

This network is greatly simplified; generating all possible links from every entity would result in a web too complicated to be visually useful, as links spread away from the focus on West Africa. Instead, I have concentrated here on the most relevant entities and relationships. I shall explain more about the network itself (e.g. who these people are) in the detail sections.

Sentinel can help analyze this network in a variety of ways. It can, for example, calculate which entities are the biggest threats. In Figure 2, threat is represented on a scale of red (highest threat) to yellow (lowest threat):

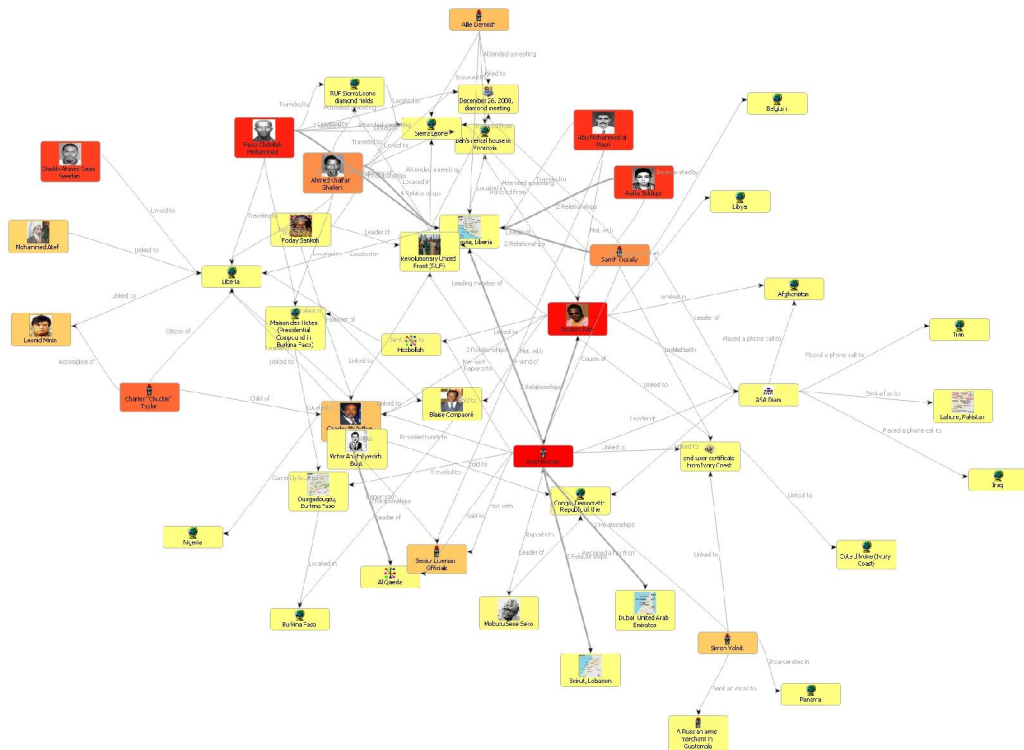


Figure 2

Sentinel can also highlight “cells” within the larger network. Figure 3 is a cell centered on the former leader of Nigeria, Charles Taylor; the cell allows us to pick out how Taylor facilitated Al Qaeda’s buying diamonds:

