

Telecom Immunity: Playing the “9/11 Card” ... Again

By [Tom Burghardt](#)

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The Bush administration, never known for its veracity on any issue, once again is playing the “9/11 card” in an desperate attempt to continue violating the Fourth Amendment rights of the American people.

U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey, a darling of Senate Democrats prior to his confirmation as Bush’s top lawyer, said in speech on Thursday at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, that the September 11, 2001 attacks could have been prevented “if the government had been able to monitor an overseas phone call to the United States,” according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Mukasey went on to claim that “we knew that there had been a call from someplace that was known to be a safe house in Afghanistan and we knew that it came to the United States. We didn’t know precisely where it went. You’ve got 3,000 people who went to work that day, and didn’t come home, to show for that.”

Correctly calling Mukasey on his mendacious pronouncements, *Chronicle* reporter [Bob Egelko](#) writes,

Mukasey did not specify the call to which he referred. He also did not explain why the government, if it knew of telephone calls from suspected foreign terrorists, hadn’t sought a wiretapping warrant from a court established by Congress to authorize terrorist surveillance, or hadn’t monitored all such calls without a warrant for 72 hours as allowed by law. The Justice Department did not respond to a request for more information.

A congressional investigation found in 2003 that the National Security Agency had intercepted messages between one of the Sept. 11 hijackers and an al Qaeda safe house in the Middle East as early as 1999, but had not shared the information with other agencies. (Bob Egelko, “Mukasey Backs Bush Efforts on Wiretapping,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Friday, March 28, 2008, Page B-1)

That we are supposedly to believe that the National Security Agency, the largest and most secretive outfit in the U.S. intelligence “toolbox,” was somehow “blinded” by “unreasonable” civil liberties concerns, and were “following the letter of the law” regarding warrantless wiretapping of foreign terrorist organizations, beggars belief.

In fact, prior to, and even *after* 9/11, the United States and their favorite clique of murderous intelligence assets, the Afghan-Arab database known as al-Qaeda, were preoccupied with a series of destabilization operations that stretched from Central Asia to the Balkans.

From Chechnya to Kosovo, al-Qaeda operatives and their BND-CIA-MI6 handlers were subverting Russian and Yugoslavian national sovereignty and fomenting rebellion alongside dodgy Saudi and Gulf “charities” that served as a cats-paw for Western imperialist interests.

As with all strategic intelligence operations undertaken by the United States and their “friends,” the Saudis were playing a double-game: seemingly advancing the regional interests of their U.S. partners in crime, al-Qaeda-linked Saudi “charities” were simultaneously wedded to a game plan they hoped would lead to the creation of a reactionary, far-right Islamist beachhead in the heart of Central Europe. That they did so with U.S.-NATO collusion is beyond question.

According to Balkan analyst, Christopher Deliso,

After 9/11, the Saudi charity organizations not only became more secretive: they became more hostile, at times showing classic signs of organized intelligence activity. ...

However, despite these abundant reasons for concern, UNMIK signed a memorandum of understanding on February 5, 2002, with the Al Haramain Foundation, which was allegedly supporting refugees from Macedonia...

Less than a month after the agreement was signed, on March 11, 2002, the U.S. Treasury officially blocked the accounts of Al Haramain’s Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina branches. Yet the Kosovo branch was left untouched. Al Haramain, back in 1999, ran something called the Kosovo Relief Fund out of its Ashland, Oregon, headquarters, back in the days when NATO and the Islamists were fighting for the same goal—expulsion of the Serbs from Kosovo. At that time, the known terrorist and al-Qadi’s “business partner,” Abdul Latif Saleh, who was later mysteriously removed from Albania, questioned, and released by the CIA, was serving as charge de affaires at the Saudi embassy in Tirana. (The Coming Balkan Caliphate, Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007, p. 61)

That the United States and their NATO partners continued their brazen, if underhanded support of al-Qaeda after 9/11, had disastrous consequences that reverberated far-beyond Afghanistan and Iraq. On March 11, 2004 multiple train bombs ripped through Madrid’s public transportation system, killing 191 and wounding 1,755 mostly working-class Spaniards. The two chief organizers of the Madrid attacks, Saud al-Otaibi and Abdel Karim al Meyati, “had both fought for the Izetbegovic government in Bosnia during the 1990s,” according to Deliso.

Three years later, when suicide bombers struck the London public transportation system, killing 52 and wounding 700 individuals, an MI6/al-Qaeda operative, Haroon Rashid Aswat, was fingered as the mastermind of the attacks.

According to analyst Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed, during a 2001 interview with the London-based Arabic daily, *al-Sharq al-Aswat*, al-Qaeda/al-Muhajiroun leader Omar Bakri, described the relationship between British intelligence and the operations in Kosovo and al-Muhajiroun; Aswat had joined the operation in 1995:

Bakri boasted that al-Muhajiroun sent Muslim youths on jihad training courses in Virginia, Michigan and Missouri...where they learned various techniques for guerrilla warfare, for making explosives and using shoulder-mounted missiles.

