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## Truth, lies, and the legend of 9/11

*Part 2 of 10 parts: Enter Daniel Pearl*

By Chaim Kupferberg

November 8, 2003—We may never know the true motivation that set Daniel Pearl on a quest that would ultimately lead to his grisly demise. However, thanks to an invaluable article by Robert Sam Anson in the August 2002 issue of *Vanity Fair*, we *do* know which key player was involved in guiding him on his quest for knowledge.

Mansoor Ijaz is not a man widely known outside his circle, but his intimate connections run deep in Washington's power circles. A counter-terror expert, a member of the Council On Foreign Relations, a *Fox News* analyst, as well as a business partner of former CIA Director James Woolsey, Ijaz is represented by the public relations firm of Benador Associates, whose client list reads like a "who's who" of the propaganda heavy-hitters who were pushing for a war in Iraq—Richard Perle (former Chairman of the Defense Policy Board), Woolsey (also a member of the Defense Policy Board), Iraqi scientist (and chronicler of Saddam's weapons program) Khidir Khamza, former *Washington Times* publisher (and *UPI* chief) Arnaud De Borchgrave, anti-Saddam author Laurie Mylroie, Harvard professor/CIA associate Richard Pipes (mentor of Mylroie, and father of Daniel Pipes), and Frank Gaffney, president of the hard-right Center For Security Policy (of which Perle and Woolsey are on the advisory council).

The interlocking relationships of members of this clique—or "crew," in the parlance of organized crime—is indeed a testament to the power of networking, yet the astonishing scope of their most recent activities—both in the lead-up to and aftermath of 9/11—is perhaps indicative of a more covertly sinister tint in the psychological makeup of some members of the political "power elite."

Ijaz's frequent writing partner, James Woolsey, for example, was one of just 17 participants in a July 2001 bio-warfare exercise dubbed "Dark Winter," a simulation of a mass smallpox attack, co-sponsored by the *ANSER Institute of Homeland Security* and the *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*. Among the other participants was Benador client Arnaud De Borchgrave and New York Times journalist Judith Miller, who had co-authored a book with Benador client Mylroie in the early '90s. Mylroie's book—an attempt at linking Iraq to 9/11—was released just weeks after September 11 with a foreword written by James Woolsey. Around the same time, Judith Miller had just launched her own well-publicized book on the germ warfare threat—within a week or two of her own well-publicized role as one of the very few recipients of an "anthrax" mailing (which turned out not to be anthrax).

As for the anthrax threat, a major principal in the company that holds the exclusive license for the anthrax vaccine is former Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff William Crowe, whose business associate in the consulting firm Global Options is—you guessed it—James Woolsey.

As for the present smallpox threat, the man charged with overseeing President [sic] Bush's mass vaccination policy was another "Dark Winter" alumnus, Jerry Hauer. Hauer, a former director of Kroll Associates—the security firm at the helm when the Twin Towers fell—is also the man who personally pulled strings in order to get senior FBI official John O'Neill his job as head of security at the World Trade Center. O'Neill, who had left a 30-year career in the FBI only two weeks before September 11, perished in the rubble of the Twin Towers on his very first day at the post. Incidentally, O'Neill just happened to have been the main FBI official in charge of investigating all things bin Laden.

Given the above social contacts, from Daniel Pearl's point of view, Mansoor Ijaz was indeed the man to meet. "He [Pearl] wanted me to introduce him to people who could open doors for him," explained Ijaz in *Vanity Fair*. One of those doors opened to Khalid Khawaja, a former ISI agent whose militant credentials

included a longstanding friendship with Osama bin Laden. But Khawaja was a liberal militant, counting among his acquaintances both Ijaz and Woolsey, with whom he carried on a lengthy correspondence.

With Ijaz's letter of reference in hand, Pearl established contact with Khawaja in Pakistan. As reported by Arshad Sharif in a February 14, 2002, item from *Dawn*, "Khawaja claimed that he introduced Mr. Pearl to his contacts and arranged interviews with Taliban diplomats and other people." According to the "official" record of Pearl's journalistic quest, he was on the trail of Richard Reid, otherwise known as the "shoe bomber." According to Anson, Pearl believed that Reid was a follower of Sheikh Mubarak Ali Shah Gilani, "a leader of an obscure Muslim militant group named Jamaat ul-Fuqra."

