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Inside As-Sahaab: The Story of Ali al-Bahlul and the Evolution of Al-Qaida's Propaganda

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In November 2008, a military jury convened under the authority of the Guantanamo Bay Military Commissions convicted Yemeni national Ali Hamza Ahmad Suliman al-Bahlul of conspiracy, solicitation, and providing material support to terrorism in violation of the Military Commissions Act of 2006. Al-Bahlul was subsequently sentenced to a life term in a U.S. military prison.[1] Yet, Mr. al-Bahlul was no ordinary footsoldier or conventional military commander in the service of Al-Qaida. Rather, he had been personally chosen by Usama Bin Laden in order to help develop another key battlefront in Al-Qaida's war on the United States: the "media jihad." The story behind Mr. al-Bahlul and his personal recollections of serving as the chief of Al-Qaida's As-Sahaab Media Foundation offer unprecedented insights into the history of As-Sahaab, its mission, and how it has evolved over time into the global phenomenon that exists today.

Under questioning by agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) while held in administrative custody in Guantanamo Bay during 2002 and 2003, Mr. al-Bahlul admitted traveling more than once to Afghanistan in hopes of joining the Arab mujahideen fighting there. On his second mission, in 1999, al-Bahlul was able to cross safely through Pakistan into Afghanistan and reach an Al-Qaida guesthouse located near the Kandahar International Airport. At the guesthouse, he was greeted by Egyptian national Saif al-Adel (a.k.a. Mohammed al-Makkawi), an Al-Qaida Shura Council member and the chief of Al-Qaida's Security Committee, who grilled al-Bahlul on the details of his background and how he had managed to slip into Afghanistan.[2] Evidently satisfied with the answers he received, Saif al-Adel showed al-Bahlul to his temporary quarters at a house located near the airport. At the time, two other Al-Qaida recruits were already living in the house: an Egyptian national Abdelrahman al-Masri (a.k.a. Mohammed Atta) and a Lebanese national Al-Qa'Qa' al-Lubnani (a.k.a. Ziad Jarrah). While sharing a residence in Kandahar, al-Bahlul recalled Atta and Jarrah discussing "their studying engineering in Germany" and thought of them as "highly educated."[3]

Soon after his arrival in Kandahar, Mr. al-Bahlul was summoned before Usama Bin Laden and was "personally appointed" by Bin Laden to head up Al-Qaida's media office.[4] Al-Bahlul indicated that he had been selected for this task because of his familiarity "with computers and

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[1] "Bahlul Sentenced to Life in Prison." November 3, 2008. http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=12331.

[2] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.

[3] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.

[4] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].

software applications."[5] According to al-Bahlul, the other members of Al-Qaida's media team at the time included Egyptian national Abu Hussein al-Masri, Yemeni national Abdelaziz al-Nu'man (who was later reportedly killed during the 2001 Qala-e-Jangi prison uprising in Mazar-e-Sharif), and an unidentified Afghan.[6] The name of Al-Qaida's media office, the As-Sahaab Media Foundation, was chosen for unspecified reasons by Bin Laden himself, and it was considered to be an official organ of Al-Qaida's Media Committee chaired by Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri.[7]

Under questioning by the FBI and NCIS, Mr. al-Bahlul advised that As-Sahaab "was responsible for producing all Al-Qaeda media-related propaganda, including Bin Laden's video and audio tapes and statements"[8] and he had personally "produced Al-Qa'ida/UBL tapes under the name As-Sahaab Foundation."[9] According to al-Bahlul, "the media office was fully equipped with computers, satellite television, video equipment and a library of audio and videotapes" and it was even one of his own personal responsibilities to record "television news from different countries" and compile "news briefs" for Bin Laden from various newspapers and Internet websites.[10] Al-Bahlul was additionally tasked with the duty of recording "various lectures" by Bin Laden "and other Al-Qa'ida leadership, to include Ayman Zawahiri."[11] Though some of these recordings may have included the "martyrdom" wills of intended suicide operatives, al-Bahlul insisted that, serving in his capacity within As-Sahaab, "he did not know about [military] operations in advance."[12]

When As-Sahaab would complete its work on a given videotaped statement from Bin Laden or Al-Qaida, the final product would first be handed over for preliminary review by Al-Qaida's Security Committee, headed by Saif al-Adel: "Al-Bahlul stated it is the duty of the Security Committee to disseminate all statements and tapes... he usually gave the productions to either Saif al-Adel, Abu Hafs [al-Masri], or Bin Laden himself."[13] Mr. al-Bahlul also noted that any video footage taken of activity at Al-Qaida's secretive training camps in Afghanistan would have to be "approved by the Al-Qa'ida military committee prior to dissemination or distribution."[14] Following

[5] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.

