

CALIFORNIA
MFR04018786

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Interview of Sami A. Mekhemar

Date: 04/21/2004

Special Access issues: none

9/11 Personal
Privacy

Prepared by: Quinn John Tamm, Jr. and Marco A. Cordero

Team Number: 1A

On the above listed date Commission professional staffers Marco A. Cordero and Quinn John Tamm, Jr. interviewed Sami A. Mekhemar, M.D. at his company office, Med Choice International, Inc., 1990 Westwood Boulevard, Suite 240, Los Angeles, CA 90025. The telephone number for Dr. Mekhemar is [redacted] and a pager number of [redacted]

Dr. Mekhemar was born in Egypt, and is an American citizen. Arabic is his first language. He is a non-practicing physician (internist) who operates a business that manages medical care for international patients at medical facilities in the Los Angeles, CA area. Dr. Mekhemar has business relationships with the University of California, at Los Angeles (UCLA) Medical Center, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA and St. Vincent Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA. Dr. Mekhemar's principal medical center is UCLA.

Dr. Mekhemar was asked if he knows the imam of the Culver City mosque, also known as the King Fahad Mosque (KFM), Fahad al-Thumairy. Dr. Mekhemar stated that he knows "Sheikh" al-Thumairy from both the mosque and the Saudi Arabian Consulate in Los Angeles, CA. Dr. Mekhemar said that he first met al-Thumairy when al-Thumairy visited a patient of Dr. Mekhemar at UCLA Medical Center. The patient was from Saudi Arabia. Sheikh al-Thumairy was visiting the patient as a clergyman. Since that first meeting, Dr. Mekhemar has contacted Sheikh al-Thumairy and requested that he (al-Thumairy) make pastoral calls on other hospitalized Muslim patients. Most of Dr. Mekhemar's patients are Saudis, and do not speak English. Dr. Mekhemar stated that his company attends the needs of international patients by locating housing for them and any companions they may bring, translating conversations with physicians and other medical professionals, arranging for the payment for medical services, monitoring care, arranging for transportation to and from Los Angeles, and representing the patients with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the patient's consulate to obtain the proper travel documents. Dr. Mekhemar uses various short term furnished apartment complexes in the west Los Angeles area for housing. The two principal apartment complexes are the Lido Apartments in the Westwood section of Los Angeles and the Westside Apartments on Sepulveda Boulevard. Dr. Mekhemar explained that in the case of Saudis, who are his most frequent patients, either he or the Saudi consulate rents the apartment, in the name of the patient and guarantees payment of the rent.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 5-3-07 BY UC/LW/322/UP

Dr. Mekhemar was asked if he could recall a patient or patients, prior to 09/11/2001 that came to Los Angeles from Saudi Arabia. The patient would have been treated for liver disease and been accompanied by two sons or a son and a son-in-law. Dr. Mekhemar noted that liver disease is a common ailment of Saudis, and many come to the United States to be evaluated for transplant surgery. Dr. Mekhemar further stated that many Saudi males drink illegally produced ethanol or "moonshine" liquor that is surreptitiously produced. This consumption of ethanol causes many older Saudi males to develop cirrhosis of the liver. Because alcohol consumption is ostensibly illegal in Saudi Arabia, many well-to-do Saudis seek medical care for cirrhosis and related diseases in the United States.

Dr. Mekhemar searched his records and identified a patient by the name of [redacted] [redacted] as fitting this criterion. Dr. Mekhemar reviewed this record and located the treatment summary for [redacted]. Dr. Mekhemar said that [redacted] was a patient of Dr. Sami Saab at UCLA Medical Center. Dr. Saab evaluated [redacted] as a candidate for liver transplant, because [redacted] was in the early stages of liver failure. Dr. Mekhemar related that the consultation report indicates that [redacted] son and son-in-law met with Dr. Saab when he discussed treatment options with [redacted]. Dr. Mekhemar explained that prior to 09/11/2001, patients coming to the United States for medical treatment could designate a "companion." This companion would be able to obtain the same B1/B2 two year visas as the patient. Dr. Mekhemar's records reflect that the designated companion for [redacted] was [redacted] who is identified as [redacted] son-in-law. Dr. Mekhemar provided the Commission staff members with photocopies of the United States visas for [redacted]. Dr. Mekhemar was asked if he had any record of [redacted] son. Dr. Mekhemar said that Dr. Saab's consultation report notes that [redacted] son was present for the consultation. However, the son was not the designated companion. The son would have been able to enter the United States on a B2 tourist visa, as contrasted with the more long term B1 business visa. Only one person may be designated as a companion for each patient, and in the case of [redacted] it was his son-in-law. It was Dr. Mekhemar's practice to only maintain copies of the travel documents for the patient and the companion.

Dr. Mekhemar noted that he had a dinner party for a group of patients at the Westside Apartments, formerly known as the Avalon Westside Apartments in July 2001. This was during the period of time that [redacted] was in the Los Angeles area for his liver transplant consultation. [redacted] was living in an apartment at the Avalon Westside Apartments. The records reflect that the apartment number was [redacted]. At that time the manager was a "young man" by the name of "Ryan." Sheikh al-Thumairy attended the party along with Dr. Mekhemar's patients. Sheikh al-Thumairy was not specifically invited, but was welcomed when he arrived. Dr. Mekhemar can not remember at this late date whether he saw [redacted] or al-Thumairy speaking with one another at the party. [redacted] returned to Saudi Arabia in September 2001. He did not receive a liver transplant, but did respond to medical treatment provided at UCLA Medical Center. Dr. Mekhemar said that [redacted] is still alive and living in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

9/11 Personal
Privacy

Dr. Mekhemar was asked if he managed the care of a patient by the name of [redacted] who may have had some association with Sheikh al-Thumairy. Dr. Mekhemar searched his records and stated that he had two patients with the name [redacted]. One patient was [redacted] and the second patient was [redacted]. [redacted] was a patient at Cedars-Sinai Hospital. [redacted] was a patient at UCLA and his companion was his son, [redacted] a professor at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Dr. Mekhemar does not have any specific recollection that either patient had an association with al-Thumairy, although both may have met the Sheikh or had pastoral calls from the Sheikh.

Dr. Mekhemar was asked if he ever met another imam associated with the KFM, Mohammed al-Muhanna. Dr. Mekhemar stated that he knew al-Muhanna as well as he knew Sheikh al-Thumairy. Dr. Mekhemar explained that he is a Muslim, but not a very observant Muslim. He attends the KFM, two or three times a year, normally during Ramadan. Dr. Mekhemar always appreciated the fact that Sheikh al-Thumairy was not judgmental about Dr. Mekhemar's lack of orthodoxy. Dr. Mekhemar found Sheikh al-Thumairy to an honest and helpful imam, especially in dealing with patients in the Los Angeles hospitals. Dr. Mekhemar never heard Sheikh al-Thumairy preach an anti-American sermon. Dr. Mekhemar contrasted al-Thumairy with al-Muhanna. Dr. Mekhemar stated that al-Muhanna was a virulent critic of America and American society. According to Dr. Mekhemar, al-Muhanna was disdainful of Western values and was openly hostile to non-Muslims and Muslims who did not meet al-Muhanna's religious standards. Dr. Mekhemar stated that many people in the Muslim community were surprised when al-Thumairy was not allowed to re-enter the United States, but no one was surprised that al-Muhanna was excluded.