... The training was organised by a British security firm that is managed by a Muhajiroun member.

In other words, Bakri and his al-Muhajiroun organisation have not merely been tolerated by British authorities despite involvement in al-Qaeda recruitment, terrorist training, and incitement to violence, murder and terrorism; they were actively protected by British security services in the late 1990s, operating as recruiting agents for British covert operations in the Balkans, especially in Kosovo. (Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed, *The London Bombings: An Independent Inquiry*, London: Duckworth, 2006, p. 153)

Undeterred by seemingly insignificant things such as facts, *The Wall Street Journal's* editorial page heartily **endorsed** the AG's "reasoning" at the Commonwealth Club. Mukasey claimed that telecom liability from lawsuits for their "cooperation" with the Bush regime's illegal surveillance of American citizens caught in NSA electronic driftnets was "vital,"

"Forget the liability" the phone companies face, Mr. Mukasey said. "We face the prospect of disclosure in open court of what they did, which is to say the means and the methods by which we collect foreign intelligence against foreign targets." Al Qaeda would love that. The cynics will call this "fear-mongering," but most Americans will want to make sure we don't miss the next terror call. ("One Missed Call," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 2008, Page A8)

This finely crafted piece of dissimulation by Bush's AG is a craven pack of lies worthy of Bill O'Reilly, Fox News or, indeed, the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal*.

But what about those phone calls that NSA was presumably unable to monitor and that USAG Mukasey alleges "could have prevented" the September 11 attacks? Paul Thompson and the History Commons demolishes the claim and **reports**,

Early 2000-Summer 2001: NSA Intercepts Communications between Hijackers in US and Al-Qaeda Communications Hub

The NSA intercepts approximately 14 calls between the hijackers in the US and an al-Qaeda communications hub in Sana'a, Yemen, run by Ahmed al-Hada, who is hijacker Khalid Almihdhar's father in law (see August 5-25, 1998).

The first calls are made by Almihdhar and are intercepted during the spring and summer of 2000 (see Spring-Summer 2000).

More calls are made by hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi after the bombing of the USS Cole in October 2000 (see Mid-October 2000-Summer 2001).

The final call from the US is intercepted just a few weeks before 9/11 (see August 2001). The NSA intercepted the hijackers' calls outside the US before this (see Early 1999 and December 29, 1999) and continues to do so in 2000 (see Summer 2000) after Almihdhar returns to Yemen (see June 10, 2000 and (Mid-June-Mid-July 2000)). Some of the calls may only contain non-operational information, as they are between Almihdhar and his wife. [9/11 COMMISSION, 7/24/2004, PP. 17; SUSKIND, 2006, PP. 94; WRIGHT, 2006, PP. 343] However, the calls are also used to relay messages to the 9/11 hijackers. [EMBASSY OF YEMEN (WASHINGTON), 2/13/2002; MSNBC, 2/14/2002; MSNBC, 5/2005] The CIA is the lead agency monitoring the communications hub. It has planted bugs

inside the house and is wiretapping all calls (see Late August 1998). Intercepts of calls to and from the hub are a major plank of the US intelligence community's effort to fight al-Qaeda. Also involved is the FBI, which is using phone records to plot these calls on a map (see Late 1998-Early 2002). Some of the calls intercepted by US intelligence come from bin Laden's satellite phone in Afghanistan (see August 5-25, 1998 and Late August 1998). After 9/11, counterterrorism officials will say that the number was one of the hottest targets being monitored by the NSA and was an "intelligence bonanza." [LOS ANGELES TIMES, 12/21/2005; WRIGHT, 2006, PP. 343]

As I wrote [earlier this month](#), the NSA—and other U.S. intelligence agencies—*did* "connect the dots" that may have prevented the 9/11 attacks. That they chose not to do so, reflected Bush administration desires to protect on-going U.S. intelligence operations elsewhere and "certain foreign interests" notably those of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf monarchies and Pakistan.

Mukasey's posturing is a dodge on two fronts: it continues the 9/11 cover-up narrative first floated by U.S. National Security Advisor (now Secretary of State) Condoleezza Rice that "no one could have imagined" the 9/11 terrorist operation, that the hijackers "acted alone" without active support networks *inside* the U.S., and finally, Mukasey's duplicities serve as a justification for on-going *domestic* intelligence operations that target the American people.

The retroactive immunity sought by the Bush administration for giant telecommunications corporations have little to do with "protecting the Homeland." It is, however, a propitious mechanism for inoculating corporate executives and their shareholders for their criminal complicity with the Bush regime, as America is transformed into a "post-Constitutional" police state.

Tom Burghardt is a researcher and activist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to publishing in Covert Action Quarterly, Love & Rage and Antifa Forum, he is the editor of Police State America: U.S. Military "Civil Disturbance" Planning, distributed by [AK Press](#).

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