[6] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.

[7] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.

[8] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.

[9] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].

[10] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].

[11] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].

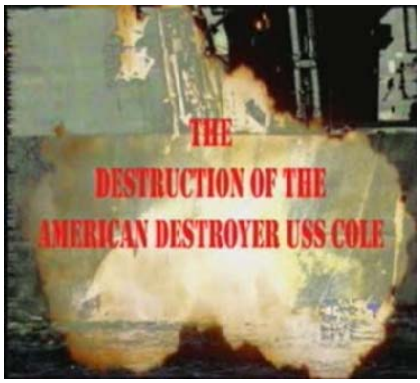
[12] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].

[13] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.

[14] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].

the completion of the production of a tape, al-Bahlul would thereupon "provide it to Bin Ladin. The distribution of the tape was not his responsibility as it was directly handled by Bin Ladin."[15] According to al-Bahlul, several of his own video projects at As-Sahaab were eventually "sent through Bin Ladin to the Al-Jazira channel. Al-Bahlul was unaware of who specifically delivered the tape to Al-Jazira."[16] However, when shown a photo of Al-Qaida member Anas al-Liby, al-Bahlul recognized him and identified Anas as an employee of "the office of Al-Jazeera television in Afghanistan."[17]

In October 2000, Al-Qaida launched one its most sophisticated terrorist attacks to date: the suicide boat bombing of an American naval vessel, the U.S.S. Cole, off the coast of Aden, Yemen, killing 17 sailors. Though Al-Qaida failed to capture live footage of the stunning attack on the Cole itself, the bombing nonetheless represented a major propaganda victory for Al-Qaida. Soon thereafter, Mr. al-Bahlul reported receiving a request from Bin Laden "to produce a video tape to commemorate the USS Cole attack."[18] Bin Laden specifically insisted to al-Bahlul that he include an audio clip of Quranic recitation by imprisoned Al-Qaida leader Mahmud Mamdouh Salim (a.k.a. Abu Hajer al-Iraqi), "particularly because he was in American custody."[19] Lacking the equipment normally found in a professional media studio, al-Bahlul relied instead on a Windows PC with Adobe Premiere Pro video editing software.[20] Handwritten notes allegedly penned by al-Bahlul include painstakingly detailed schematics of computer hardware, how to properly connect VCR and other A/V equipment for video capture, and troubleshooting instructions for whenever the crash-prone Adobe Premiere software would encounter sudden and frustrating errors.[21]



Indeed, dozens of pages of scribbled notes lay out the creation of the Cole video using Adobe Premiere. The systematic collection of serial numbers used for unlocking Windows, Adobe, and other commercial products suggests that Mr. al-Bahlul was most likely using illegally-pirated versions of these software packages.[22] Other notations cover a host of technical issues—including "importing clips", "dragging clips into the time-line", "adding special effects to a video",

[15] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].
[16] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].
[17] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. August 3, 2002.
[18] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.
[19] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].
[20] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002. See also: Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].
[21] Exhibits AFGP-2002-800752-004-0041; AFGP-2002-800752-004-0042.
[22] Exhibits AFGP-2002-800752-004-0041; AFGP-2002-800752-004-0022.

