

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Department of Justice

THE BOMBING OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

February 26, 1993

New York City, New York



This document contains neither
recommendations nor conclusions of
the FBI. It is the property of
the FBI and is loaned to your agency;
it and its contents are not to be
distributed outside your agency nor
duplicated within your agency.



U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Washington, D. C. 20535

July 27, 1993

**BOMBING OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, NEW YORK CITY
FEBRUARY 26, 1993**

This memorandum relates the events immediately following the bombing of the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York City on February 26, 1993, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) investigation of this crime. The memorandum is divided into four sections: the explosion; forensic work at the crime scene; criminal investigative developments; and legal developments. This letterhead memorandum is for use by the United States counterterrorism/law enforcement community and by foreign intelligence/law enforcement agencies.

THE EXPLOSION - FEBRUARY 26, 1993

On Friday, February 26, 1993, at 12:18 PM, a massive explosion occurred on the B-2 level of the parking garage at the WTC in New York City. By the afternoon of the next day, it had become clear to law enforcement officials that the explosion was the result of a bomb, rather than an accident such as a gas leak. The FBI has determined that the bomb consisted of roughly 1,200 pounds of explosives, making it one of the largest homemade devices ever seen in the United States. The bomb exploded with a velocity of over 15,000 feet per second and created a crater 150 feet in diameter and five stories high.

Although there were approximately 50,000 people in the WTC complex at the time, only six were killed and about 1,000 injured. Of those injured, only 15 were hurt by the blast itself, with the rest suffering from smoke inhalation. The number of smoke-related injuries was compounded by the fact that both the main and backup power generators of the WTC went off-line as a result of the blast, thus shutting off the complex's exhaust system.

The bomb caused enormous damage to the underground parking area of the WTC and the connecting Vista Hotel (photos #1, #2, #3, and #4). Six levels of the parking garage were perforated by the blast and cars as far as three or four stories below and 600 feet away from the center of the explosion

were destroyed (photo #5). The blast demolished hundreds of vehicles and the 40 cars closest to the explosion were reduced to the size of footballs. The Vista Hotel, located directly above the blast, took much of the force of the explosion and was badly damaged. Property damage to the whole WTC amounted to over half a billion dollars. The WTC had to be closed for a month, causing severe problems for the 350 businesses which operate within the complex. Due to the extensive damage, loss of life, injuries, and economic loss, the bombing of the WTC is considered the single largest international terrorist incident ever conducted on United States soil.

The WTC, however, narrowly avoided even more extensive damage. The bomb damage to the structural supports of the 110-story towers of the WTC did weaken those supports. Although the WTC was never in danger of collapsing, the structural integrity of the connecting 22-story Vista Hotel was uncertain since its supports had suffered more extensive damage. Since a Port Authority Transportation and Housing (PATH) railway line, part of the major commuter line running from New Jersey to New York City, passes through the parking garage of the WTC, there was a concern that the whole PATH system would have to be closed due to bomb damage. Fortunately, after test-running a train through the garage, officials determined that the line was safe for operation and it was reopened. The destruction of a large number of fiber optic lines which run through the parking level could have paralyzed some communications in New York, but they were fortunately spared harm as well.

Shortly after the explosion, law enforcement agencies and news organizations began to receive letters and telephone calls from a variety of different groups claiming responsibility. By way of example, on February 27, 1993, The New York Daily News received a telephone call claiming responsibility for the bombing in the name of "The Liberation Army," mentioned further below.

FORENSIC WORK AT THE CRIME SCENE: FEBRUARY 26 - MARCH 24, 1993

A coordinated effort between law enforcement agencies was launched immediately after the bombing to process the crime scene and determine who was responsible for this terrorist incident. Cooperating with the FBI in the investigation were the United States Secret Service; the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS); the United States Customs Service; the United States Department of State (USDS); the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; the New York City Police Department; the New York City Transit Police; the New York State Police; and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PA-NYNJ), as well as other local agencies. Immediately after the bombing, a total of 300 law enforcement officials were assigned to conduct forensic examinations of the crime scene, including 70

specially trained FBI Agents from throughout the United States and FBI Headquarters (FBIHQ) in Washington, D.C. The PA-NYNJ provided the FBI with hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment to process the crime scene, and assigned 1,700 personnel to do reconstruction work on the building once the forensic investigation was completed.

Law enforcement officials were faced with a difficult and dangerous task. The first and most important problem investigators dealt with was determining if the area was safe enough to conduct forensic analysis. To make the area structurally sound, tons of rubble had to be dumped back into the crater before investigation could begin. In addition, dust and carcinogens had been deposited into the air by the explosion. To make sure workers could breathe safely, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) fitted each investigator with a protective mask. Officials had to guard against the danger of falling debris rupturing the freon tanks of the WTC's air-conditioning system, which could have released toxic gases had they been breached. Water mains had broken, flooding part of the area, and both raw sewage and rotting food from the WTC kitchens caused further complications in the area. Fires also intermittently erupted throughout the garage from gas or fuel leaks. Despite these hazards, only three injuries were sustained among the 2,000 people participating in the processing of the crime scene and reconstruction of the building during the first four weeks.

