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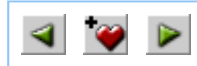
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mparent7777 ( [mparent7777](#)) wrote,
@ [2005-08-19](#) 09:17:00



Atta's big gamble. Plus: Jack Abramoff's link to a mysterious Saudi -- and perhaps to Al Qaeda Thursday, August 18, 2005

[Atta's big gamble. Plus: Jack Abramoff's link to a mysterious Saudi -- and perhaps to Al Qaeda](#)

You have probably never heard of Makram Chams. It's time you met him.

Actually, you can't *physically* meet him -- he disappeared on September 11, 2001. I bring him to your attention for two reasons:

1. He knew, and apparently aided, Mohammed Atta and the other 9/11 terrorists.
2. He owned a casino ship in Florida.

Yes, a casino ship -- just like the SunCruz ships owned by Jack Abramoff, the recently-indicted Republican money-man and wheeler-dealer. According to Associated Press, the terrorists took a mysterious trip on a SunCruz ship on September 5, 2001. And that trip is of great interest for three reasons:

1. SunCruz ships were under investigation for involvement in money laundering and other unsavory activities.
2. Al Qaeda operatives made a number of mysterious casino jaunts in that era; few believe that they were hard-core gamblers.
3. Al Qaeda was funded by drug money. Drug money must needs be laundered. Casinos have been known to be used for that purpose. Casino ships are unregulated.

Perhaps we should tentatively add a fourth reason for concern: Intelligence agents who had identified Atta in the United States and who knew of his ties to Osama Bin Laden were told to steer clear of him. They literally covered up his picture on their charts of Al Qaeda agents. (See my latest piece on [Able Danger](#).)

So with *that* background in mind, let's learn more about the mysterious Makram Chams (whose first name is sometimes transliterated as Meekram).

My information was kindly provided by the estimable [Daniel Hopsicker](#), of Mad Cow Morning News. I'm trying to double check the Makram Chams story (which is mentioned on one of his documentary videos) to the limited extent that I can.

Hopsicker learned from eyewitnesses -- including a cab driver who drove Atta on a number of occasions, and who told this story to the FBI -- that Atta frequently visited Makram Chams, a Lebanese who lived above a convenience store that he owned.

At one point, Chams asked the cab driver to take him to the Orlando Executive Airport. There, Chams picked up an Armani-suited Saudi businessman and his wife, who wore traditional Arab attire. The driver then took this party back to Chams' apartment. (After 9/11, the FBI reviewed surveillance tapes of this pick-up, which is how they learned of the driver.)

Weeks later, the same driver was asked to take the Saudi's wife back the airport. But now they were carrying extra luggage -- extremely heavy luggage. It was a chest so heavy that two men had to transport it.

An intelligence source contacted by Hopsicker felt certain that this chest contained gold.

Chams was no mere convenience store operator. He co-owned (along with one other investor) a casino ship called Vegas-in-Venice. This ship attracted a fair amount of attention because it had been left illegally in the harbor for over a year.

We have no word as to what happened to this ship, or how Chams paid for it. Was he a front man? Was the ship purchased by SunCruz?

After 9/11, Makram Chams disappeared, and his store remains shuttered.

Such is the gist Hopsicker's story -- or rather, as much of it as he has chosen to relay to *me* at this time. (His book "Welcome to Terrorland" may contain further details.) The FBI does not include any mention of Chams in their publicly-released material on Atta. Of course, we now know (from the Able Danger story and other sources) that Atta did far more in this country than the Authorized Version would have us believe.

Casino ship owner Cham and his disturbing dealings with wealthy Saudis find an echo in the career of Jack Abramoff. Not only was he in the same business, he also has a Saudi connection many will consider unsettling.

As [Kate Cambor](#) at the TPM Cafe notes, Abramoff did PR work for a Saudi billionaire named Saleh Abdullah Kamel, chairman of the General Council for Islamic Banks.

Kamel sure *needed* a good PR person. According to a number of published accounts report (which I cannot independently confirm), he has another good buddy -- a fellow named Osama Bin Laden.

Kamel is also the chairman of Dallah al Baraka Group (DBG), which is suspected of having ties to al Qaeda and other extremist groups, and he was also the co-founder and large shareholder of Al Shamal Bank in Sudan, Osama bin Laden's

bank of choice from 1983 onward. He was listed as being one of the seven "main individual sponsors of terrorism" in this report by French researcher Jean-Charles Brisard submitted to the UN Security Council in December 2002. (You might remember that Omar al-Bayoumi, who befriended and provided money to two of the 9/11 hijackers, was once an assistant to the Director of Finance for Dallah Avco, a DBG company that works with the Saudi aviation authority. And the WSJ has reported that the United States believes the Dallah al-Baraka Bank, another DBG company, was also used by al-Qaeda.)

Kamel's name also appeared in the "Golden Chain," a roster seized by Bosnian authorities in Sarajevo in March 2002 listing Saudi donors to bin Laden and his associates; and he was named as a defendant in two Sept. 11th related lawsuits: one filed by the victims' families in 2003 and another filed by Cantor Fitzgerald in September 2004 (Although claims of two plaintiffs from the first suit were dismissed, the same claims from other plaintiffs have yet to be.)

One of Kamel's companies, [Dallah Avco](#), made extensive payments (according to a Los Angeles Times story) to al-Bayoumi, the Saudi who paid rent for the 9/11 hijackers lodging in San Diego. (For more, see [here](#).)

Kamel has denied any connection to Al Qaeda.

All of which brings a couple of questions to mind -- questions which may or may not be related.

Why did Kamel go to Jack Abramoff for help?

And just who was the wealthy Saudi who showed up at Makram Cham's humble pad?

posted by Joseph : 6:08 PM [3 comments](#)

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