"animating a clip", and "exporting the movie."[23] Still other handwritten notes revealed that al-Bahlul was having a particular technical problem trying to excerpt portions from another separate mujahideen propaganda video from Chechnya, "Russian Hell in the Year 2000." According to the notes:

> "After 4 minutes have passed, the Adobe Premiere opened a 'Close Program' window in front of the Adobe Premiere. It said 'Not responding' and I did 'End Task' and then I restarted it. Then, when it opened again, I made an experiment with the sound alone, without the picture, with movement, and it began to speed up from 31 to 60 and in the number 34 the red bar stopped speeding up around 2 minutes and more from the estimated time to the end of the speeding but it became evident that it is 'Not responding' and I closed the Adobe Premiere and made a third experiment. It was shortened to 5 minutes only, but the same problem reoccurred. Then I selected sound of only half an hour of the entire film and the speeding remained towards 180 and it advanced in a normal manner until the number 34 when it stopped. After careful inspection it became evident that there is an error in the film JR2000 after 5:20 minutes have passed."[24]

Despite these frustrating technical hurdles, with the assistance of Abdelaziz al-Nu'man and the other unnamed Afghan employee at As-Sahaab, al-Bahlul was able to finish production of the Cole video within approximately six months.[25]

According to Mr. al-Bahlul, the basic "blueprint" of the video "The Destruction of the U.S.S. Cole" was directly adopted from a speech given by Bin Laden in January 2000 during celebrations with other Al-Qaida members marking the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr.[26] Even so, al-Bahlul also indicated that Bin Laden "revised the tape several times before he gave it his final approval."[27] Draft versions of the video seized by the U.S. military from former Al-Qaida bases near Kandahar include several video excerpts which were later removed in the final release of the Cole video—including speeches by Bin Laden and footage of Al-Qaida operatives practicing assassination techniques at what appears to be the Tarnak Farms training camp. Al-Bahlul expressed a defiant sense of pride in creating the video and "advised he included all his beliefs in the USS Cole tape."[28] He further described the Cole video as "'the best' recruitment tape thus far... 'I am not aware if they (Al-Qa'ida) made any tapes after September (2001); however, prior to that, the Cole was the best one.'" Al-Bahlul freely acknowledged to his interrogators that the purpose of creating the Cole video was "to awaken the Islamic Umma to revolt against America... he hoped new recruits would come to Afghanistan and join the jihad."[29] The final release of the

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[23] Exhibit AFGP-2002-801138.
[24] Exhibit AFGP-2002-801152.
[25] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002. See also: Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].
[26] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].
[27] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.
[28] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.
[29] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].

video included a clip of at least one future 9/11 suicide hijacker, Saudi national Saeed al-Ghamdi (a.k.a. "al-Muataz Billah"), as he practiced firing an anti-aircraft weapon at the Al-Farouq training camp in Afghanistan. When shown an open-source public version of "The Destruction of the U.S.S. Cole", al-Bahlul confirmed that it was his work, but "advised he was unaware of the English subtitles as seen on the tape viewed, and he believed it was added after he was in custody."[30]

After producing a total of six to eight video recordings for Bin Laden, in approximately February 2001, Mr. al-Bahlul received a promotion within the ranks of Al-Qaida, and was apparently asked to serve as Bin Laden's "Public Relations Secretary."[31] According to al-Bahlul, in the wake of his own promotion, the As-Sahaab Media Foundation fell under the principle charge of "Mukhtar" (a.k.a. 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaykh Mohammed).[32] Al-Bahlul described Bin Laden as being "always on the move" and he admitted that, while serving as "Public Relations Secretary", he "went with Bin Laden everywhere and he always had a laptop with him which was used for his job."[33] Upon further questioning, al-Bahlul added that "he did Bin Ladin's work on the laptop, and he referred to the laptop and the work as his 'office on the move.' Al-Bahlul advised the laptop included lectures, media, Hadith and Qur'an, among other items Bin Ladin used."[34] Al-Bahlul also reported to his interrogators that he had been instructed "on various occasions" by Bin Laden to aid Al-Qaida's Taliban allies with their own computer glitches and their failed efforts to obtain essential software applications.[35] Specifically, al-Bahlul described how "Bin Ladin asked him to assist the Taliban officials in downloading a Microsoft Windows 98 program on their computers. The Windows 98 program was an Arabic version, and the Taliban needed it for its publications the 'Islamic Imara.'"[36]

[Top]: Saeed al-Ghamdi in the pre-9/11 "Cole" video produced by Ali al-Bahlul. [Bottom]: Saeed al-Ghamdi unmasked in the post-9/11 video by As-Sahaab, "The Will of Abul Abbas al-Janoobi."

