needed to know.

They often displayed a conspicuous clumsiness. As student pilots, some of them were dismissed as instructors as hopelessly incompetent and obstinate. But in the face of obstacles, they showed uncanny persistence. They moved on to other flight schools. They learned what they needed to know.



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23 Oct 01 - 17 Jun 10

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friend didn't speak English. "He was just the friendliest guy," Mrs. Irish says of M who is believed to have piloted the plane that crashed into the World Trade Center. He would greet her, she remembers, with a big smile and a warm, "Good mornin

## ONE HIJACKER'S BEGINNINGS

**AS A BOY**, Mohamed Atta had a flair for English and chess. The frail, quiet se domineering Cairo lawyer traded letters with a pen pal in the U.S., a classmate re called him "Mr. Polite."

Professional achievement, not religion, was a defining theme in the relatively mo family. Mohamed's father pushed him to match the attainments of his two older s physician and a professor of immunology. It wasn't enough that Mohamed earne degree from Cairo University and landed a job with a local engineering firm, the named Mohamed, says today. He wanted his son to learn German -- "the languag as the elder Mr. Atta puts it -- and earn a doctorate abroad.

In 1992, the son arrived in the cold, rainy northern German port of Hamburg, wh had decided he should study. He passed the entrance exam for the School of App but was told there wasn't room for him. This, he and his father concluded, was ra wired money to cover the cost of a discrimination lawsuit. According to court rec Hamburg, the suit was eventually dropped, and Mr. Atta was admitted. But by th embittered young man had enrolled instead at Hamburg-Harburg Technical Univ

There, a former classmate, Volker Hauth, recalls Mr. Atta criticizing Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. More vehemently, he railed against the Egyptian government's oppression of fundamentalist Muslims. His country's "fat cats" were getting rich at the expense of the poor, he told his classmate. "This hurt Mohamed's sense of justice," recalls Mr. Hauth. Even opportunities for the educated Egyptian middle class were drying up in a gasping economy.

 See a chro the moven of some of th culminating ir attacks on the Center and th

In contrast to his self-confident, often-angry views about politics, he was awkwa women, former classmates say. In 1994, he fell in love with a Palestinian woman says he discouraged his son's talk of marriage. It would be a distraction from his Mr. Atta told his son. The relationship collapsed, leaving the young man distraug recalls. Later, Mohamed told friends the woman had been too modern for his tast

In the mid-1990s, his involvement with Islam deepened, former classmates and I remember. He grew a traditional beard. He interrupted his graduate studies in 19 pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

In 1996, at the age of 27, he made out a will, requesting a strict Muslim funeral. ' especially pregnant women, and "unclean people" were to be excluded. Mourner not to cry. Five years later, the document would be found in luggage that never n American Airlines Flight 11, which Mr. Atta is thought to have steered into the V Center's north tower.

authoritarian governments backed by the U.S.

Signaling his deepening devotion, Mr. Atta early in the year sought another pilgrim trip to the Omrah shrine. Omrah has a reputation for drawing not only pious Muslims but also many militant extremists. On short notice, Mr. Atta implored his father for help and arrangements for the trip. By tapping an old client at the Saudi Embassy in Cairo, Mr. Atta obtained travel documents permitting his son to visit in February, for the start of the Ramadan. (The father says he doesn't believe his son participated in the Sept. 11

The younger Mr. Atta didn't return to Hamburg for 15 months. At some point, a former law-enforcement official says, he is thought to have visited Afghanistan to train at a secret camp for terrorists. The FBI isn't saying what evidence it has of this visit. When Mr. Atta returned to Hamburg in 1998, two other suspected members of the Sept. 11 conspiracy, al-Shehhi and Ziad Jarrah -- were also there.

Each of that pair had entered Germany two years earlier, ostensibly to attend college. al-Shehhi, then 20, was the son of a Muslim prayer leader in the United Arab Emirates. Jarrah was a 23-year-old born in Lebanon, who grew up dreaming of becoming a pilot.

Whatever brought them together, the three Middle Easterners began attending the same mosque. So, too, did a Syrian-born trader, Mamoun Darkazanli, who was a business partner of a man indicted by the U.S. in 1998 because of his alleged role as Mr. bin Laden's lawyer. German police began watching Mr. Darkazanli and another of his friends, who was his roommate in a Hamburg apartment where Mr. al-Shehhi would also come to live and who was often a visitor.

