Stop the Flt 93 (Murdoch) Memorial: Saudi authorities contradict U.S. Park Service: mihrabs do NOT have to point exactly at Mecca

Description

Blogburst logo, petition

A Muslim consultant told the Park Service in 2006 that the Crescent of Embrace memorial to Flight 93 cannot be seen as a *mihrab* (the Mecca-direction indicator around which every mosque is built), because the giant Islamic-shaped crescent does not point *exactly* at Mecca:

> Mihrab orientation is either correct or not. It cannot be off by some degrees.

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Saudi religious authorities recently had to address this question when observers noted that some 200 mosques in Mecca itself do not point directly at the Kaaba (the Ã¢â‚¬Å“Sacred MosqueÃ¢â‚¬Â• that all Muslims are supposed to face for prayer). Meccans who worried that their prayers might not count were assured by the Islamic Affairs Ministry that Ã¢â‚¬Å“it does not affect the prayers.Ã¢â‚¬Â•

The necessity for such a rule is obvious. Throughout most of IslamÃ¢â‚¬â„¢s 1400 year history, Muslims who were any significant distance from Mecca had no accurate way to determine the direction to Mecca. Thus it became established religious principle that what matters is *intent*. It is the *mind* of the believer that needs to face directly towards the Kaaba, and directly towards God. This principle applies in Mecca the same as anywhere else.

All the great mosques of the ancient world point well away from Mecca

Older mosques often point 10, 20, 30 or more degrees away from Mecca. The most famous mihrab in the world, the mihrab of the Great Mosque in Cordoba Spain, points more than 45Ã‚Â° off of Mecca:

The Cordoba mihrab points south, while Mecca is east-southeast of Spain.

In contrast, the Crescent of Embrace points a mere 1.8Ã‚Â° north of Mecca, Ã‚Â± 0.1Ã‚Â°, which is highly accurate by Islamic standards.

The Muslim consultant who lied to the Park Service was a classmate of architect Paul Murdoch

Who told the Park Service that a mihrab has to point exactly at Mecca to be legitimate? It was Nasser Rabbat, a professor of Islamic architecture at MIT and an expert in the history of mosque design. No one knows better than Professor Rabbat that mihrab orientation does NOT have to be exact.

There is only one reason why Rabbat would lie to the Park Service about such a basic fact. He recognizes that the giant Mecca-oriented crescent at the heart of the Flight 93 memorial IS a legitimate

mihrab, and he wants this al Qaeda sympathizing plot to succeed.

A look at Rabbatâ€™s background shows that he was a classmate of Crescent of Embrace architect Paul Murdoch, both getting masters degrees in architecture from UCLA in 1984 and both doing their masters work on Middle Easter subjects. (Murdoch wrote a Ã¢â‚¬Å“masters projectÃ¢â‚¬Â• titled: Ã¢â‚¬Å“A museum for Haifa, Israel.Ã¢â‚¬Â• Rabbat wrote a master thesis on house design in Cairo and Damascus.)

This prior connection between Murdoch and Rabbat raises the possibility that Murdoch himself was able to orchestrate the Park Service investigation into warnings about his own design. By the same token, having the two classmates both show up in the Flight 93 memorial raises the possibility that Rabbat was Murdochâ€™s source of expertise on how to incorporate the full complement of typical mosque features into his Crescent design. (For the dozen typical mosque features, see *Crescent of Embrace*, chapter 5.)

The Crescent of Embrace also includes an exact Mecca-orientation

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While exact orientation on Mecca is not a traditional requirement, modern mosque designers do generally employ now-available techniques for orienting their mihrabs more precisely on Mecca than was previously possible. Murdoch satisfies this modern norm (and provides hidden proof of intent) by including a true thematically-defined crescent that *does* point exactly at Mecca.

Murdochâ€™s thematic explanation for his crescent design is that the circle was broken on 9/11 by the path of Flight 93. The terrorist-piloted airplane smashes our peaceful circle, turning it into a giant Islamic-shaped crescent (that just happens to point to Mecca). The terrorist-memorializing implications of this theme are hardly less overt than the Islamic symbol shapes themselves. Nothing particularly subtle here folks.

The symbolic breaking of the circle occurs at the upper crescent tip, where the fifty-foot tall, thousand-foot long Entry Portal Wall is parted by the Entry Portal Walkway, which follows the flight path through the wall:

The section of wall to the right of the walkway in this image is symbolically â€œbroken offâ€• by the flight path. Remove this symbolically broken off part, and the remaining crescent structure points EXACTLY at Mecca, Ã‚Â± 0.1Ã‚Â°:

What symbolically remains standing in the wake of 9/11: a giant Islamic-shaped crescent pointing EXACTLY at Mecca.

Rabbat knew about this too, since the original report that Rabbat was commenting on detailed both the slightly inexact Mecca-orientation of the full Crescent of Embrace, and the exact-Mecca-orientation that results when the symbolically broken-off parts are removed. Same for the Park Service. As the original

recipient of Alec Rawlsâ€˜ report, the Park Service knew about both orientations. They also knew, because it was also in the original report, that a mihrab does NOT have to point exactly at Mecca. Yet they still publicly touted RabbatÃ¢â‚¬â„¢s claim that the crescent canÃ¢â‚¬â„¢t be seen as a mihrab because it doesnÃ¢â‚¬â„¢t point exactly at Mecca. A veritable web of self-conscious lies by Rabbat AND the Park Service.

The design is called a broken circle now, but the circle is still broken in the same place as before (where the flight path crosses the upper crescent tip). The unbroken part of the circle, what is symbolically left standing in the wake of 9/11, remains completely unchanged. It is still a giant-Islamic shaped crescent, still pointing exactly at Mecca.

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