[30] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].

[31] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002. See also: Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].

[32] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.

[33] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.

[34] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].

[35] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.

[36] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].

In the immediate days leading up to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, Al-Qaida began to make preparations for a possible U.S. military response on targets inside Afghanistan. Though he was not told the full details of the upcoming 9/11 attacks, Mr. al-Bahlul was ordered to evacuate the Al-Qaida compounds in Kandahar alongside Bin Laden. He was also instructed by Bin Laden "to prepare the Media equipment and put it in a van prior to the evacuation... the Bin Laden convoy and the van which contained the media equipment... was driven by him (Al-Bahlul)."[37] With As-Sahaab now a potentially mobile enterprise, al-Bahlul was able to produce further propaganda recordings even as he remained on the run near the personal company of Usama Bin Laden.

While being questioned by FBI and NCIS agents, al-Bahlul was also shown footage from an As-Sahaab video broadcast via the Al-Jazeera satellite television network on October 7, 2001, featuring speeches by a group of Al-Qaida leaders—including Bin Laden, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Sulaiman Abu Ghaith, and Abu Hafs al-Masri. Though he denied being involved in the creation of this particular video, Mr. al-Bahlul indicated that he did recognize it from its televised broadcast on Al-Jazeera and believed it to be the work of Bin Laden's son "Muhammad." According to al-Bahlul, "Bin Ladin tasked his son Muhammad with 'special videos and statements,' but no one knows which events are so designated except for Bin Ladin himself."[38]

In February 2008, prosecutors with the U.S. Office of Military Commissions filed a charge sheet against Mr. al-Bahlul that alleged, among other things, that he had "prepared the propaganda declarations styled as martyr wills of Muhammed Atta and Ziad al Jarrah in preparation for... September 11, 2001."[39] During al-Bahlul's subsequent trial at Guantanamo Bay, in order to help buttress their charges, prosecutors introduced a previously unreleased video recording recovered by the U.S. government from the ruins of an abandoned Al-Qaida base inside Afghanistan. The video featured raw, unedited footage of 9/11 hijacker Ziad Jarrah reading portions of his "martyrdom" will in front of an anonymous mountainous backdrop, presumably near Kandahar.

Unlike the typically fluid, polished content of previous hijacker wills published by As-Sahaab, in the raw recording recovered by the U.S. government, Jarrah appears somewhat camera-shy, requiring constant prodding from two unidentified As-Sahaab cameramen. One of the men tells Jarrah, "This is a good place, this is a good place, if you want to start reading... As you know, this speech requires passion and enthusiasm... Passion is essential for this speech."[40] After several minutes of discussing the ills of the Muslim world in Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere, Jarrah stumbled over his words repeatedly and stopped. Apologetically, he mumbled, "I am sorry. I made many mistakes. I repeated myself many times."[41] One of the men behind the camera reassured Jarrah, "All we need to do is to make a simple introduction... Regarding [your] second question, why didn't you try a different approach? I mean another style. Do you have a will to the Moslem nation, a will for the Moslem youths, or the Moslem seculars? Something for the Moslem youths who get arrested and tortured." Once again, Jarrah began a series of condemnations of the U.S. and Israel, and the "apostate" regimes in control of the Middle East. After several minutes, Jarrah trailed off and then impatiently addressed the cameraman, "Is that

[37] FBI 302 Summary of Interview with Ali Hamza Ahmed Suliman al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Muhammad Anis Abdullah Khalidi, Ismail, Abu Malek, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted]. July 30-31, 2002.
[38] Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF) Report of Investigative Activity. May 18-20, 2003. Activity #: 09743031901214. Interview of Ali Ismail al-Bahlul (a.k.a. Abu Anas al-Makki, Anas) ISN# US9YM-00039DP by FBI Special Agent AS [name redacted] and NCIS Special Agent RMF [name redacted].
[39] http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2008/d20080208bahlul.pdf.
[40] Exhibit AFGP-2003-001320.
[41] Exhibit AFGP-2003-001320.

enough?" Jarrah was duly admonished by his As-Sahaab handlers, "No, it's not enough. Start again. Say, 'Praise to God, peace upon His prophet' quickly, and then why you are carrying out this operation."[42] Clearly, this revealing video footage seems to suggest that the theatrical "martyrdom" wills of Al-Qaida suicide operatives are much more carefully scripted and deliberately orchestrated than the As-Sahaab Media Foundation would otherwise wish to acknowledge.

