

# The Perplexing Puzzle of the Published Passenger Lists

by Gary North

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Maybe you like puzzles. I hope so. I don't like them. I regard them as a challenge, not a game. I avoid them because, when I cannot find a solution, my mind won't stop working on them. Then I get very frustrated. So, I avoid magic shows, crossword puzzles, and similar brain- twisters.

Yet I am also a historian with a Ph.D. Historians are trained to solve puzzles with insufficient pieces. Historians never have all of the evidence that they would like in order to come up with a coherent explanation of what happened. They always want another piece in the puzzle before they go into print. (Of course, once they go into print, they will tend to reject any newly discovered piece that messes up their version of the completed puzzle.) At some point, they are supposed to come to a conclusion. They are supposed to make a judgment about what happened. I am presently stuck. So, I am sending out this report. Maybe there is someone my list who can get me unstuck.

Years ago, I saw a movie, "My Cousin Vinnie." Vinnie was studying to be a lawyer. He wasn't a good classroom student, but he had a unique ability. He could figure out how things fit together. Show him a magic trick, and he could tell you how the magician did it. Tell him a story with a missing link, and he could identify where the missing link was, and maybe what it was. He could solve puzzles. I am trying to locate Vinnie. This puzzle is no game.

The United States has gone to war on the basis of one solution to this puzzle. We have not yet been told what this solution is. The puzzle begins with the crash of four airliners. We must work our way backward from this. To do this, I decided to begin with official information that was published 16 days after the attack. To work my way backwards, I first leaped forward.

## Alleged Hijackers

On September 27, the Associated Press released a story about the hijackers. The version that I read, published in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, referred to these men as alleged hijackers. I shall do the same. I located this article by using [www.daypop.com](http://www.daypop.com). Daypop is the most complete archive of recent news stories on the Web. Daypop allows you to search for stories that are up to four weeks old. I searched for "passenger list" and "hijackers." Daypop produced three pages of links -- not that many. Almost all of these links were to the same AP story, which was published by numerous on-line news sources. Here is the version I used.

<http://www.accessatlanta.com/ajc/terrorism/nation/0927hijackerlist.html>

The headline reads: "FBI releases updated list of alleged hijackers." Above the headline is a link that says, "Click here to see 19 suspected hijackers." I clicked it. A large box popped up. It took a while for the photos to appear. There are 19 photos, along with names. The names appear to be Middle Eastern - - Arabs. Most of the men look like Arabs, although a few might pass as Mexicans. Only one of them looked vaguely like a European. They are divided into four lists, according to which flight they are said to have boarded. There were five men on American Airlines Flight 77, five on AA Flight 11, five on United Airlines Flight 175, and four on UA Flight 93 -- the flight that crashed in Pennsylvania.

Let's return to the AP story itself. We read the following: As Attorney General John Ashcroft launched a "national neighborhood watch" with the release of the photos, FBI Director Robert Mueller acknowledged that questions remained about whether an accompanying list contained the true names of the 19. "What we are currently doing is determining whether, when these individuals came to the United States, these were their real names or they changed their names for use with false identification in the United States," Mueller said. The FBI director said there was evidence that one or more of the hijackers had had contacts with al-Qaida, the network associated with Osama bin Laden, the exiled Saudi millionaire who is the Bush administration's top suspect in the attacks.

This story indicates that, as of September 27, the FBI was not certain whether these suspects had used their real names. The remainder of the story listed each of their names, along with possible aliases. The aliases all look like Arab names. I have discovered no additional information released to the general public regarding these suspects. I now backtrack to the morning of September 11.

The issue that I am trying to deal with is airline security. To draw rational conclusions about how the alleged hijackers accomplished their acts of terrorism, we must begin with airline security. The United States has now gone to war because of a breakdown somewhere in airline security procedures. Yet nobody in government is blaming the specific airlines. They are blaming the procedures. This is why I want you mentally to go through the procedures with me. I have hit a brick wall. I am asking you to help me knock it down. I will show you how I went through the procedures mentally. See if you can figure out which step I missed.

## Step One: Check-In

On September 11, airline check-in counters were the only places in the United States that required travellers to present a photo ID in order to travel. A photo ID meant (and still means) a card issued by some branch of civil government. Years ago, the United States government took the first step toward a national ID card when it mandated the requirement that all passengers present a photo ID card before being allowed to get on a commercial airplane. This means that the tightest security that the typical American ever confronts is airport security. This is the model for all other security systems governing the general public. Let's go through the check-in routine together. Pretend that it's September 11, and you are a check-in agent at either a United Airlines counter or an American Airlines counter. It is your job to ask the standard questions. "Did you pack your own luggage? Have you had it in your possession at all times?" Then you ask for a photo ID. The name on the ID must match the name on the ticket. The photo must match the person presenting the card.

