

New doubts about Trade Center bombing

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Although federal agents tracking down a myriad of leads have now arrested three individuals for their alleged involvement in the Feb. 26 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City, the investigation to date has also raised a number of perplexing questions about the ultimate authors of the terror attack that left at least five people dead and thousands injured.

Following the initial arrest of Mohammed Salameh, a Jordanian national, on charges of aiding and abetting in the bomb plot, the FBI has arrested Ibrahim A. Elgabrowny and Nidal A. Ayyad. Elgabrowny, a cousin of El Sayyid Nosair, the man linked to the assassination of Jewish Defense League founder Rabbi Meir Kahane several years ago, was arrested on March 4 at his Brooklyn apartment on charges of assaulting a federal officer. He has not been charged in the bombing. Police and FBI agents raided his apartment because Salameh had listed it as his home when applying for a driver's license several years ago.

Ayyad, a chemical engineer employed by a major defense contractor, Allied Signal, was arrested at his Maplewood, New Jersey home on March 10 and charged with abetting the bombing. Ayyad shared a bank account and a storage room with Salameh, and police believe he may have been with Salameh when the Ryder van that apparently carried the bomb was rented several days before the Trade Center explosion. According to a March 11 *New York Times* story, federal investigators have traced a series of international wire transfers to the Salameh-Ayyad bank account totalling \$8,000 during the weeks leading up to the bombing. The probe into the source of those funds may provide one of the first hard leads into the authorship of the terror attack.

The Israeli connection

Federal investigators are following a series of fortuitous leads that developed from their initial search of the bomb site. However, so far, they admit that the arrests of the three individuals provide few clues about who ordered the bombing and for what purpose.

Israeli-linked terrorism "experts" have been quick to jump on alleged links among the three arrested men and an Egyptian Islamic cleric, Sheik Omar Abdul-Rahman. Abdul-Rahman, who preaches at mosques in Brooklyn and Jersey City, has denied any role in the bombing. For months, Israeli intelligence, along with groups like the Anti-Defamation

League of B'nai B'rith, have been lobbying the Clinton team to take a hard stance against alleged Islamic terrorism, a stance that would place the administration into a new "special partnership" with Israel. So far, President Clinton and Secretary of State Warren Christopher have resisted the pressure.

A newspaper in the United Arab Emirates, *Khaleej Times*, over the weekend of March 6-7 raised the question of possible Israeli Mossad involvement in the bombing. For years, Israeli intelligence has infiltrated radical Arab and Islamic fundamentalist groups, often with the aim of instigating violence to justify counter-terror actions.

In the specific case of the World Trade Center, questions have been focused on the role of a woman identified as Josie Hadas. When Mohammed Salameh rented the Ryder van, he listed an apartment rented in Hadas's name as his current address, and gave her telephone number. Hadas is reportedly a Jewish Israeli; one Israeli counter-terrorism expert contacted by *EIR* admitted that it was likely that she was working as an undercover operative for the Mossad, but would not speculate on her possible role in the bombing. According to *Khaleej Times*, "FBI officials would not comment on whether Miss Hadas was an Israeli or had any links to Israeli intelligence. Joe Valiquette stated: 'We have no idea whether Hadas is a member of the Israeli Mossad, but even if it were true, we wouldn't tell you anyway.'"

With the arrests of the three men, including one with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering, the same Israeli-linked "experts" who one week before were screaming about Muslim fundamentalist terror squads invading America shifted gears and began peddling the line that the Trade Center bombers were amateurs who assembled a "makeshift bomb."

In fact, U.S. and European experts have insisted from the outset in interviews with *EIR* that the Trade Center bombing was a very sophisticated operation, which required the input of at least one leading intelligence service. None of the existing terrorist groups operating in the world today, according to these experts, have the in-house skills to carry out such an operation.

This evaluation was echoed by Lyndon LaRouche in a March 8 interview: "Certainly, that bombing could not have been done by a bunch of Arabs. There are a few people, a few teams in the world, that could have done that—relatively few. Most of them are known; this was not simply done by that blind, 80-year-old sheikh. That sheikh is a British intelligence asset. We have his pedigree. . . . He was brought into the United States in 1991 by the State Department and protected by the State Department, up until these recent events. He is actually owned by British intelligence out of the old Arab Bureau network.

"This whole thing is a can of worms. It is not the true story. It is not leading in the direction of the true story. This World Trade Center bombing is an act of terrorism against the United States, like that we saw in the strategy of tension in Europe in the late 1970s."