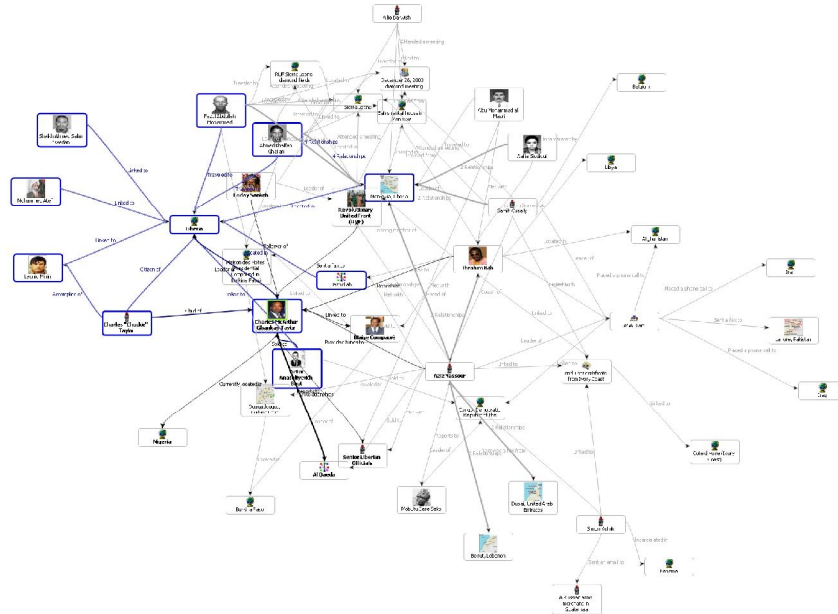


Figure 3

Sentinel also incorporates a variety of “gradient metrics” drawn from the field of Social Network Analysis. These metrics break down data in numerous ways. One example is the way Sentinel picks out “hubs”: entities that are, we might say informally, at the center of everything. In the picture below, entities shade from red, the biggest hubs, to yellow, the least important hubs:

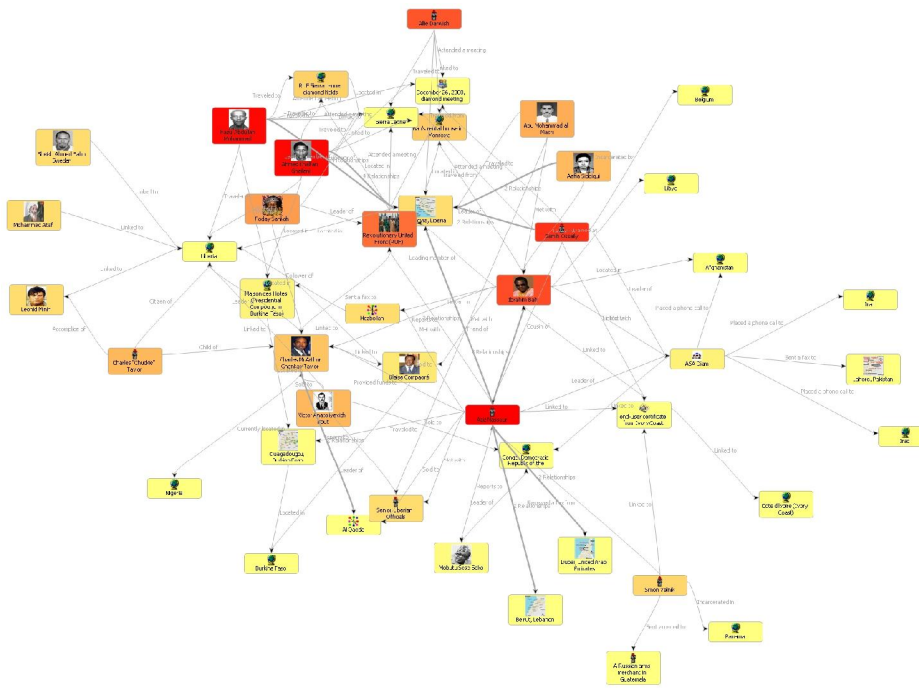


Figure 4

Details

Figure 2 helped us identify the biggest threats in the West African network: Aziz Nassour, Ibrahim Bah, Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, Abu Mohammed al Masri, and Aafia Siddiqui. I shall now look at how Sentinel can show us more in-depth information about what these people were doing in Africa and how they are connected to the larger world of Al Qaeda.

Aziz Nassour and Ibrahim Bah

Within the Sentinel software, one can click directly on the entity boxes or relationship lines to pull up more detailed information about entities or relationships. On the web, one can navigate through static hyperlinks to pull up the same information. Figure 5 shows Nassour's extended links:

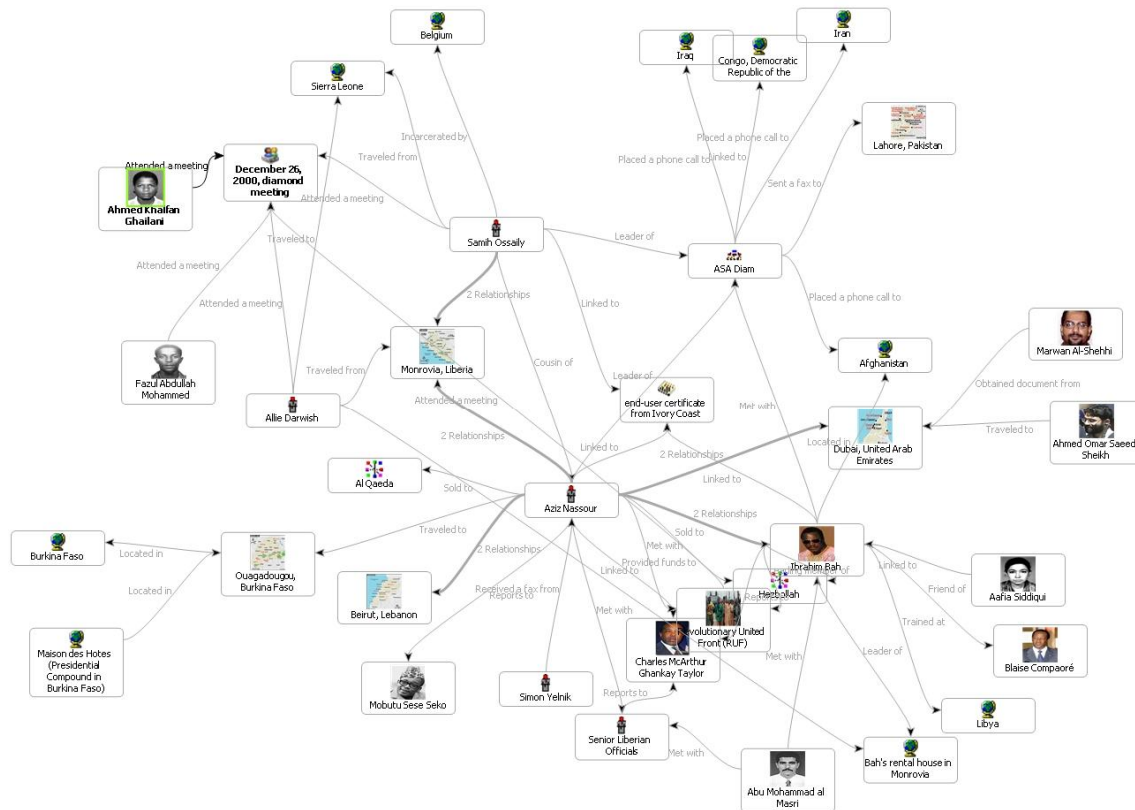


Figure 5

The information within these relationships and entities reveals that Nassour is the Lebanese diamond merchant who actually sold the diamonds to Al Qaeda. From Figure 5 we can see that he met directly with Al Qaeda operatives Ghailani (recently captured in Pakistan) and Mohammed. Nassour and his cousin, Samih Ossaily, ran a company called ASA Diam. ASA Diam had suspicious communications with people in such places as Congo, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The two cousins also had many connections throughout West Africa, and to the diamond-trading hotspots of Lebanon and Belgium. Nassour worked closely with Ibrahim Bah, another individual identified by Sentinel as a top threat.

Figure 6 examines Bah's connections more closely:

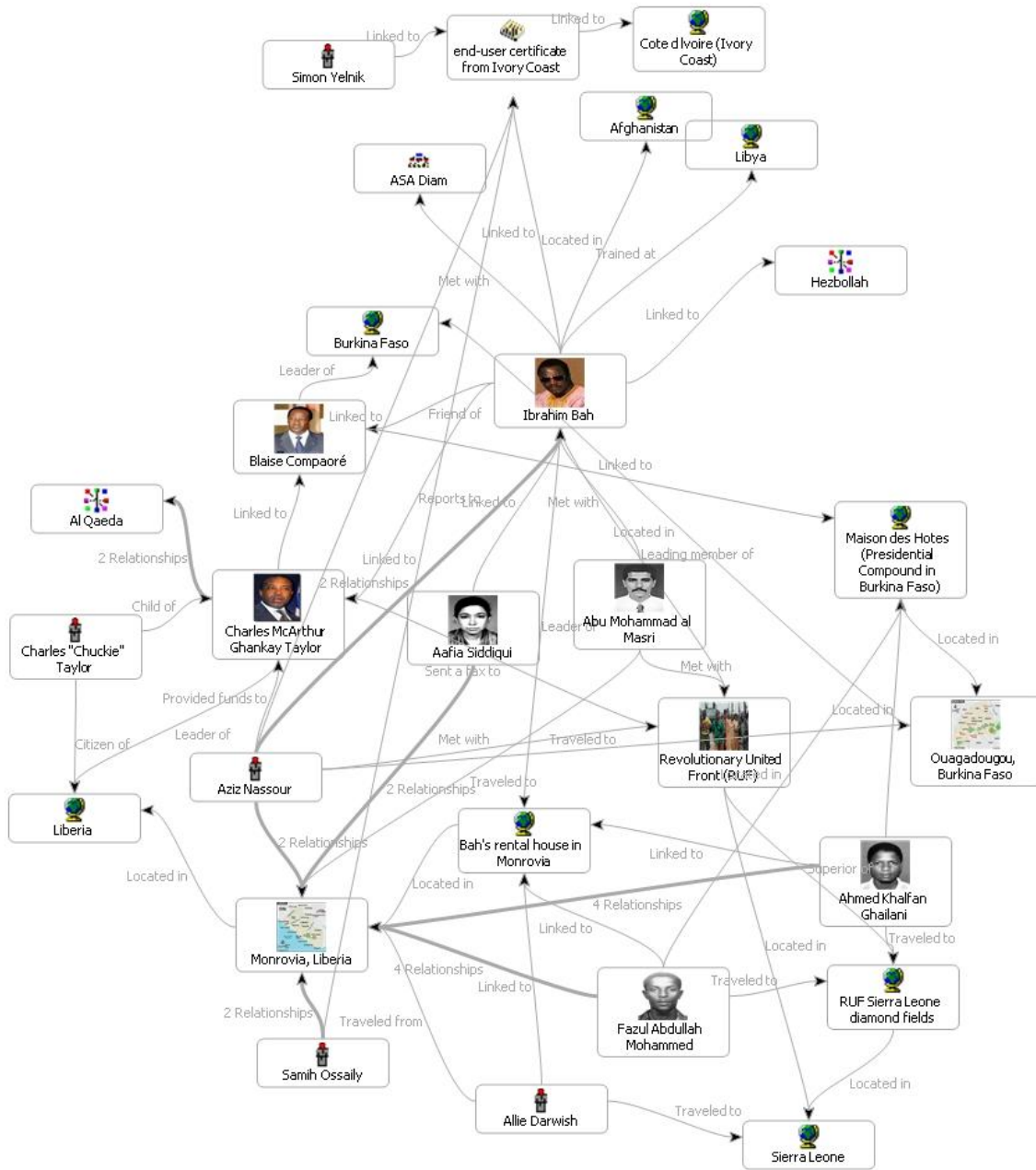


Figure 6

A general in the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Bah also reported to Liberian strongman Charles Taylor, a notorious RUF supporter. The RUF was one of the largest “conflict diamond” providers in West Africa. Bah connected them in turn to Al Qaeda and the diamond dealers, enabling Al Qaeda to corner this segment of the diamond market in 2001. He met with high-ranking Al Qaeda figures Aafia Siddiqui and Abu Mohammed al Masri, and his deals with Taylor and the neighboring leader of Burkina Faso Blaise Compaoré ensured that, for a price, the Al Qaeda agents could operate safely.