As Khawaja spins the tale, when Pearl asked for an introduction to Gilani in early January, Khawaja's militant toes went cold. With Khawaja now purportedly out of the picture, Pearl was left to scrounge up his own contacts. Eventually, Pearl found a "connected" militant who went by the name of Chaudry Bashir—but who was, in actual fact, Omar Saeed clothed in yet another alias. Or so that is the "official" version. If true, our man Saeed had his terrorist appointment book just about crammed with militant activities at the time, for he was, according to Indian intelligence, intimately involved with the man who took responsibility for the terrorist attack in Calcutta on January 22, 2002—just one day before Pearl's disappearance.

On that very day, a militant/gangster by the name of Aftab Ansari called in his claim of responsibility for the carnage. As for his connection with Omar Saeed, here is how the *Times of India* reported it on January 22:

*"[Indian] CBI Director P C Sharma told visiting FBI Chief Robert S Mueller that Ansari, who claimed responsibility for [today's Calcutta] attack, had taken a ransom of Rs 37.5 million to free shoe baron Parthapratim Roy Burman through hawala channels to Dubai, CBI sources said. Out of this amount, Omar [Saeed] . . . had sent \$100,000 to Atta through telegraphic transfer, CBI sources said."*

What was going on here? Apparently, the January 22 Calcutta incident was the trigger for an update on the "legend" of 9/11—and FBI Director Mueller was on scene to play his part in the unfolding drama. Within hours of the January 22 attack, the Indian Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was circulating news that the main suspect in the Calcutta attack, Ansari, had sent money to Omar Saeed, who then sent it on to Mohamed Atta in preparation for the September 11 attacks. No mention was made of the previously reported involvement of the chief of Pakistani intelligence. In fact, *The Times of India* would, within the next few weeks, back away from its October 9 article linking Omar Saeed to the Pakistani general—perhaps at the behest of Indian intelligence. The 9/11 money, in the CBI's new version, came from an August 2001 kidnapping masterminded by Ansari and Asif Reza Khan. Unfortunately, Khan was not around by this time to confirm it, as he had already been killed in what was believed to be a staged shootout with Indian police several weeks earlier.

The story at this point gets a bit murky, as it becomes difficult to distinguish fact from disinformation, but what is clear is the very real perception of a well-timed and coordinated set-up. The next day—on January 23, 2002—Daniel Pearl disappeared off the streets of Karachi, Pakistan, after setting up an appointment to meet Omar Saeed, alias "Bashir", for the first time. Meanwhile, on that very day, Aftab Ansari was arrested by UAE authorities at Dubai International Airport while attempting to board a plane bound for Islamabad. Also on the very day of Pearl's disappearance, the *Los Angeles Times* reinstated Omar Saeed back into "mainstream" view by citing a report by India Today, which mentioned the new *Saeed/Ansari/9/11 Money Trail* connection. The British *Independent*, on January 24, also gave voice to the Saeed revelations stemming from the Indian CBI, throwing in, for good measure, an extensive biography of Omar Saeed. This was followed by a January 27 item in the *Telegraph* that also touched upon Saeed's link to the Calcutta attack.

Why was Omar Saeed suddenly being "resurrected" worldwide within hours of the January 22 attack, after being mostly forgotten after October 9? It should be pointed out that Saeed's purported links to the Pearl kidnapping were not "known" until February 5, 2002. In that light, Robert Mueller's subsequent travel itinerary bears closer scrutiny. As reported by the *Los Angeles Times* on January 23, "FBI Director

Mueller said Tuesday (i.e. January 22) that Indian authorities provided leads in the search for Al Qaeda members and cells, based on arrests in India." There was no word from Mueller, however, on his reported discussions with the CBI Chief concerning the 9/11 money trail.

