



Transportation
Security
Administration

JUL 14 2009

FOIA Case Number: TSA09-0435

Mr. Robert MacLean
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. MacLean:

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated April 6, 2009, to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DHS referred your request and a three page document to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for a direct response to you. You have requested an "unredacted copy of this July 26, 2003 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Advisory, title: Potential Al-Qaeda Hijacking Plot in the U.S. and Abroad." Your request has been processed under the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552.

This document has been reviewed and one page is being released in its entirety. However, portions of two pages are being withheld pursuant to Exemption 2 of the FOIA. A more complete explanation of this exemption is provided below.

Exemption 2 of the FOIA exempts from mandatory disclosure records that are "related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of any agency." The courts have interpreted the exemption to encompass two distinct categories of information: (1) internal matters of a relatively trivial nature – often referred to as "low 2" information; and (2) more substantial internal matters, the disclosure of which would risk circumvention of a legal requirement – often referred to as "high 2" information.

We have determined that certain portions of the requested records contain personnel rules and/or internal practices of the TSA and are properly withheld from disclosure as "low 2" information. Exemption "low 2" protects from disclosure internal matters of a relatively trivial nature, such as file numbers, mail routing stamps, initials, data processing notations, brief references to previous communications, and other similar administrative markings.

The fees incurred to process your request do not exceed the minimum threshold necessary for charge and, therefore, there is no fee associated with processing this request.

In the event that you may wish to appeal this determination, an administrative appeal may be made in writing to Kimberly Walton, Special Counselor, Office of the Special Counselor, Transportation Security Administration, 601 South 12th Street, East Building, E7-121S, Arlington, VA 20598-6033. Your appeal **must be submitted within 60 days** from the date of this determination. It should contain your FOIA request number and state, to the extent possible, the reasons why you

believe the initial determination should be reversed. In addition, the envelope in which the appeal is mailed in should be prominently marked "FOIA Appeal." Please note that the Special Counselor's determination of the appeal will be administratively final. If you have any questions pertaining to your request, please feel free to contact the FOIA Office at 1-866-364-2872 or locally at 571-227-2300.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KJ Janet", followed by a period.

Kevin J. Janet
FOIA Officer
Freedom of Information Act Office

Enclosure

~~SENSITIVE SECURE INFORMATION~~
(Not Releasable to Media)



Advisory

Title: Potential Al-Qaeda Hijacking Plot in the U.S. and Abroad

July 26, 2003

LIMITED DISTRIBUTION: Any release, dissemination or sharing of this document, or any information contained herein, is not authorized without approval from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). All requests for further dissemination must be submitted to the DHS, Information Management & Requirements Division (IMRD) at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

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OVERVIEW

Al-Qaeda continues to plan attacks against commercial aircraft in the United States and abroad.

DETAILS

Al-Qaeda planners have primarily considered suicide hijackings and bombings as the most promising methods to destroy aircraft in flight, as well as to strike ground targets. Cognizant of changes in aviation security measures since September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda is looking for new ways to circumvent enhancements in aviation security screening and tightening immigration requirements. At least one of these attacks could be executed by the end of the summer 2003.

Attack venues may include the United Kingdom, Italy, Australia, or the East coast of the United States due to the relatively high concentration of government, military, and economic targets. The extremists may plan to identify flights that transited the target country, so that the hijackers would not need visas for those countries.

The plan may involve the use of five-man teams, each of which would attempt to seize control of a commercial aircraft either shortly after takeoff or shortly before landing at a chosen airport. This type of operation would preclude the need for flight-trained hijackers.

The hijackers may try to calm passengers and make them believe they were on a hostage, not suicide mission. The hijackers may attempt to use common items carried by travelers, such as cameras, modified as weapons.

No equipment or operatives are known to have been deployed to conduct the operations.

SUGGESTED PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Airlines are reminded of their obligation to provide adequate security procedures at the airports for all passengers especially those passengers transiting the U.S. without visa. Airlines will identify to CBP any Transit With Out Visa (TWOV) passengers exhibiting suspicious behavior.

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Advisories recommend the immediate implementation of protective actions, including best practices when available. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) encourages recipients of this advisory to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity to law enforcement, the DHS Watch Operations Center or the Transportation Security Intelligence Service (TSIS) watch office.

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The DHS Watch Operations Center or the TSIS watch office may be contacted at:

DHS Watch:

Phone: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]@hq.dhs.gov

TSIS:

Phone: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]@tsa.dot.gov

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DHS intends to update this advisory should it receive additional relevant information, including information provided to it by the user community. Based on this notification, no change to the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) level is anticipated; the current HSAS level is YELLOW.

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