

# The Alleged 9/11 Hijackers: The Claim that Mohamed Atta Had Become a Fanatically Religious Muslim

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Global Research, September 10, 2017

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Terrorism](#)

## Introduction

As shown in the previous Point ([“The Claim that the Hijackers Were Devout Muslims”](#)), the alleged 9/11 hijackers did not live up to the 9/11 Commission’s description of them as devout Muslims – especially Mohamed Atta, said to have become fanatically religious after going to Germany. [1] The present Point provides an explanation of how Mohamed Atta could have been very devout while in Germany, even though Mohamed Atta’s behavior in America suggested that he was not.

## The Official Account

The 9/11 airliners were hijacked by devout Muslims, ready to die for a cause. In the words of *The 9/11 Commission Report*, the hijackers had become a “cadre of trained operatives willing to die.” [2] The Report also said that Mohamed Atta, called the ringleader, had by 1998 become very religious, even “fanatically so.” [3]

## The Best Evidence

In addition to the media stories about the hijackers in general, discussed in [Point H-3](#), suggesting that they were not really devout Muslims, there were many stories about Atta in particular.

For example, stories in newspapers in Venice, Florida, reported that Atta had lived there for several months. Investigative reporter Daniel Hopsicker went to Venice, where he learned that Atta and a young woman named Amanda Keller had taken a trip to Key West with a few other people, during which they drank heavily and used cocaine. [4]

Another example involves one of the best-known stories about Atta’s non-Muslim behavior. This episode involved a restaurant named [“Shuckums”](#) in Hollywood, Florida. According to a Florida newspaper, two of the hijackers were “knocking back glasses of Stolichnaya and rum and Coke at a fish joint in Hollywood the weekend before [9/11].” [5] According to the restaurant’s manager, “The guy Mohamed was drunk [and] his voice was slurred.” [6] According to the bartender, Atta and his companion “were wasted.” [7]

According to a third story:

In Florida, several of the hijackers – including reputed ringleader Mohamed Atta

- spent \$200 to \$300 each on lap dances in the Pink Pony strip club. [8]

At the first hearing of the 9/11 Commission (March 31 - April 1 2003), a member of the press asked Commissioner Richard Ben-Veniste:

“If Atta belonged to the fundamentalist Muslim group, why was he snorting cocaine and frequenting strip bars?”

Ben-Veniste replied: “You know, that’s a heck of a question.” [9]

But it was a question that the 9/11 Commission never addressed.

How could Atta’s behavior as reported in the press be reconciled with the portrait of him as very devout? The two views of Atta could be explained if the man the world came to know as Mohamed Atta was not the original Mohamed Atta. There is good evidence, moreover, that this is the case.

Two Attas?

A young Egyptian man whose full name was Mohamed Mohamed el-Amir Awad el-Sayed Atta had studied urban planning at the Technical University of Hamburg-Harburg in the 1990s. As reported by researcher [9a] Elias Davidsson,

“His friends in Hamburg knew him as Mohamed el-Amir, not as Mohamed Atta.” [10]

In fact, Professor Dittmar Machule, who was Mohamed el-Amir’s tutor and thesis advisor, said:

“I do not know the name Mohamed Atta,” until “after the 11th of September.”

Professor Machule said that this student was “very religious,” prayed regularly, and never touched alcohol.

“I would put my hand in the fire,” said the professor, “that this Mohamed El-Amir I know will never taste or touch alcohol.”

Also, by contrast with the man known as Mohamed Atta in America, the student the professor knew as Mohamed El-Amir Atta would not even shake hands with a woman on being introduced to her. [11]

A German urban planner named Ralph Bodenstein, who worked with Mohamed in 1995 studying traffic patterns in Cairo’s historic part, said:

“[H]e was a very religious person. He was growing a beard, he had just come back from a small hajj. He did pray five times a day. On the other hand, he was very full of idealism and he was a humanist. He was very much interested in social work.” [12]

Volker Hauth, an architect who knew Mohamed el-Amir while he studied in Hamburg, and who went with him on trips to the Middle East, said:

“The religious convictions of both of us – his Islamic and mine Protestant – were a kind of bonding for us. In Germany at that time, there were a lot of students from East Germany with no religion, and this was something difficult for Mohamed.” [13]

In addition to the fact that Mohamed el-Amir was reportedly very devout, whereas the reported behavior of the man known as Mohamed Atta in America indicated that he was not, very different adjectives were commonly used to describe the two men’s character traits.

According to Elias Davidsson, those who described Mohamed el-Amir commonly used terms such as “reserved, introvert, polite, intelligent, very nice.” For example:

Professor Machule said Mohamed “was a very nice young man, polite, very religious, and with highly developed critical faculties, alert and observant.” [14]

Abdullah Bozkurt, a dealer who knew el-Amir from a car market in Hamburg, where both traded, said: “He made such a friendly impression. He easily got in contact with everybody, was always smiling and never in a bad mood.” [15]

Bechir Bejaoui, who had been a friend of el-Amir, declared under oath in a deposition made at the German Federal Criminal Agency in Hamburg that el-Amir was “friendly, pleasant, mild ... so delicate and reasonable. ... He was never aggressive. He was, as I said, always delicate and relaxed and friendly.” [16]

On the other hand, said Davidsson, those who said anything about the character of the man known in America as Mohamed Atta “described him as an unpleasant, arrogant and obnoxious man.”