The probe, however, went nowhere. Police saw nothing suspicious in the student in Mr. Darkazanli's. "We didn't know what we were looking at," says one German police investigator. He adds that police were hindered by German laws that allow surveillance of those suspected terrorists planning an attack in Germany. Otherwise, wiretapping and other aggressive investigative action are off-limits.

In 1999, Messrs. Atta, al-Shehhi and Jarrah were joined many nights at the Hamburg mosque by four or five other men, neighbors say. Most of those in attendance wore beards and traditional Eastern robes. They left their shoes neatly lined up outside the door. On bank-transfer used to pay rent, Mr. Atta each month wrote, "dar el anser," Arabic for "house of

Mr. Jarrah, for one, maintained at least one secular, personal interest outside the mosque. He spent time in Bochum, Germany, two hours away, where, according to his uncle, Jarrah, he shared an apartment with a Turkish girlfriend, Aysel Sengun. She didn't seem a strict Muslim, her former neighbors say. A medical student, Ms. Sengun had long favored jeans and heels. She is now in a German witness-protection program.

In late 1999, Messrs. Atta, Jarrah and al-Shehhi prepared to move. Within a span of weeks, each man separately reported his passport as lost and obtained a new one, German officials say. That would have allowed them to apply for U.S. visas without revealing their true countries that would raise suspicions, such as Iraq, Iran or Afghanistan.

In December, Mr. Jarrah told a friend he was leaving to fulfill a dream of studying

## ROOTS IN THE SOUTHWEST

**IT ISN'T CLEAR** yet whether the Hamburg trio came to the U.S. with a fully-devised hijacking scheme later. Some German federal investigators theorize that members of the 19 knew the broad outline of the plan. These investigators point out that al-Shehhi took flight lessons in Bonn in 1999, perhaps in preparation for a hijack. One other eventual member of the suspected Sept. 11 team had been in the U.S. very eager to learn to fly airplanes.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, a wealthy young businessman named Abdul Hanjour shuttling between Saudi Arabia and Arizona, where he exported luxury cars and a wide circle of friends. In 1990, his teenage brother came to visit.

Hani Hanjour, then 18, signed up for an eight-week course at the University of Arizona for English as a Second Language. "He was very, very quiet, very shy and very reserved," says Susan Khalil, a friend of Abdul Hanjour. "Hani seemed awkward socially ... a very quiet type of person."

He soon returned to the Middle East but in 1996 resurfaced in Ms. Khalil's life. He called from Saudi Arabia and asked Mrs. Khalil and her husband if Hani could come to visit them in Miramar, Fla., where they had relocated. "We said what any friend would do," Ms. Khalil recalls.

Hani had a goal now: to learn to fly. Ms. Khalil helped him fill out applications to join a flight school. After a brief stop at a California pilot academy, he soon returned to Arizona to attend Airline Training in the Phoenix area, according to CRM's president, Duncan K. McQuinn.

He was reclusive, his English poor. As the months wore on, he didn't display much interest in the cockpit, Mr. Hastie says. But Mr. Hanjour didn't give up. By 1998, he had applied to another Phoenix flight center, the Sawyer School of Aviation, former employees of which Hanjour paid \$300 to join the "Sim Club," providing him open access to Sawyer's flight simulator.

The following year, the Sim Club had another member: Lotfi Raissi. British prosecutors last month accused Mr. Raissi, an Algerian, of having provided pilot training to four hijackers. In addition to Mr. Hanjour, Ziad Jarrah also trained on Sawyer's simulator. The school's former chief flight instructor Sylvia Stinson. She and the simulator's manager, Wes Fults, say they recall Mr. Raissi teaching others, but they don't remember him as being involved in the 19.

At some point after his simulator work, Mr. Hanjour is believed to have spent time in Phoenix according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Although the FBI hasn't been sure when he may have been in the area, investigators have linked his movements to other individuals who lived in the city and who would eventually join Mr. Hanjour on the flight into the Pentagon: Khalid al Midhar and Nawaf Alhazmi.

In December 1999, Mr. al Midhar, a Yemeni citizen, had been videotaped by Malaysian intelligence officials at a meeting with members of Mr. bin Laden's al Qaeda network.



Go

4 captures

23 Oct 01 - 17 Jun 10

a private-security consultant who headed counterterrorism efforts for the Central Agency in the 1980s and maintains contacts throughout the Middle East. Besides U.S. intelligence officials also were interested in Mr. Alhazmi, who may have been in Lumpur with Mr. al Midhar and was known to have traveled with him on at least one occasion, Mr. Cannistraro says.