Not only was the investigation dangerous, but it was also enormously formidable and complex. Law enforcement officials sifted through 2,500 cubic feet of rubble weighing about 4,000 tons. Of this debris, about 3,000 pounds was transported to the FBI Laboratory for further analysis. Thousands of photographs of the crime scene were taken, numerous documents and vehicles seized, and thousands of fingerprints processed. Five of the victim's bodies were found quickly, but the sixth body took two and one-half weeks to uncover as it was buried under all of the rubble. Eventually, investigators were able to recover about 40 percent of the vehicle containing the bomb (similar vehicle depicted in photo #6). Every section of the FBI Laboratory became involved in the investigation, representing the largest crime scene on United States soil ever processed by the FBI Laboratory. Despite the size of the investigation and the dangers involved in the operation, by March 24, 1993, less than a month after the explosion, the FBI completed its investigation of the crime scene. The FBI then turned the area over to the PA-NYNJ for reconstruction of the building.

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE DEVELOPMENTS: FEBRUARY - MARCH, 1993

On February 28, 1993, only a few days after the blast, investigators found a charred piece of metal they determined to be part of the vehicle which carried the bomb. Further examination of the metal revealed a partial series of stamped numerical and alphabetical impressions from the manufacturer, known as a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). With the partial VIN and other information, investigators constructed a complete VIN of the vehicle that contained the bomb. Checking the history of the VIN, investigators determined that the vehicle was a yellow Ford Econoline E-350 van (similar to photo #7) owned by the Ryder Truck Rental Company. MOHAMMED AMIN SALAMEH (born on September 1, 1967, in the West Bank of Jordan) (photo #8) was identified as having rented this particular van on February 23, 1993, from a Ryder facility known as DIB Rentals located in Jersey City, New Jersey.

SALAMEH and others maintained several connections to the van on February 26, the day of the blast. At 4:00 AM, several hours before the bombing, SALAMEH was identified as the driver of a Ryder van stopped at a Shell station to purchase gasoline. RAMZI AHMED YOUSEF (born on May 20, 1967 in Iraq), was identified in the van with SALAMEH at this time. Accompanying the van at the gas station was a Lincoln town car in which MAHMUD ABOUHALIMA (born on November 19, 1959, in Egypt) (photo #9), was identified with two unknown men. Later that afternoon, SALAMEH went to the Ryder truck rental facility and demanded a refund of his deposit, claiming the van had been stolen. After being told he needed a police report to obtain a refund of his deposit, SALAMEH went between 6:00 and 8:00 PM to the Jersey City Police Department and filed a stolen vehicle report on the van.

On March 4, 1993, SALAMEH was arrested at the Ryder truck rental facility in Jersey City by undercover FBI Agents who had contacted him and requested his return to the facility to secure the refund. SALAMEH had on his person, at the time of his arrest, the business card of NIDAL AYYAD (born on July 17, 1967, in Kuwait) (photo #10). Among the documents seized when Salameh was arrested was an airline ticket he possessed to depart the United States on March 5, 1993, on a flight to Jordan.

SALAMEH filled out the rental agreement for the van listing as a home address one of his prior residences located at 34 Kensington Street in Jersey City, New Jersey. On March 4, 1993, a search of his former apartment at this address revealed the presence of bomb-making materials.

Also on March 4, 1993, IBRAHIM ALI ELGABROWNY (born on December 24, 1950, in Egypt) (photo #11) was arrested at his residence located at 57 Prospect Park in Brooklyn, New York,

after assaulting a Federal officer who attempted to execute a search warrant at this location. Officers had come to the address because it had been listed by SALAMEH on the rental agreement for the Ryder van. At the time of his arrest, ELGABROWNY had in his possession his own United States passport and five fraudulent Nicaraguan passports containing the photographs of EL-SAYED NOSAIR and his family. NOSAIR is currently incarcerated in Attica State Prison in Attica, New York, on weapons charges relating to the 1990 murder of Jewish Defense League founder MEIR KAHANE in New York City.

On March 5, 1993, an employee of the Space Station Storage Center located at 69 Mallory Avenue in Jersey City, New Jersey, identified SALAMEH as having rented a storage locker at this location. Investigation revealed that SALAMEH, and several others, made multiple trips to the storage facility on February 25, 1993, the day before the bombing. It was also learned that on February 25, 1993, AGL Welding Supply Company of Clifton, New Jersey, delivered three hydrogen tanks to the storage locker. A search of the locker by investigators on March 5, 1993, revealed hundreds of pounds of urea, several containers of nitric acid, and numerous other chemicals, in addition to filter paper, fuses, tubing, beakers, and other pyrotechnic materials. There were sufficient materials located in the storage locker to build another 300-pound bomb.