The very next day—January 23—Mueller was in Pakistan, just in time for the Pearl kidnapping by Omar Saeed. Of course, Mueller could not have known by then that the person who was mentioned to him the day before as being the 9/11 paymaster would be involved in the Pearl kidnapping the very next day. One might even chalk it up to coincidence—or maybe not. On January 24, Mueller reportedly took up the matter of Omar Saeed with Pakistan President Musharraf. Was he discussing CBI Chief Sharma's revelations about Omar Saeed and the 9/11 money trail? As later revealed by an "anonymous" Bush administration official, Mueller was formally requesting the extradition of Omar Saeed—for a 1994 kidnapping of an American tourist.

What, according to the "mainstream" media, prompted this sudden, rather overdue, request? According to the February 24, 2002, issue of *Newsweek*, Saeed was "secretly" indicted back in November 2001 for that obscure kidnapping. As reported by *CNN* on February 28, 2002: "Justice Department officials won't say what prompted that indictment, which came more than six years after the incident." It also came several weeks after Saeed was first outed as the 9/11 paymaster.

The possibility also exists that the November 2001 "secret" indictment was a late February fiction meant to explain Mueller's sudden interest in Omar Saeed. For good measure, timed with the *Newsweek* revelation, Wendy Chamberlin, the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, revealed to *CBS News* that she had preceded Mueller's request with an informal approach to Musharraf concerning Saeed's extradition a few months before. The reader would be cautioned as to drawing any firm conclusions as to the true nature of the "secret" November indictment. Instead, one should focus on the compelling circumstantial evidence of a disinformation campaign that appears to be organized around a number of conveniently timed set-ups. According to *CNN*, Mueller was also the one who first informed Musharraf of the Pearl kidnapping. So, to recap: only two days after the *Times of India* reported Mueller's discussions with the CBI concerning the Omar Saeed link to 9/11, Mueller reportedly discussed Omar Saeed *only* in connection with an obscure 1994 kidnapping, while broaching a new kidnapping that occurred the day before, which, in a matter of weeks, would publicly be linked to . . . Omar Saeed.

Incidentally, the FBI also happened to be instrumental in coordinating Saeed's eventual capture as the Pearl kidnap mastermind. As the "official" story had it soon after Saeed's "official" arrest on February 12, the case was solved when the authorities successfully traced a series of emails back to one of Saeed's alleged accomplices, who then confessed that he was only acting under Saeed's orders. The government's case, as reported by Zarar Khan of the *Associated Press* on July 1, 2002, "rests heavily on technical FBI evidence, which traced the emails to fellow defendant Fahad Naseem."

Mueller, incidentally, also played a crucial role in arranging for the deportation of Aftab Ansari from the UAE to India. Ansari, by reason of the Calcutta bombing, was delivered to Indian custody on February 9, just three days before Omar Saeed was "officially" arrested for the Pearl kidnapping. In short, these two purported 9/11 partners had been arrested separately in the same week of February for crimes they had separately committed in the same week of January.

Meanwhile, Daniel Pearl's chaperone, the "militant" Khalid Khawaja, was beginning to feel the heat due to his involvement in managing Pearl's appointment book. For a presumed partisan of bin Laden, Khawaja seemed to be unduly concerned about the bad press that Pearl's disappearance was garnering him. According to a February 15, 2002, article in *Dawn* by Arshad Sharif, "Khawaja said it was on the intervention of [Mansoor] Ijaz that *Newsweek* toned down its article which was allegedly raising an accusing finger on him." In a typical example of post-9/11 news management, Khawaja—presumed friend of Osama bin Laden—shared his correspondence from editor Gretel Kovach of *Newsweek*:

*"If it is of any consolation, you may have read in the e-mails I sent Mansoor that the Newsweek article would have been much stronger in pointing the finger at you as the person who led Danny*

*into trouble. Thankfully, I spoke with Mansoor and was able to offer a contrary account—that you refused Danny's request, and that others tricked him into thinking he could meet Gilani."*

Mansoor Ijaz—fellow propagandist and business partner of the ubiquitous James Woolsey—wasn't exactly a disinterested party in the matter, for if it was Khawaja who had led Pearl to his ultimate fate, so, too, by association, would suspicion lie with Ijaz, who had sent Pearl on to Khawaja.