Though al-Bahlul may now be imprisoned for the rest of his life, he has sworn to continue his commitment to violent jihad by the pen, if not by the sword. Likewise, as months and years pass between successful Al-Qaida terrorist attacks, those who are now at the helm of As-Sahaab rely upon the media and the Internet as a tool to amplify the significance of Al-Qaida's leadership and ideology. One could argue that, absent the constant and reassuring broadcasts originating from As-Sahaab, the general public would begin to forget about Usama Bin Laden and the Al-Qaida agenda. Some of the sophisticated animation sequences featured in recent Al-Qaida videos have given rise to rampant speculation concerning the potential technical hardware at the disposal of As-Sahaab. Perhaps what is most remarkable of all from what we have now learned about As-Sahaab are its convenient portability and relatively negligible fixed infrastructure. If nothing else, the account of Ali al-Bahlul is a reminder that even relatively meager computing resources can be creatively marshaled in order to perform essential logistical tasks on behalf of modern terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaida.

[42] Exhibit AFGP-2003-001320.

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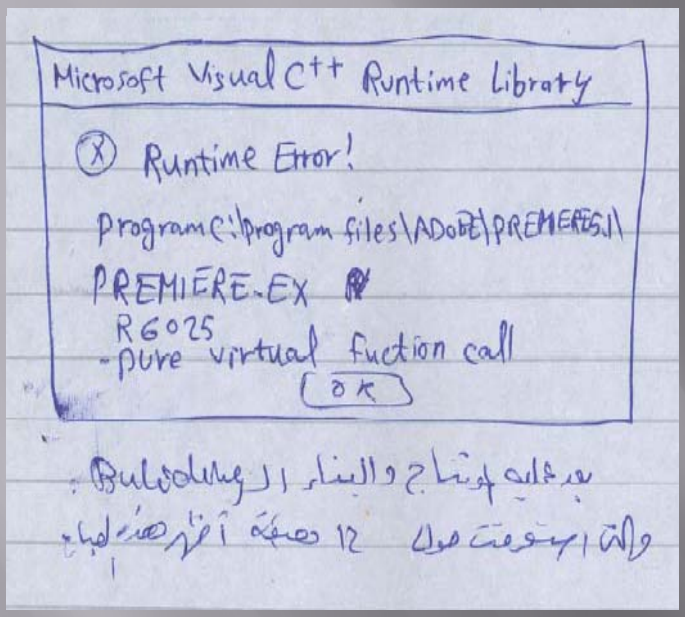
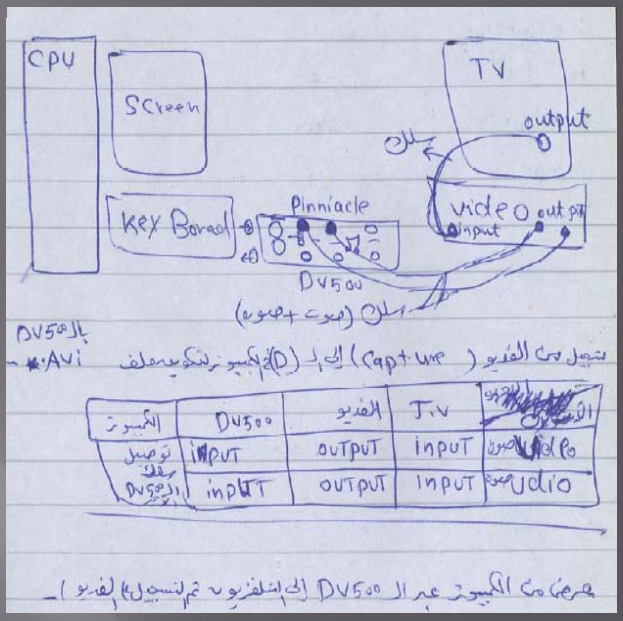
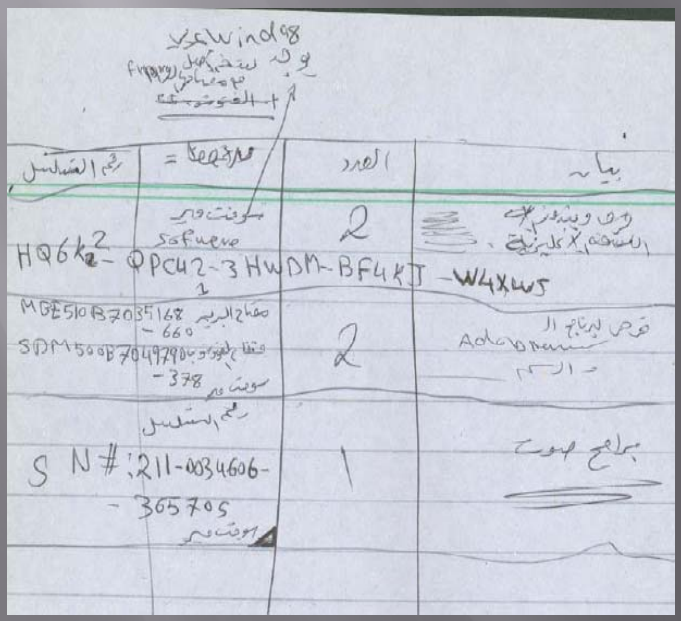
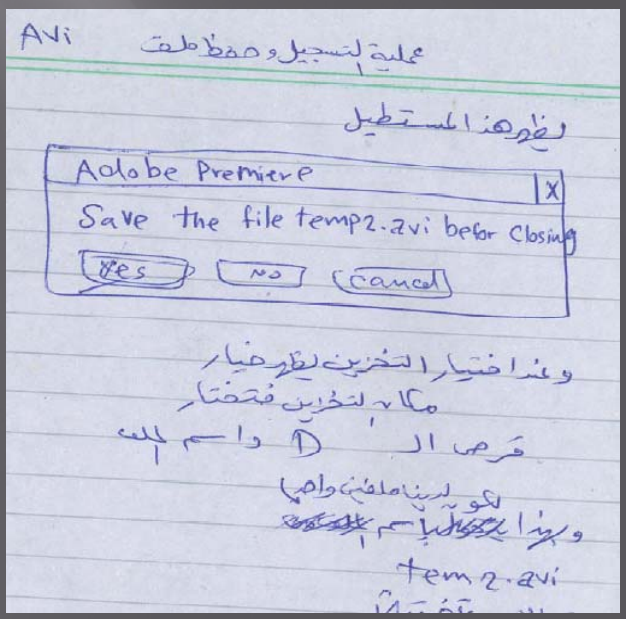
Appendix A: Notes Allegedly Taken by Ali al-Bahlul