Fazul Abdullah Mohammed and Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani

Although Ghailani is no longer as much of a threat because he was apprehended in Pakistan recently, he and Mohammed were Al Qaeda's "men on the ground" in West Africa. Figure 7 shows a select expansion of their extended network:

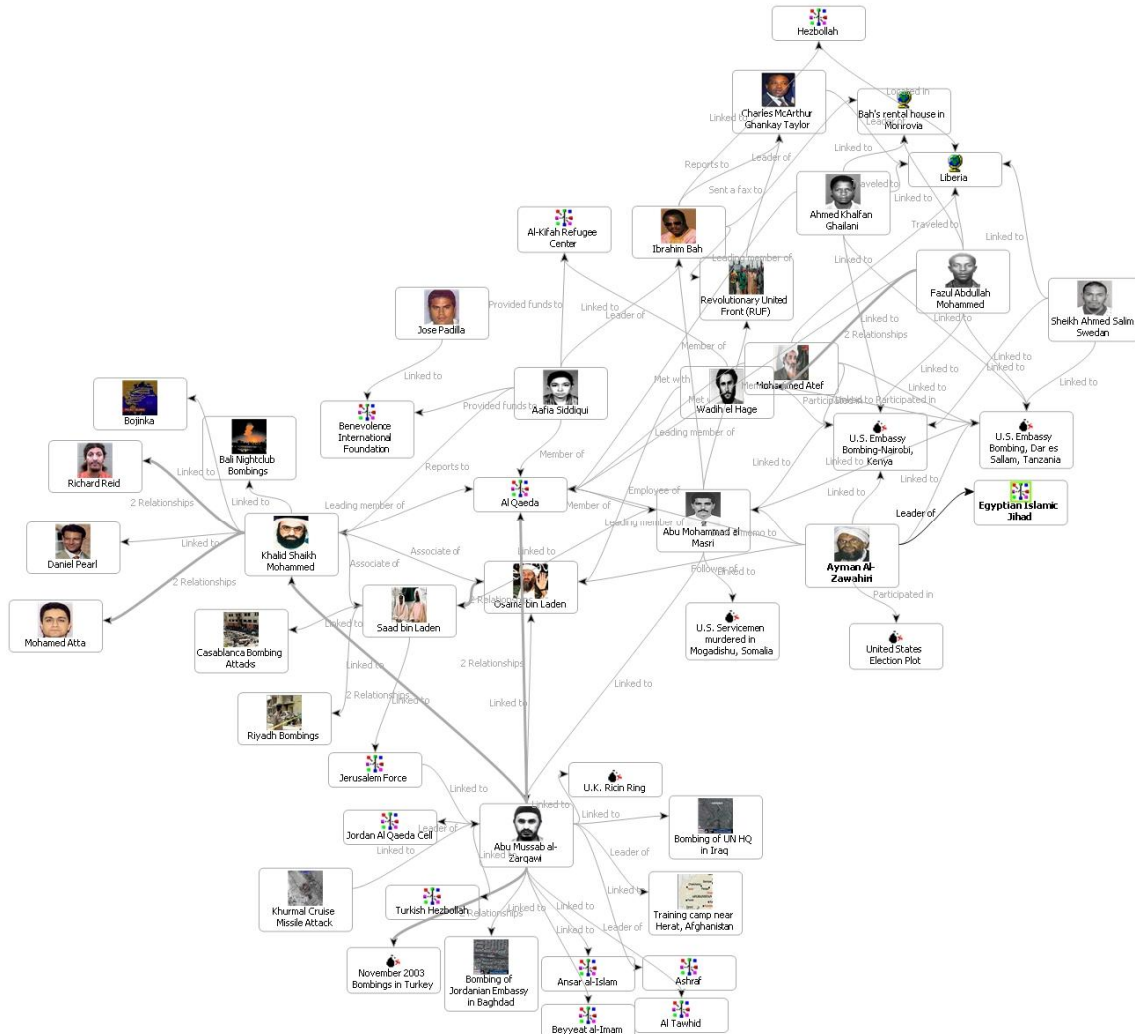


Figure 7

Note how quickly one can move from Ghailani and Mohammed to numerous terrorist kingpins (bin Laden, al-Zarqawi, al-Zawahiri), organizations (Islamic Jihaad, Ansar al-Islam, Hezbollah), plots (US embassy bombings in East Africa, Bali nightclub bombing, 9/11, alleged US election plot), and well-known names (Richard Reid, Jose Padilla, Mohammed Atta, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed). Given such connections, the fact that these two men were in West Africa buying up diamonds is highly significant.