Ten months after the Cole attack, on Aug. 21, 2001, Messrs. al Midhar and Alhazmi were placed on a U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service "watch list" designed to track terrorists and criminals. By the time they were put on the watch list in August, they had come to the U.S., arriving aboard the same flight into Los Angeles International Airport from Hong Kong on Jan. 15, 2000, according to a federal law-enforcement official. Mr. Alhazmi left and re-entered the U.S. in New York in July 2001.

The INS watch list has traditionally been used primarily at the U.S. border to block entry of people placed under surveillance suspected terrorists or criminals. It typically hasn't been used in efforts to round up suspects who are already in the U.S.

Late last summer, when the INS determined from immigration records that Messrs. Alhazmi and al Midhar were already in the country, their names were disseminated to other FBI offices. But Jeff Thurman, an agent in the FBI's San Diego branch, says his office wasn't aware of those watch-list names until after the Sept. 11 attacks.

An FBI official in Washington says the notice about Messrs. al Midhar and Alhazmi was sent to the FBI field offices in Los Angeles and New York. Messrs. Alhazmi and al Midhar had indicated upon entering the country they would be staying separately in hotels, the FBI official says. Agents checked registries of every hotel in New York and Los Angeles, looking for the pair in the weeks before the Sept. 11 attacks, the FBI official says. He stresses that the bureau didn't realize at the time that it was looking for participants in an imminent mass-terror assault.

Had investigators started looking earlier and more broadly across the country, tracking down the two suspects might well have been possible. Mr. al Midhar was using a credit card in the name of Mr. Alhazmi, a Saudi native, was listed in the 2000-01 San Diego phone book. He attended the city's largest mosque, the Islamic Center, in the middle-class Clairmont neighborhood.

Like Mr. Hanjour, they sought flight training. And they, too, were weak pilots. At the Flying Club, they told employees they aimed to pilot Boeings. But they made it into the sky only in small single-engine planes, before instructor Richard Garza told them to give up.

They struck him, Mr. Garza recalls, as "two guys who had probably never opened the door to a car." At one point, when Mr. Alhazmi was practicing, Mr. Garza looked back in the rearview mirror to find Mr. al Midhar with his eyes shut, praying softly.

## BANK ACCOUNTS, FLYING LESSONS

**T**HE HAMBURG TRIO arrived in the U.S. within a month of each other, a federal law-enforcement official says. Mr. al-Shehhi flew into Newark on May 29, 2000.



Go

4 captures

23 Oct 01 - 17 Jun 10

Ramzi Binalshibh, a Yemeni citizen and one of Mr. Atta's Hamburg roommates, paid \$2,200 to a Florida flight-training school and tried to come as well. But in an ill-organized immigration procedure that can thwart suspected terrorists, Mr. Binalshibh was denied a visa, according to German federal investigators. The reason for the visa denial couldn't be determined, but German investigators had previously linked Mr. Binalshibh to the bin Laden days before Sept. 11, he left Germany for Pakistan, the investigators say.

During the 14 months after they arrived in the U.S., Messrs. Atta, al Shehhi and al-Shehhi laid the logistical foundation for an intricate conspiracy. Mr. Atta is believed to have held the primary responsibility.

He oversaw arrangements for bank accounts and credit cards, cellphones, identification documents and frequent-flier memberships, according to U.S. investigators and a source. In the spring of 2000, Mr. Atta received \$100,000 in wire transfers from a man in the Arab Emirates who is believed to use the alias "Mustafa Ahmad" and to have arranged the financing for the conspiracy, according to people familiar with the investigation.

Transfers of that size don't necessarily have to be reported to the government by banks, and of themselves, wouldn't be considered suspicious by bankers or regulators, a source says. Banking and regulatory officials. Additional transfers were made to the plotters from Eastern banks during this period, according to people in the U.S. banking industry.

The hijackers, while adroit at times, also had moments of friction with American officials. While they tried to learn flying in Florida, Messrs. Atta and al-Shehhi rented a room with two twin beds and a bath at a modest home in the town of Venice. The two student pilots acknowledged their landlords, Drucilla Voss and her husband, Charles, a bookkeeper at Huffman Aviation school, the Vosses say.

The pair were sloppy, leaving unmade beds and a lot of water on the bathroom floor, "bed-and-breakfast," Mr. Voss says. "My wife didn't appreciate it, and I didn't appreciate it for one week, Mr. Voss told his renters to find another place to live.

In July, Messrs. Atta and al-Shehhi began a series of 200 lessons at Huffman Aviation, which cost some \$20,000. Each time, they paid with a check drawn from a local SunTrust account, says Huffman owner Rudi Dekkers.