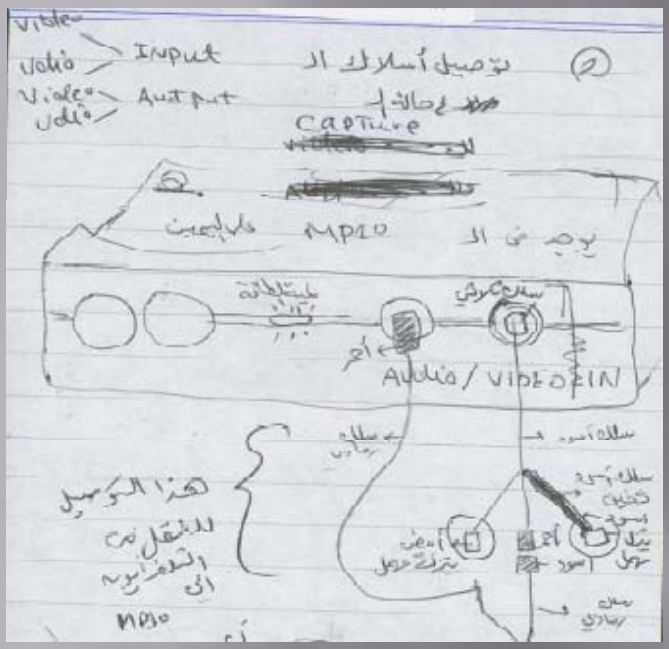


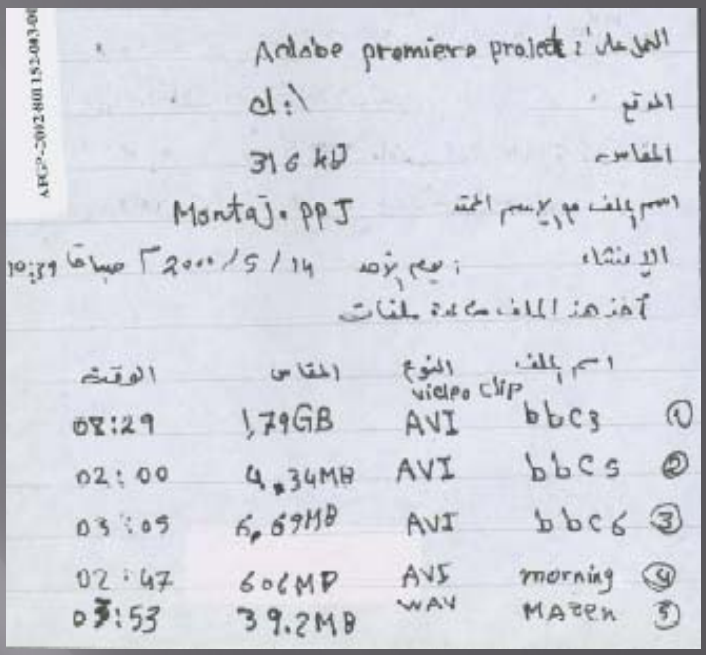


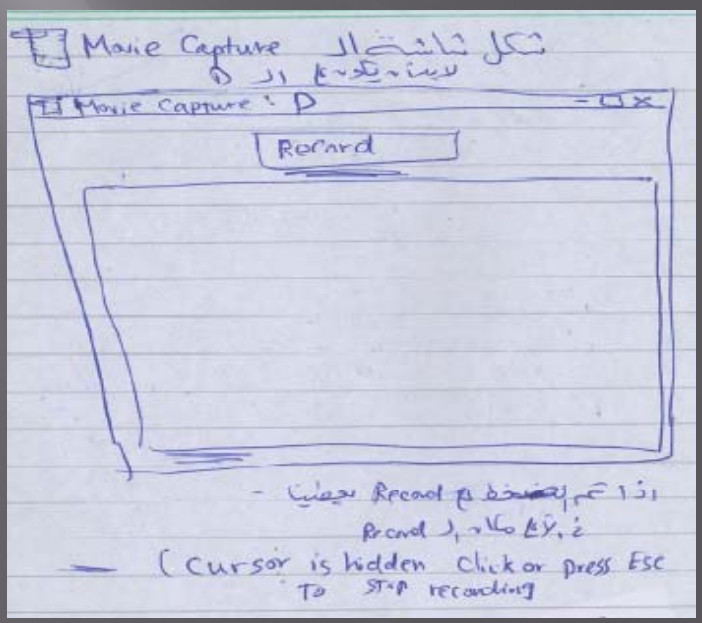




Excerpts from Exhibit AFGP-2002-800752, handwritten notes allegedly made by Ali al-Bahlul—including records of software crashes, diagrams of connections for A/V equipment, charts of pirated serial numbers used to unlock commercial software, and written instructions for how to produce video recordings.







[At top and bottom right]: Excerpts from Exhibit AFGP-2002-801152, handwritten notes allegedly made by Ali al-Bahlul—including diagrams of connections for A/V equipment and instructions on how to create a multi-source video project using Adobe Premiere Pro software.

[At bottom left]: At a preliminary hearing held in Guantanamo Bay in January 2006, al-Bahlul displayed a handwritten sign in Arabic and English announcing his intention to boycott his trial and to refuse any form of participation.

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Appendix B: Still Images from Selected Source Videos

[At top]: Still images from "out-takes" of footage initially included in early draft versions of the "Cole" video that were later cut out of the final public release. [At bottom]: Still images from the raw "martyr" will video of Ziad Jarrah, recovered by the U.S. government from a former Al-Qaida base in Afghanistan.