

Report: 9/11 Hijacker Bypassed FAA

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D A L L A S, June 13 — A suspected Saudi terrorist believed to have piloted the plane that crashed into the Pentagon bypassed the Federal Aviation Administration for his flight licenses, according to a published report today.

Sources and agency records cited by The Dallas Morning News showed that Hani Saleh Hanjour obtained certification by using private examiners who independently contract with the FAA. That certification allowed him to begin passenger jet training at an Arizona flight school despite having what instructors later described as limited flying skills and an even more limited command of English.

The jet training enabled the 30-year-old Hanjour to take the controls of American Airlines Flight 77 on the morning of Sept. 11 and crash it into the Pentagon, killing 188 people including all passengers aboard.

Certification of Hanjour illustrates a flaw in the federal system, one official said.

An FAA inspector in California who spoke on condition of anonymity told the newspaper a pilot now "could go all the way through to become a 747 captain, if you will, having never gone before the FAA."

Agency records show that Hanjour was certified as an "Airplane Multi-Engine Land/Commercial Pilot" on April 15, 1999, by Daryl Strong, a designated pilot examiner in Tempe, Ariz. It was the last of three certifications Hanjour obtained from private examiners.

Strong, 71, said his flight logs confirm that he conducted a check ride with Mr. Hanjour in 1999 in a twin-engine Piper Apache but that he remembers nothing remarkable about him. Strong, with more than 50 years of flying experience that included a commercial crop duster, said until recently he conducted about 200 such check rides each year, at \$200 per flight.

FAA officials confirm one of their inspectors, John Anthony, was contacted by Pan Am International Flight Academy in Miami in January and February about Hanjour and, at the request of the school, checked Hanjour's commercial pilot's license to ensure it was valid.

"There should have been a stop right then and there," said Michael Gonzales, an FAA inspector speaking as president of the Professional Airways Systems Specialists chapter in Scottsdale that represents FAA field inspectors. He said Hanjour should have been re-examined as a commercial pilot, as required by federal law.

—The Associated Press