9/11 Hijackers Trained at U.S. Military Bases?

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Alleged Hijackers May Have Trained at U.S. Bases
The Pentagon has turned over military records on five men to the FBI

By George Wehrfritz, Catharine Skipp and John Barry
NEWSWEEK

Sept. 15 — U.S. military sources have given the FBI information that suggests five of the alleged hijackers of the planes that were used in Tuesday's terror attacks received training at secure U.S. military installations in the 1990s.

THREE OF THE alleged hijackers listed their address on drivers licenses and car registrations as the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Fla.—known as the "Cradle of U.S. Navy Aviation," according to a high-ranking U.S. Navy source.

Another of the alleged hijackers may have been trained in strategy and tactics at the Air War College in Montgomery, Ala., said another high-ranking Pentagon official. The fifth man may have received language instruction at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Tex. Both were former Saudi Air Force pilots who had come to the United States, according to the Pentagon source.

But there are slight discrepancies between the military training records and the official FBI list of suspected hijackers—either in the spellings of their names or with their birthdates. One military source said it is possible that the hijackers may have stolen the identities of the foreign nationals who studied at the U.S. installations.

The five men were on a list of 19 people identified as hijackers by the FBI on Friday. The three foreign nationals training in Pensacola appear to be Saeed Alghamdi and Ahmad Alnami, who were among the four men who allegedly commandeered United Airlines Flight 93. That flight crashed into rural Pennsylvania. The third man who may have trained in Pensacola, Ahmed Alghamdi, allegedly helped highjack United Airlines Flight 75, which hit the south tower of the World Trade Center.

Military records show that the three used as their address 10 Radford Boulevard, a base roadway on which residences for foreign-military flight trainees are located. In March 1997, Saeed Alghamdi listed the address to register a 1998 Oldsmobile; five months later he used it again to register a second vehicle, a late model Buick. Drivers licenses thought to have been issued to the other two suspects in 1996 and 1998 list the barracks as their residences.

NEWSWEEK visited the base early Saturday morning, where military police confirmed that the address housed foreign military flight trainees but denied access past front barricades. Officials at the

base confirmed that the FBI is investigating the three students.

It is not unusual for foreign nationals to train at U.S. military facilities. A former Navy pilot told NEWSWEEK that during his years on the base, "we always, always, always trained other countries' pilots. When I was there two decades ago, it was Iranians. The shah was in power. Whoever the country du jour is, that's whose pilots we train."

Candidates begin with "an officer's equivalent of boot camp," he said. "Then they would put them through flight training." The U.S. has a long-standing agreement with Saudi Arabia—a key ally in the 1990-91 gulf war—to train pilots for its National Guard. Candidates are trained in air combat on several Army and Navy bases. Training is paid for by Saudi Arabia.

9/11 Information Center

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