Aafia Siddiqui

Another large threat identified in the Al Qaeda diamond operation is the mysterious Aafia Siddiqui, a former MIT graduate student and allegedly Al Qaeda's only female leader. Siddiqui not only connects quickly to many of the same dangerous entities as the other two Qaeda operatives, but her financial transactions are of particular interest (Figure 8):

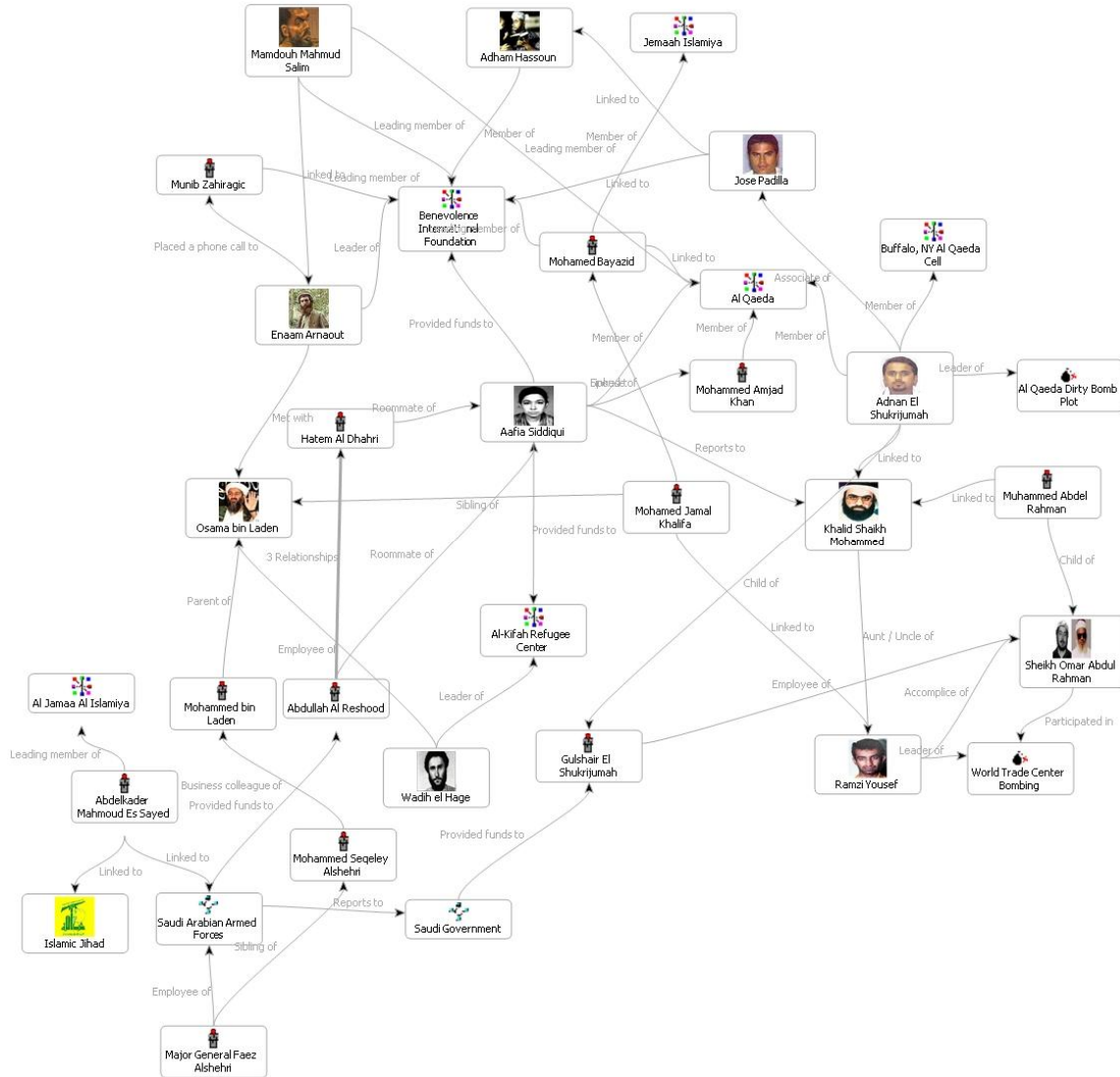


Figure 8

Figure 8 represents a complicated web of financial transactions encompassing Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups as well as the Saudi Arabian government and military. For example, the Saudi government donated money to an interpreter for one of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing masterminds. Another person linked to that plot was Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Siddiqui's boss. The Saudi military also provided money to Saudi citizens who lived at the same apartment as Siddiqui, possibly as her roommates. Although one can draw no firm conclusions from these connections, they certainly suggest avenues ripe for investigation.

