



Radical Cleric Al-Awlaki Invited to Private Lunch at Pentagon in Effort to Reach Out to Muslims After 9/11

By MARTHA RADDATZ

Oct. 21, 2010

Anwar Al-Awlaki is an American-born radical cleric linked to the 9/11 hijackers, the failed Christmas Day airline bombing and the Fort Hood shootings. President Obama himself has authorized the targeted killing of Awlaki in Yemen, where he is believed to be hiding. He is of Yemeni descent but was born in New Mexico, serving as an imam in both Virginia and San Diego where he met several of the 9/11 hijackers who flew a plane into the Pentagon.

But just weeks after that terrorist attack, Awlaki was invited to a private lunch at the Pentagon as part of an effort to reach out to the Muslim community. When asked by ABC News if Awlaki had actually attended the lunch, Pentagon spokesman Col. David Lapan said, "We believe that to be true."

"We believe it was hosted by a small group within (but not including) the Department of Defense General Counsel's staff," a Pentagon spokesman tells ABC News.

Days before, Awlaki, whose Arabic name is Aulaqi by the FBI, had been interviewed by the FBI about the hijackers. The 9/11 commission report later found:

"Another potentially significant San Diego contact for [9/11 hijackers] Hazmi and Mihdhar was Anwar Al-Alwaki, an imam at the Rabat mosque. Born in New Mexico and thus a U.S. citizen, Awlaki grew up in Yemen and studied in the United States on a Yemeni government scholarship. We do not know how or when Hazmi and Mihdhar first met Awlaki. The operatives may even have met or at least talked to him the same day they first moved to San Diego. Hazmi and Mihdhar reportedly respected Awlaki as a religious figure and developed a close relationship with him.

"When interviewed after 9/11, Awlaki said he did not recognize Hazmi's name but did identify his picture. Although Awlaki admitted meeting with Hazmi several times, he claimed not to remember any specifics of what they discussed. He described Hazmi as a soft-spoken Saudi student who used to appear at the mosque with a companion but who did not have a

large circle of friends," the report continued.

"Awlaki left San Diego in mid-2000, and by early 2001 had relocated to Virginia. As we will discuss later, Hazmi eventually showed up at Awlaki's mosque in Virginia, an appearance that may not have been coincidental. We have been unable to learn enough about Awlaki's relationship with Hazmi and Mihdhar to reach a conclusion."

911 Commission Report

"In sum, although the evidence is thin as to specific motivations, our overall impression is that soon after arriving in California, Hazmi and Mihdhar sought out and found a group of young and ideologically like-minded Muslims with roots in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, individuals mainly associated with Mohdar Abdullah and the Rabat mosque."

The Pentagon meeting was not disclosed until after the Fort Hood shootings in July 2009. Major Nidal Hasan, who is charged with the murders of 13 people on the Army Post, had been in e-mail contact with Awlaki. A defense department employee then recognized Awlaki and reported the 2001 meeting to the FBI.

Kodak

Bring in any old printer to

and save an additional

\$50 off any new Kodak Printer

9607 Research Boulevard
Austin, 512-795-0014

1201 Barbara Jordan Boulevard
Austin, 512-22 -2047

OFFER EXPIRES 2/19/2011

ADVERTISEMENT

PRINT POWERED BY



ABC News' Jason Ryan and Kirit Radia contributed to this report.



ADVERTISEMENT

PRINT POWERED BY  FormatDynamics™