Neither man received high marks. That summer, they violated pilot guidelines by flying a small Piper Warrior airplane on a runway after it had stalled, Mr. Dekkers says. At another Florida flight school they attended, Jones Aviation, in Sarasota, asked them to leave after just three weeks, because of their poor attitude, says owner Gary Jones.

Flight-school operators generally say there wasn't anything in the behavior of the hijackers that warranted reporting to authorities. Flight schools cater to a wide range of students from those aspiring to careers as pilots to weekend fun-seekers. Foreign students are common, instructors say.

Messrs. Atta and al-Shehhi "were average students -- not bad, not good, just average," says Dekkers. "But they improved after the first month." Once they had completed the



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4 captures

23 Oct 01 - 17 Jun 10

Messrs. Hanjour and Jarrah also qualified for FAA licenses, according to Landings ([www.landings.com](http://www.landings.com)), a Web site that gets data from the FAA and is considered a

In early 2001, Messrs. Atta and al-Shehhi separately traveled internationally. The Germany in March and cleared out their old Hamburg apartment, German police Mr. Atta met three Arabic-speaking men in Hamburg. Karl-Heinz Horst, a German who recognized Mr. Atta's face from television reports after Sept. 11, says he had passengers about 400 miles, from Furth, in southern Germany, to Hamburg in the the long ride, one of the passengers said in English that he was a war veteran from Mr. Atta met the taxi in Hamburg and paid the \$500 bill in cash, says Mr. Horst.

What Messrs. Atta and al-Shehhi were up to in Europe isn't publicly known. But travelers were back in the U.S. to receive a wave of reinforcements.

Several of these additional members of the 19-man team arrived on U.S. visas of Arabia. They came on flights originating from such cities as Zurich and London. needed spending money, places to stay and forms of identification. Florida was the destination.

In April and May, at least nine bank accounts associated with the hijackers were cash and travelers checks at SunTrust branches, according to people familiar with The amounts involved were relatively small and didn't cause bankers or regulators red flags. In July and August, Mr. Atta repeatedly visited the Shipping Post, a mail mailing business in Punta Gorda, Fla., to obtain money orders in amounts of \$10 according to the owner.

Mr. Atta, usually neat in pressed khakis and shirt, wasn't a people person. He son at motel and rental-car clerks. He often traveled with Mr. al-Shehhi and left the p role to his chubby, sociable sidekick. Investigators speculate that the plotters mo frequently to avoid attracting attention in any one spot.

Through the spring and summer, Mr. al-Shehhi made scores of cellphone calls to motels, apartments, car-rental desks and the Palm Beach driver's-license office. C 26, for instance, nearly 20 calls were placed from his phone to various real-estate agents in and around Hollywood, Fla.

For all the mayhem they would later inflict, some of the men who came to the U. 11 plot were hardly robust or physically imposing. In Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, Al joined Ziad Jarrah in the \$200-a-week apartment Mr. Jarrah had rented from local Charles Lisa. Skinny and frail, Mr. Alhaznawi arrived with an infected gash on his Lisa recalls he directed the two men to nearby Holy Cross Hospital for treatment

Many who encountered them now mourn their failure to discern hints of the crime Mr. Lisa says he checked himself into a hospital for several days in September at loss of sleep and high blood pressure. "I still blame myself for not catching at least that was suspicious," he says.

Like their counterparts in Germany and U.S. federal law enforcement, police in F

Mr. Atta obtained a Florida license a week later but failed to show up for a May appearance to resolve the citation. As is routine in such instances, a bench warrant led to his arrest. But as is also routine in most jurisdictions, there isn't any indication that he would find him to enforce the minor charge.

Groups of hijackers rendezvoused in several places, including Las Vegas last spring for what federal law-enforcement officials believe were planning sessions. They met in cyberspace. Mr. al-Shehhi used a computer in the Delray Beach public library to meet, according to library employees. A senior FBI official says investigators have obtained a number of e-mails in English and Arabic, reflecting discussions of the planned Sept. 11 hijacking.

Some of the hijackers showed an appetite for Americana. During months spent in the United States, Ahmed Alghamdi visited a small grocery store several times a day. Each time, says a store employee, Alfonso Then, the young man bought a half-dozen individually wrapped glazed cookies for a few cents apiece.