I began with American Airlines, Flight 11. This was the plane that crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center. I began with the list of passengers. This was not difficult. The passenger lists for all four planes are posted on *CNN's* Website. Click on the link. This is a long link for the formatting of

my newsletter. If it is broken on your screen, you will have to paste it into your Web browser's address box. This will take two steps.

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/trade.center/victims/AA11.victims.html>

The *CNN* page says that there were 92 people on board. I suggest that you print out the list. Part of my exercise was to count the names of the passengers. Besides, you never know when a Web page will disappear. Do you have the print-out in front of you? Count the names. I get 86 names, including the crew. But the *CNN* page says 92 people were on board. None of the 86 names is an Arab name. This is very, very strange. First, how did the *CNN* list-compiler know that there were 92 people on board? Five of them are not listed. Second, how did anyone get on board who was not on the list of ticketed passengers? To get onto the flight legally, each passenger had to have a ticket with his or her name on it. Each passenger had to present a photo ID to the check-in agent. The check-in agent was supposed to look at the picture and the person, and then make a judgment. Was it the same person? If the mandated procedure was followed, the check-in agent decided that the ticket's name, the photo ID's name, the photo, and the ID-holder's face all matched. If there was any doubt, the check-in agent was supposed to ask for some other form of identification. If there was none, the person was not allowed to board the plane. We are told by the United States government that five Arabs somehow got through this initial screening procedure. How did they do this? This is puzzle number one regarding Flight 11.

Puzzle number two has to do with the incomplete passenger list. Airlines keep a list of passengers on board. This is for insurance purposes, should there be a crash. It is also for the purpose of notifying relatives after a crash. It is also for the purpose of in-cabin screening. "Has everyone paid who is on the plane?" And, finally, is there a hijacker on board? On American Airlines Flight 11, there were no Arab names on the passenger list. So, how does the government know who the hijackers were?

Why does *CNN*'s Web page list 92 dead, when there are only 86 name listed? Who was the non-Arab? I have seen nothing about government accusations against American Airlines for substandard check-in security procedures. In fact, I have seen nothing about the discrepancy between the published names and the published numbers regarding how many people were on board.

Let's go to American Airlines Flight 77. This plane crashed into the Pentagon.

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/trade.center/victims/AA77.victims.html>

We are told that 64 people were on board. I count 56, including 6 crew members. There is no explanation offered for the absence of 8 names. There is no Arab name on this list. Something is definitely wrong here.

What about United Airlines? Did the company's employees follow the same check-in procedure? Presumably, they did. I checked Flight 175, which crashed into the south tower.

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/trade.center/victims/ua175.victims.html>

There were 56 people on board, according to *CNN*'s summation. I printed out the list. I counted the names. Once again, they don't add up. The summation says there were 2 pilots, 7 flight attendants, and 56 passengers. I counted the names. The total is 56 -- the number attributed to the passengers. Nine names are missing. None of the listed names is Arab.

This leaves United Flight 93, which crashed in Pennsylvania. It had 45 people on board, according to the summation.

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/trade.center/victims/ua93.victims.html>

Again, there is a discrepancy. Only 33 names appear on the list. A dozen names are missing. Among the missing names are the four Arabs who allegedly hijacked the plane.

So, the published names in no instance match the total listed for the number of people on board.

*CNN* really should offer an explanation for this discrepancy. In no case does an Arab name appear on a list, let alone one of the alleged hijackers. How did *CNN* fail to count the names accurately? Did the airlines not provide the full list of each flight's names? Perhaps so. This raises the next question.

How did the airlines know how many people were on each of these flights? The airlines must have had a list for each flight. What possible reason could they have had for not releasing the full lists? Finally, why are there no Arabs listed on any of these lists, let alone the specific Arabs identified by the Attorney General and the head of the FBI in an Associated Press story? I do not understand how 19 Arabs could have evaded the check-in procedures. I also do not understand why every passenger's name is not on the published lists.

I have seen no other source of the passenger lists. (Another search word: "manifests.") It has now been over a month since the attack. Where is a complete list? I don't know. Where is a complete list of all four flights that has the alleged hijackers' names on it? I don't know.

Finally, where is some enterprising reporter who is trying to get answers? I don't know. What about Step Two?

## Step Two: On-Board Seating

There were multiple terrorists in the cabin of each plane when the plane left the ground. They did not get there through the ticket-screening system. Or did they? If they did, then how? I assume here -- again, maybe I am wrong -- that they got there through another entrance. Maybe they were part of the food service team. These were all cross-country flights. The planes were loaded with lots of fuel, which is why they were selected: flying bombs. On cross-country flights, passengers still are given meals, not just pretzels and soft drinks. The number of meals is supposed to match the number of people on board, or at least come close. Flight attendants have a list of passengers and their assigned seats. This is to enable them to identify passengers who have requested special meals, such as kosher meals. It is also to enable them to identify people who have not bought a ticket. Flight attendants are supposed to know who has been assigned to which seat.