Conclusion

This document has just scratched the surface of the information contained in the Sentinel open source database and the tools available within Sentinel to analyze that information. The pictures within this document can be zoomed in or printed out if they are too fuzzy. The following links on the database's homepage provide documentation for the sketches I laid out above and a starting point for further reading:

Aziz Nassour: <http://www.trackingthethreat.com/content/entities/ent1716.htm>

Ibrahim Bah: <http://www.trackingthethreat.com/content/entities/ent1718.htm>

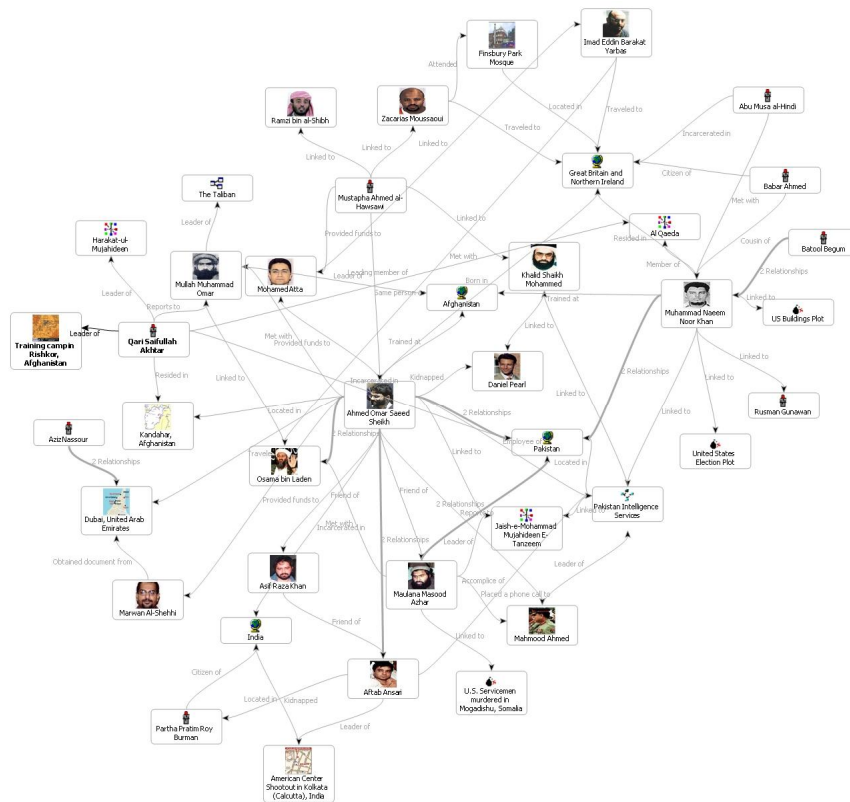
Charles Taylor: <http://www.trackingthethreat.com/content/entities/ent1710.htm>

Fazul Abdullah Mohammed: <http://www.trackingthethreat.com/content/entities/ent1705.htm>

Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani: <http://www.trackingthethreat.com/content/entities/ent1703.htm>

Aafia Siddiqui: <http://www.trackingthethreat.com/content/entities/ent1729.htm>

Interesting but unrelated (at least directly) to West Africa and diamonds: The alleged 9/11 financier (Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh) and the Pakistani Intelligence Services



Learn More About Sentinel:

Sentinel is a Windows®-based program that provides data visualization, analysis and knowledgebase management all within one product. Sentinel produces interactive dynamic link charts, timeline and geospatial views, and provides a variety of analysis tools including Social Network Analysis, temporal analysis and entity and relationship weighting. Sentinel includes a multi-user knowledgebase for efficiently and economically storing analysis data.

To learn more, visit www.fmsasg.com.