For much of last summer, a group of four of the hijackers rented scooters by the hour from Car Rental in Ft. Lauderdale. They killed time tooling up and down the city's famous beach as much as countless college students do during Spring Break, according to the company, who ask not to be identified. "For guys that hated America, they sure looked like they were having a great time here," says one owner. "They didn't seem to have a care in the world."

The men assumed to have steered the planes on Sept. 11 continued practicing the same maneuvers in August. Messrs. Atta, al-Shehhi, Hanjour and Jarrah flew aircraft in Maryland, Florida and Georgia. On Aug. 19, an instructor at Palm Beach County Airport in Lantana heard a man speaking in Arabic over the airplane's radio. The instructor, who speaks Arabic himself, asked the man to remain anonymous, believes Mr. Atta intended to turn on the craft's intercom to talk to a passenger. Instead, Mr. Atta keyed the plane's radio. He exclaimed, "God is Great."

## IDENTITIES AND PLANE TICKETS

**AS SUMMER DREW** to a close, the conspirators moved toward their points of departure. Those who were bound for American Airlines Flight 77 shifted from California or New Jersey to a shorter, easy driving distance of the flight's point of origin, Washington's Dulles Airport.

One priority was obtaining local government-issued identification, which is least likely to draw attention from airlines. In the Washington area, the plotters tapped into the thriving market for documents that serves conventional illegal immigrants.

On Aug. 1, according to the FBI, Messrs. Hanjour and al Midhar pulled a van into a parking lot in suburban Falls Church, Va. There, they met Luis Martinez-Flores, an illegal immigrant from El Salvador.

In return for \$100 in cash, withdrawn from an ATM by Mr. al Midhar, Mr. Martinez-Flores took the Middle Easterners to a nearby state-government office and signed forms for them to obtain their permanent residence in Virginia, according to the FBI. That is all that Virginia requires to obtain a state identification card.



Go

4 captures

23 Oct 01 - 17 Jun 10

Martinez-Flores faces federal charges of fraudulently helping several suspected hijackers obtain identification documents. An attorney representing Mr. Martinez-Flores notes that the government hasn't linked his client to the hijacking plot but otherwise declines to comment.

Next, there was a flurry of ticket purchasing, some by means of frequent-flyer accounts and other hijackers set up in late August. Messrs. al Midhar and Alhazmi, the two hijackers shown up on the U.S. immigration watch list, signed onto Travelocity.com ([www.travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com)), an Internet travel site, to order tickets for United Flight 77 from Los Angeles to Washington, a Travelocity official says. Placing those orders, the pair would have a screen showing a seating diagram of the Boeing jet they would eventually hijack.

In Paterson, N.J., Messrs. Moqed and Hanjour went to the ATS travel agency to purchase tickets for Mr. Hanjour on American Airlines Flight 77. But Visa declined to approve the purchase, says an ATS agent who requests anonymity. The pair left, returning later with an American Express card with \$1,842 in cash -- and got the ticket, says the travel agent. Mr. Moqed, who acted as the contact for the duo, asked that Mr. Hanjour be seated as far forward as possible. Mr. Hanjour was assigned seat 1B, near the cockpit.

That large cash ticket transaction wasn't the only clue near the end of something big was going on. But no one put them together. On Sept. 9, Mr. al-Shehhi and Mohand Al Shelhi, two of at least seven of the hijackers to leave the Panther Motel in Deerfield Beach, Fla., asked the proprietor, Richard Surma, about what the pair had left behind, the proprietor, Richard Surma, dug into his nameless safe and found a black tote bag containing aeronautical maps of the eastern U.S., a pocket calculator, a German-English dictionary and three martial-arts books.

Mr. Surma says he found these items interesting enough to hold onto, but they didn't seem particularly ominous. Only after Sept. 11 did he realize their potential significance. He turned them over to the FBI.

Other hijackers displayed a fastidious efficiency as they wrapped up their business. A week before the attacks, the FBI says Messrs. Atta, al-Shehhi and Waleed al-Shehri returned \$15,000 in unused funds back to Mustafa Ahmad, the alleged bin Laden paymaster in the United Arab Emirates. Mr. Alhazmi's final bank statement, opened after Sept. 11 by his brother, the landlord, showed that he left behind just \$14.

## ENDGAME

**A FEW DAYS** before Sept. 11, some of the 10 hijackers who would destroy the World Trade Center began casing Logan Airport in Boston. Garage surveillance records obtained by investigators show that a white Mitsubishi sedan rented by one of them moved in and out of the airport's parking garage at least four times between Sept. 5 and Sept. 11. After the attacks, the car would be found in a Logan garage.