Rudy Dekkers, President of [Huffman Aviation](#) in Venice, Florida, where Atta went to flight school, said Atta “was very arrogant. ... [H]e had a bad attitude and we just didn’t like him.” [17]

Atta, along with a man going by the name Marwan al-Shehhi, also applied to enroll at [Jones Aviation](#) in Sarasota, Florida. “According to the instructor at Jones,” said The 9/11 Commission Report, “the two were aggressive, rude, and sometimes even fought with him to take over the controls.” [18]

Gary Jones, the vice president of Jones Aviation, said: “We told them we wouldn’t teach them anymore. We told them, one, they couldn’t speak English and, two, they had bad attitudes.” [19]

Moreover, the contrast was not simply behavioral but also physical. The American Atta was described as 5’8” and sometimes as 5’10” tall. [20] By contrast, Professor Machule, said of his former student that he was not a “bodyguard type” but “more a girl looking type,” [21] and described him as “very small,” being “one meter sixty-two” in height, which means slightly under 5’4”.

## Conclusion

Defenders of the official story might claim that radical transformations do occur. But it would be very unlikely that a young man who would not touch alcohol would turn into a man who would use cocaine and become drunk regularly; that a young man who would not shake hands with women would turn into one who spent time with strippers and prostitutes; and that a young man described as polite and very nice would turn into one described as arrogant, aggressive, and rude. It would especially be unlikely that a young man described by his professor as very small, being one meter sixty-two (5'4") in height, would in a few years be described as 5'8" or even 5'10".

It is much more likely – given the assumption that the 9/11 planes were hijacked by Muslims – that the image of their “ringleader” was based on a truly devout young man from Egypt named Mohamed Mohamed el-Amir Awad el-Sayed Atta, to which the 9/11 Commission added the claim that he had become fanatically religious. The 9/11 Commission then simply ignored all reports of the behavior of the American Mohamed Atta that did not fit the image of a devout Muslim.

This Point can explain why the man known to Americans as Mohamed Atta reportedly did not behave like a devout Muslim, even though Mohamed Mohamed el-Amir Awad el-Sayed Atta, who studied at Hamburg, was a genuinely devout Muslim. This Point also reinforces the conclusion of [the previous Point](#), that claims about Mohamed Atta and the other alleged hijackers should not have provided any basis for a war on Islam.

## Notes

1. [The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States](#), authorized edition (W. W. Norton, 2004), 160. ([pdf](#): 177)
2. [Ibid.](#), 154 ([pdf](#): 171).
3. [Ibid.](#), 160 ([pdf](#): 177). The text says: “When Atta arrived in Germany, he appeared religious, but not fanatically so. This would change ... ”
4. Daniel Hopsicker, “[The Secret World of Mohamed Atta: An Interview With Atta’s American Girlfriend](#),” *InformationLiberation*, 20 August 2006.
5. Jody A. Benjamin, “[Suspects’ Actions Don’t Add Up](#),” *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, 16 September 2001.
6. Ken Thomas, “[Feds Investigating Possible Terrorist-Attack Links in Florida](#),” *Associated Press*, 12 September 2001.
7. Barry Klein et al., “[FBI Seizes Records of Students at Flight Schools](#),” *St. Petersburg Times*, 13 September 2001.
8. David Wedge, “[Terrorists Partied with Hooker at Hub-Area Hotel](#),” *Boston Herald*, 10 October 2001.
9. [Sander Hicks](#), “[No Easy Answer: Heroin, Al Qaeda and the Florida Flight School](#),” *Long Island Press*, 26 February 2004.
- 9a. Elias Davidsson ... [musician](#) and human rights activist, [programmer \(at IBM\)](#), in the 60s) and author

of, i.a., [Hijacking America's Mind on 9/11: Counterfeiting Evidence](#) (2013) and [Psychologische Kriegsführung und gesellschaftliche Leugnung: Die Legende des 9/11 und die Fiktion der Terrorbedrohung](#) (2017) – editor's note]

10. Elias Davidsson, "[The Atta Mystery: Double Agent or Multiple Attas?](#)" *Aldeilis.net*, 5 October 2011.
11. "[Professor Dittmar Machule](#)," Interview by Liz Jackson, A Mission to Die For, *Four Corners*, 18 October 2001.
12. Carol J. Williams et al., "[Mainly, They Just Waited](#)," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 September 2001.
13. [Ibid.](#)
14. Peter Finn, "[Suspects Used German Rental As Headquarters](#)," *Washington Post*, 15 September 2001.
15. [Ibid.](#)
16. [Bundeskriminalamt](#), Zeugenvernehmung von Bejaoui, Bechir, Hamburg, 5.10.2001.
17. [Interview of Quentin McDermott with Rudy Dekkers](#), *ABC Australia*, 21 October 2001.
18. [The 9/11 Commission Report](#), 224 (pdf: 241).
19. Stephen J. Hedges and Jeff Zeleny, "[Hijacker Eluded Security Net](#)," *Chicago Tribune*, 16 September 2001.
20. Elaine Allen-Emrich and Jann Baty, "[Hunt for Terrorists Reaches North Port](#)," *Charlotte Sun*, 14 September 2001.
21. "[Professor Dittmar Machule](#)," Interview by Liz Jackson, A Mission to Die For, *Four Corners*, 18 October 2001.

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## [America's "War on Terrorism"](#)

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