Meanwhile, Omar Saeed appeared to be at the very broiling geo-political center of the Pakistan-India stand-off. With Indian authorities publicly highlighting Omar Saeed as the poster boy of Pakistani terrorism, using him as a cudgel to prod the reluctant Americans into action against the Pakistani ISI, one could read Mueller's trip to the region as an effort to broker the competing interests of these incompatible allies in the so-called War on Terror. Publicly, Mueller was in India on January 22 as part of a U.S.-Indo Working Group on Counter-Terrorism. But as we do not have access to the minutes of those meetings, we might surmise that, behind closed doors, Mueller was negotiating with his Indian counterparts the final dispensation of Omar Saeed within the overall 9/11 Legend. Not that negotiations were going particularly smoothly—as evidenced by the upsurge in daring attacks against Indian interests in the few months previous. Yet it seems that a quid-pro-quo had been worked out along the following lines: the Indian authorities would excise the ISI chief from their version of 9/11 and instead splice in a less incriminating "gangster" from Dubai as the partner of paymaster Omar Saeed. In return, the Americans would redouble their efforts in moving against terror groups based out of Pakistan.

Mueller, for his part, would deal with this new version of the *Omar Saeed/Money Trail Story* in the same manner that he dealt with the older version—by ignoring it. With the Indian CBI now circulating this new version of the *Omar Saeed/ Money Trail Story* to various mainstream Western newspapers in the wake of the January 22 Calcutta attack, Mueller would publicly go on record as reserving judgment as to the true culprits and motives behind that incident—while assisting India behind-the-scenes in arranging for the deportation and arrest of Aftab Ansari. And while the Indian press was widely presenting the Calcutta attack as an Ansari/ISI production, according to the January 23, 2002, *Indian Express*, the Indian government was backing down on pushing an ISI link to Calcutta after consultation with the U.S. government. Why the apparent U.S. squeamishness concerning the ISI in regards to the Calcutta attack? Perhaps due to its proximity to the latest *Omar Saeed/Ansari/Money Trail Story* being marketed by the Indians—for if the American aim was to gradually erase Omar Saeed from the 9/11 paymaster role and place him in a *post-9/11* context, Omar Saeed would have to come by his ISI connections through a different route, one that would in fact *distance* him from his reported role in September 11. In other words, the Americans would need to *muddy the waters* over Omar Saeed and the role of the 9/11 paymaster.

It wouldn't be easy. As reported by Paul Sperry of WorldNetDaily on January 30, 2002 (i.e. one week before Omar Saeed was first outed as a suspect in the Pearl kidnapping):

*"India's Central Bureau of Investigation is turning up evidence that is proving inconvenient for the Bush administration as it tries to maintain its shaky alliance with Pakistan. As administration officials, led by State Secretary Colin Powell, praise Pakistan for its help in the war on terrorism, FBI agents responding to Indian leads are quietly investigating Pakistan-based terrorist groups connected to al-Qaida and the Sept. 11 hijacking."*

In other words, India was apparently putting the screws to the Americans. If the Americans, for purely pragmatic reasons, had opted to cozy up to the Musharraf regime, India needed insurance to hedge against the possibility that its strategic interests would be harmed through this likely temporary alliance. In that context, it would be somewhat naive to assume that India just happened to "discover" the *Omar Saeed/ISI Chief/ 9/11* connection through one of those ubiquitous cell phone "intercepts"—for as early as September 23, 2001, the British government was reported as seeking India's help in locating Omar Saeed. Moreover, in view of the fact that the Mustafa Ahmad paymaster alias *also* made its debut on that very day through Bush's Global Terrorist Executive Order, there is perhaps another plausible explanation for India's apparent obsession with Omar Saeed and his activities.

**Next:** Flashback: Assembling the legend

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