

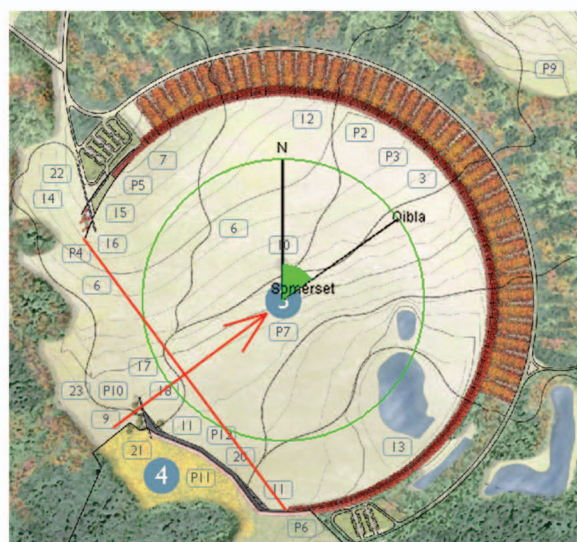
Terrorist memorializing features in the planned Flight 93 Memorial

The crescent mosque

My book *Crescent of Betrayal* (temporarily available for free download at CrescentOfBetrayal.com) documents a long list of Islamic and terrorist memorializing features in the planned Flight 93 Memorial. Last Sunday, The Johnstown *Tribune Democrat* ran an article quoting a host of critics who all insist that my claims are bogus. A couple of them, for instance, deny that the giant crescent (which is still present in the Bowl of Embrace redesign) is oriented on Mecca. But there is no reason to leave this as a “he said, she said” debate. The orientation of the crescent is trivially easy to verify. If I am wrong, reporter Kirk Swauger could prove it in a few minutes, and he agreed to fact check me on this point.

I gave Kirk the address of an Islamic website (Islam.com) that has a Mecca direction calculator (their Salat Times utility). While I was on the phone with him, Kirk set the calculator to Somerset PA, and clicked the “view qibla direction” button. He placed the resulting Mecca-direction graphic over the original Crescent of Embrace site plan, just as I have reproduced in the image to the right, and said to me: “Yup. It points to Mecca.” That’s how hard it is to fact check my claims.

I have been twisting arms as hard as I can to get area newspapers to fact-check my claims and report their findings. Kirk said that he would report at least this one bit of fact checking



in his story. Hooray. Kirk was going to tell the *Tribune's* readers that he had verified for himself that a person facing into the giant crescent would indeed be facing Mecca. But he didn't do it.

He *did* quote me on the *meaning* of a crescent that Muslims face into to face Mecca: that it is called a “mihrab,” and

is the central feature around which every mosque is built (a piece of information that *Tribune Democrat* reporter Kecia Bal fact checked last week). But on the Mecca orientation itself, Kirk's Sunday article only quotes people saying I am wrong, without reporting Kirk's verification that I am right.

One person who says I am wrong about the Mecca orientation is Daniel Griffith, professor of geospatial information at the University of Texas. Griffith claims that I am analyzing the orientation of the crescent wrong by using two dimensional geometry that is invalid when applied to directions on our three dimensional globe. Nonsense. I calculated the direction to Mecca by the great circle method (the path of shortest distance between points on a globe). Muslims calculate the direction to Mecca by the great circle method, and Griffith knows that I used this method because he wrote a report on my and other bloggers' analyses of the orientation of the crescent last year for the Pittsburgh *Tribune Review*.

Griffith's report confirms the Mecca orientation of the crescent, stating: “I computed an

azimuth value from the Flight 93 crater site to Mecca of roughly 55.20°.” The figure I have been using is 55.19° (both measured clockwise from north). Neither does Griffith contest my calculations for the orientation of the crescent. (I get that it points 1.8° north of Mecca.) He just says that the crescent can also be seen as facing *other* objects on the path to Mecca, and adds that if you don't go in a straight line, you can start in *any* direction and still get to Mecca. Brilliant.

Another bizarre case is Arthur Goldschmidt, professor emeritus of Middle Eastern history at Penn State, who claims that I am seeing things in the design because I want to. I asked Kirk if Goldschmidt had denied the Mecca orientation of the crescent. Kirk said yes, and since Kirk had just verified the Mecca orientation of the crescent for himself, he knew which of us was the reliable source on this point, but he didn't tell his readers.

