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## EXCLUSIVE



Aukai Collins told ABCNEWS he provided the FBI with information about Hani Hanjour, who later helped fly American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon. (ABCNEWS.com)

# FBI Was Warned of Sept. 11 Hijacker

## Informant Says He Provided Facts About Phoenix Hijacker

By [John McWethy](#)  
 abcNEWS.com

**May 23 —** A paid FBI informant told ABCNEWS that three years before Sept. 11, he began providing the FBI with information about a young Saudi who later flew a hijacked passenger plane into the Pentagon.

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Aukai Collins, the informant, said he worked for the FBI for four years in Phoenix, monitoring the Arab and Islamic communities there. Hani Hanjour was the hijacker Collins claimed to have told the FBI about while Hanjour was in flight training in Phoenix.

Twenty hours after ABCNEWS first requested a response, the FBI issued an "emphatic denial" that Collins had told the agency anything about Hanjour, though FBI sources acknowledged that Collins had worked for them.

FBI Special Agent Ken Williams wrote a memo last July 10, urging FBI headquarters to investigate Arab students in flight schools nationwide — and helped set off the furor over whether the attacks could have been prevented.

If Collins' claims are true, he would be another source who had advised the FBI to take a closer look at Phoenix, and maybe the first to identify a potential terrorist who later turned out to be one of the Sept. 11 hijackers

Collins said the FBI knew Hanjour lived in Phoenix, knew his exact address, his phone number and even what car he drove. "They knew everything about the guy," said Collins.

The FBI emphatically denies that Collins provided any information about Hanjour, but officials acknowledge they paid Collins for four years to monitor the Islamic and Arab communities of Phoenix because of his unusual background.

A self-styled Islamic holy warrior, Collins was born in the United States. After getting into trouble with police as a teenager, he says he found religion — Islam — and eventually went overseas to fight. In Chechnya, he lost his leg to a land mine.

## Informant Says He Provided Basic Facts

Once in Phoenix, in 1996, the FBI asked Collins to focus on a group of young Arab men,

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many of whom were taking flying lessons, including Hanjour, Collins said.

"They drank alcohol, messed around with girls and stuff like that," Collins told ABCNEWS. "They all lived in an apartment together, Hani and the others."

Collins said he provided the FBI with basic facts and let the FBI take it from there.

"When I said there's this short, skinny Arab guy who's part of this crowd, drives such-and-such a car, I assumed that they would then, you know, start tracing him and see who his contacts were," he said.

### FBI Never Saw Hijacker as Threat

The FBI in Phoenix either failed to monitor Hanjour's communications or Hanjour himself practiced extraordinary skill in hiding his intentions — because the FBI never regarded him as a threat.

Much to the dismay of the FBI, Collins has written a book about his exploits. Soon to be published, it is titled *My Jihad*.

The FBI was not alone in failing to predict Hanjour and his group were dangerous.

"I can't figure it out either," said Collins, "how they went from their back yard to flying airplanes into buildings."

Congress cannot figure it out either, as it continues to demand answers from the FBI. ■



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