As they prepared to strike, the hijackers split up and stayed in moderately priced hotels in Boston. At around 8 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 8, Fayeze Banihammad, who would join al-Shehhi on United Flight 175, showed up at the Milner Hotel on the edge of Boston's downtown theater district. Accompanied by another man, Mr. Banihammad asked a hotel employee to fill out a registration card for him, explaining that his English was poor.

refund unneeded cash to their contact in the United Arab Emirates.

On Monday, Sept. 10, a man resembling the FBI-released photo of United Flight Hamza Alghamdi checked into the Days Hotel in Boston's Brighton neighborhood front-desk employee Joe Williams. Mr. Williams signed the guest in as "Ghamdi

During their stay in the U.S., some of the hijackers had shunned images of America. Mr. Surma, the Deerfield Beach, Fla., motel owner, says his former guests used to pictures of women in bathing suits that decorated their rooms. On this night, though, a Hotel guest watched a pornographic movie on the in-house video system, according to a law-enforcement official.

In New Jersey, meanwhile, a person familiar with the investigation says at least one person preparing to hijack United Flight 93 from Newark indulged himself on his final night by visiting an exotic-dance club in nearby Elizabeth.

Despite the occasional last-minute splurge, the FBI says the hijackers operated on a tight budget in their final days. Receipts investigators found in garbage bins near the conspirators' hotels showed they often ate pizza or canned food from supermarkets. Cab drivers remember them as stingy tippers.

Mr. Atta left the Milner on Sept. 10 and, with his partner on American Flight 11, Alomari, headed two hours north to Portland, Maine. They drove a blue Nissan Altima to a Comfort Inn within sight of Portland International Jetport. Surveillance cameras came up as they visited a Wal-Mart and a bank's automated teller machine. As he used the ATM, Alomari was smiling broadly.

Investigators say they don't know why two of the 10 Boston hijackers drove to Portland before the attack, risking a missed connection. Some investigators theorize that they thought they would attract less suspicion if they originated from separate cities. For Mr. Atta viewed the Portland flight as a final test run for the plan to carry small commercial planes.

The Portland airport's security checkpoint, which the two men passed through that morning, was one of the last opportunities for law enforcement to thwart the attack. A camera snapped their photo, but no one tried to stop the two neatly dressed men with their bags slung over their shoulders. As the sun rose on a cloudless day in Portland and the Northeast, the pair sat by themselves in the waiting area by Gate 11, leaning against the seats and talking quietly, other passengers recall.

Walking to his seat on the plane, passenger Vincent Meisner remembers seeing Mr. Atta with his bag and saying, "Excuse me." Mr. Atta silently hunched his shoulders and looked away. "I thought he just hadn't had his morning coffee yet," Mr. Meisner says.

All 10 Boston-departing hijackers reached Logan airport in time. American Flight 175 were scheduled to leave for Los Angeles from different terminals, with each other. Just before passengers boarded the flights, a single cellphone call was made to the hijack teams, according to investigators. It lasted only a few minutes -- long enough, authorities believe, to declare that the operation was on.



Go

4 captures

23 Oct 01 - 17 Jun 10

unidentified author directed readers to sharpen their knife blades for the attacks a their victims by calling out in Arabic, "God is Great!"

Mr. Jarrah, preparing for his own mission in Newark airport, made a final person morning. He telephoned his girlfriend in Germany, Aysel Sengul. Mr. Jarrah sou normal and said he loved her, Ms. Sengul later told Jamal Jarrah, Ziad's uncle.

When she saw news reports later that day that hijacked planes in America had cr twin towers, the Pentagon and a rural Pennsylvania field, killing thousands, Ms. worried, she told Jamal Jarrah. She called her boyfriend's cellphone. There was n

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**EUROPE:** William Boston in Bochum, Germany; Neal E. Boudette in Frankfurt, Germany; Kassem and Marcus Walker in Hamburg.

**U.S.:** David Armstrong in Delray Beach, Fla.; James Bandler in Elizabeth, N.J.; Douglas A Rick Brooks in Atlanta; Andrew Caffrey in Portland, Maine; David S. Cloud and Gary Field: Daniel Golden in Boston; Tom Hamburger in Laurel, Md.; Laura Johannes in Newton, Mas Kranhold in Paterson, N.J.; Nicholas Kulish in Falls Church, Va.; Carrick Mollenkamp in Ve Perez in Miami; Will Pinkston in Tampa, Fla.; Chad Terhune in West Palm Beach, Fla.; Ma Rick Wartzman in San Diego.

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