Blocking for the hijacker goes far beyond the *Tribune Democrat*. Several western Pennsylvania newspapers are fiercely resisting any fact checking of my information, and none have reported it. **Alec Rawls, July 2007**

Terrorist memorializing feature #1: the star on the crescent and star flag

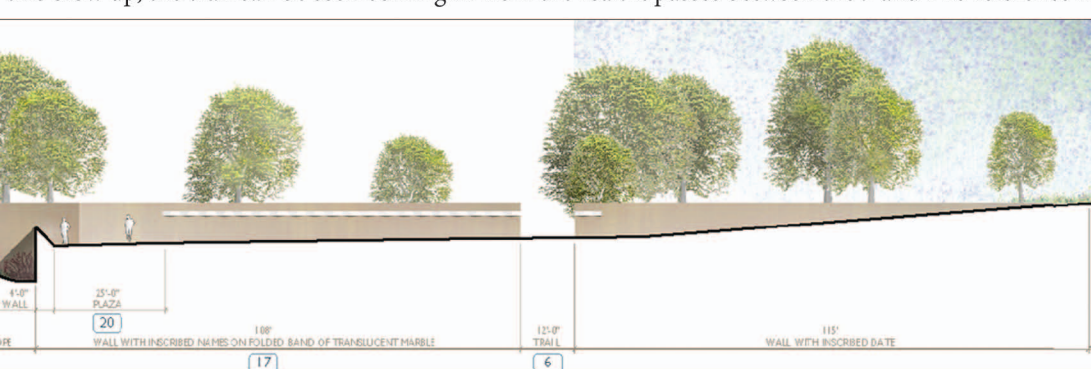


To the left is the Crescent of Embrace publicity photo released by Paul Murdoch Architects in September 2005. Many viewers were shocked to see what appeared to be a bare naked Islamic crescent and star flag.

Most Islamic flags are based on the flag of the Ottoman empire, where the star is centered on the bisector of the crescent. Typical is this red crescent and star from the flag of Northern Cyprus.

In the publicity photo, the copse of trees that appears to sit roughly in the position of the star on an Islamic flag marks the Sacred Ground Plaza, where the murdered passengers and crew of Flight 93 are memorialized. Zooming in on the point where the crescent bisector passes through the Sacred Ground Plaza in the image above, it turns out that there is a separate upper section of Memorial wall that is centered exactly on the crescent bisector, placing it exactly in the position of the star on the Islamic flag. Inscribed on this separate upper section of Memorial wall is the date: September 11, 2001. The date goes to the star on the flag. The date goes to the terrorists.

To verify this claim, start with the elevation below. It shows the Memorial wall divided into two parts. The notation for the upper section of wall reads: “wall with inscribed date.” The gap between the upper and lower sections of Memorial Wall is marked “trail,” indicating that it is the opening for a trail leading out to the rear of the wall. This trail is visible in the overhead view. The image on the far right is a blow up of Sacred Ground portion of the Mecca-orientation graphic above. In this blow up, the trail can be seen coming in from the rear. It passes between the 9 and P10 reference marks, then passes between the upper and lower sections of



Memorial Wall at the point indicated by the yellow arrow.

You can see that the section of Memorial Wall above the trail is centered on the bisector of the giant crescent. That puts the upper section of Memorial Wall is exactly the position of the star on an Islamic crescent and star flag. This is a fact. Some might disbelieve that this placement could be intentional (and if it were the only Islamic or terrorist memorializing feature of the design, such a view might be plausible), but the starting point for any discussion about interpretation has to be recognition of the fact that the upper section of Memorial Wall is in exactly the position of the star on an Islamic crescent and star flag. Coincidence or not, the 9/11 date cannot be positioned as the star on an Islamic flag.



Terrorist memorializing feature #2: 44 memorial glass blocks on the flight path

The elevation view of the Memorial Wall (above) shows forty Memorial glass blocks built into the lower section of wall, each one inscribed with the name of one of the murdered passengers and crew. Three more glass blocks, built into the upper section of Memorial Wall, are inscribed with the 9/11 date. Both sections of Memorial Wall follow the path along which Flight 93 careened to ground.

There is one last glass block emplaced along the flight path: the large glass block at the end of the Entry Portal Walkway (where the flight path “breaks the circle” according to architect Paul Murdoch). Inscribed on this glass block: “A field of honor forever.” That brings the total number of inscribed memorial glass blocks on the flight path to 44, matching the number of passengers, crew, and terrorists.



One can question whether the number of blocks is intended to memorialize the terrorists, but the number itself is a fact, and one that is trivially easy to verify. A person need only open up the crescent PDFs and look at the Memorial Wall elevation and the image of the Entry Portal Walkway. The Mecca-orientation of the crescent is not much harder to check, and neither is the placement of the upper section of Memorial wall in the position of the star on an Islamic flag.

With great effort, I managed to force a small number of people in the press and in government to witness this information, only to see them suppress it. In the end, the memorial debacle is a story of person after person, all imagining it that it could somehow be right or in their interest to avoid the truth. In contrast is the spirit of Flight 93, where ordinary heroes grasped harsh truths and acted as love required. Out of that spirit, a proper memorial will rise. Only truth can soar.