It is September 11. Here is the situation: there are an extra five men on three flights, and four extra men on Flight 93. You have already seen the photos of these men. If I had been a flight attendant, and I saw five extra men who looked like they did -- young, Arabic, and without tickets -- I would have asked them to explain why they were on board. I would not have assumed that they belonged there.

Are we to assume that on four separate flights, none of the flight attendants noticed that something was wrong? Are we to believe that they failed to notice that five or four extra passengers were on board

who were not on the passenger list? Furthermore, these men looked as though they were of one ethnic group. They all had Arabic accents, I presume. Why did the flight attendants ignore all this?

There is no indication from the government that these men took over all four planes while the planes were still on the ground. Even if they had, the pilots would not have taken off if there were hijackers on board. They would have waited to hear the demands, and the demand to "take off now" would have been refused by at least one flight crew -- and I believe all four.

We need a theory of the co-ordinated hijacking that rests on a plausible cause-and-effect sequence that does not assume the complete failure of both the check-in procedures and the on-board seating procedures on four separate flights on two separate airlines. If the explanation does rely on a theory of check-in procedural breakdown, where is the evidence? I have heard no such theory from the government. I have heard no such theory from the news media. In fact, I have heard neither the government nor the mainstream media even mention these perplexing problems. Perhaps you have. If so, I would like to see the Web link or a reference to the newspaper or other source where these matters have been discussed. I don't mean this or that discussion forum devoted to conspiracy theories.

I mean the mainstream press. It is very peculiar that the mainstream media and the government have not offered a detailed theory of how the hijackers evaded both the check-in procedures and the pre-takeoff seating procedures. Perhaps some airline industry publication has dealt with this. If so, I would like to see the document.

I would also like to see passenger lists that include every passenger's name. I want to see 19 Arab names on these complete lists. If these updated lists are ever released, I want to see that they match the original lists that were not released immediately. I want to know that any new names have not been added retroactively. I want evidence -- from travel agencies' records and credit card records -- that everyone on each plane's updated passenger list actually bought a ticket. Is this too much to ask?

So far, apparently it is.

## Conspiracy Theories

Conspiracy theories are a dime a dozen. Well, not all of them. We have gone to war based on one of them. But I don't see how anyone can make an accurate judgment about who was behind the attacks until he has a plausible explanation of how the hijackers got onto the planes and were not removed. I am not interested in any theory about who did it until I have a plausible explanation for how he did it. The key to discovering who planned this attack is inescapably tied to the procedures used by his agents to do it. I don't see how they did it, yet I know that three planes crashed into highly visible targets. A fourth plane had veered off course, and it seems plausible that it was part of a co-ordinated attack.

This has yet to be proven, but it seems plausible.

We keep hearing about plastic knives and box cutters. But we hear nothing about how these 19 men took plastic knives and box cutters onto four planes, and no one noticed that anything was amiss until the planes were in the air. So, you tell me. How did 19 Arabs get onto these planes and then remain inconspicuous until the planes were aloft?

## Conclusion

I have no conclusion. I told you this at the beginning. I am stuck. I am looking for Vinnie. Maybe you're Vinnie. After you have drawn your own conclusion, and it seems reasonable, let me know. But before you do, please run your theory by someone whose judgment you trust. See if that person thinks your theory is plausible. See if he or she can pick holes in it. Don't make me your first guinea pig. I want to be at least second. Third would be even better.

We need to get the division of intellectual labor working here.

If you have no logical explanation, join the club. Maybe you know a potential Vinnie. Use your FORWARD button to send him or her a copy of this report. Ask for feedback. Notice to all would-be Vinnies: with each forwarding, e-mail software adds either a carrot -- this is a carrot: > -- or a vertical line. This pushes the text to the right. If you have received this after several forwardings, the text may be difficult to read. You can get a fresh copy by sending an e-mail to [puzzle@kbot.com](mailto:puzzle@kbot.com), or click this link and then click SEND: [puzzle@kbot.com](mailto:puzzle@kbot.com).

Somewhere out there is a person who can solve this puzzle. There has to be a solution. I just don't know what it is. In future issues of this newsletter, I will report on any conclusions that look plausible to me.

Author's note:

If you're not yet a subscriber, and you want to read what some of these conclusions are, you can subscribe for free. Send an e-mail to this address: [unstuck@kbot.com](mailto:unstuck@kbot.com), or click on the link and then click the SEND button: [unstuck@kbot.com](mailto:unstuck@kbot.com). You will receive a welcome letter from me within a few seconds. It will explain what my newsletter is all about.

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