On March 5, 1993, a search was conducted at 40 Pamrapo Avenue, Jersey City, New Jersey, the residence of SALAMEH and YOUSEF. This address is believed to be the location where the bomb was actually constructed. Also on that day, the New York Times received a letter claiming responsibility for the bombing by a group known as the "Liberation Army, Fifth Battalion." The letter claimed the bombing was in retaliation for "American political, economical, and military support to Israel the state of terrorism and to the rest of the dictator countries in the region." The letter demanded the severing of American ties to Israel, or military and civilian targets in the United States would be hit by "more than hundred and fifty suicidal soldiers" of the "Liberation Army." The FBI later linked this letter to AYYAD.

AYYAD was arrested on March 10, 1993, in his apartment located at 60 Boyden Avenue in Maplewood, New Jersey, on the same charges as SALAMEH. AYYAD, an employee of Allied Signal, Inc. of Morriston, New Jersey, had received a degree in chemical engineering from Rutgers University.

A search was conducted of MAHMUD ABOUHALIMA's residence located at 1811 Colonial Gardens Drive in Avenell, New Jersey, on March 19, 1993. ABOUHALIMA had come under suspicion by the FBI due to his identification with SALAMEH and others at the gas station the night before the bombing, and his ties to the

40 Pamrapo Avenue address in Jersey City, New Jersey. It is known, however, that ABOUHALIMA departed the United States on March 2, 1993 on a flight to Saudia Arabia.

The FBI soon developed information linking BILAL AL-KAISI (born on December 25, 1965, in Jordan) (photo #12) to the bombing. On March 22, 1993, AL-KAISI was identified as having been present at the 40 Pamrapo address in Jersey City, New Jersey, and having rented and paid for the bills for a rear apartment at this address. A day later, AL-KAISI was identified as being seen at the Space Station Storage Center.

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS: MARCH - JULY, 1993

About one month after the blast, formal legal proceedings were initiated against several of the subjects involved in the bombing. On March 17, 1993, SALAMEH and AYYAD were initially indicted by a Federal grand jury in the Southern District of New York (SDNY) and charged with "unlawfully, willfully and knowingly, and with malice, [aiding and abetting] the damage and destruction of, by means of fire and an explosive, a building used in interstate and foreign commerce and death did result" (a violation of Title 18, United States Code, USC, Sections 844 i and 2). On March 17, 1993, ELGABROWNY was indicted by a Federal grand jury in the SDNY on counts of Assaulting a Federal Officer (a violation of Title 18, USC, Section 111), Obstruction of Justice (a violation of Title 18, USC, Section 1503), and the Possession of Fraudulent Passports (a violation of Title 18, USC, Section 1028), but he was not charged with the bombing itself. On March 25, 1993, SALAMEH, ELGABROWNY, and AYYAD were arraigned in New York, entered pleas of not guilty, and ordered held without bail.

On March 22, 1993, YOUSEF was initially indicted by a Federal grand jury in the SDNY. He is presently a fugitive, as it is believed he fled the United States immediately after the WTC bombing. On April 21, 1993, YOUSEF was identified as one of the FBI's Top Ten Most Wanted Fugitives (see flyer). On July 23, 1993, the USDS announced, as part of its "HEROES" rewards program for terrorism information, that it was offering up to \$2 million dollars in reward money for information leading to the arrest of YOUSEF anywhere in the world.

ABOUHALIMA was also indicted on March 22, 1993, by a Federal grand jury in the SDNY on the same charges as SALAMEH and AYYAD. Egyptian authorities arrested ABOUHALIMA in Egypt, and subsequently turned him over to American officials. He was arraigned and ordered held without bail on March 25, 1993.

On March 24, 1993, AL-KAISI, having been linked to the conspiracy by witnesses, was arrested under the authority of the

U.S. Attorney's Office after turning himself in to the FBI. The next day, AL-KAISI was afforded an initial appearance and served with a warrant charging him with the same offenses as AYYAD, SALAMEH, and ABOUHALIMA. He was ordered held without bail. On April 13, 1993, AL-KAISI pleaded not guilty to these charges.

On May 6, 1993, MOHAMMED AHMED AJAJ (born on December 22, 1965, in Palestine) (photo #13) was charged in the SDNY with conspiring to damage and destroy, by means of fire and explosive, a building used in interstate commerce (a violation of Title 18, USC, Section 371). AJAJ had entered the United States on September 1, 1992, on a Pakistani International Airline flight in which he sat near YOUSEF. Upon arrival in the United States, he was detained by the INS for his use of a fraudulent Swedish passport. At the time of his INS detention, AJAJ had in his possession books and video tapes describing bomb construction and how to conduct terrorist operations, as well as literature from the known terrorist organizations Hizballah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. AJAJ was detained until March 2, 1993 (and thus was incarcerated at the time of the bombing), after which he was released pending a deportation hearing on March 9, 1993. In the interval, he resided at a mosque in Jersey City, New Jersey. On March 9, 1993, he was again taken into INS custody. On May 6, 1993, AJAJ was arrested for charges relating to the bombing. On May 7, 1993, AJAJ was arraigned, pleaded not guilty, and ordered held without bail.

On May 19, 1993, a Federal grand jury in the SDNY returned a superseding indictment on ELGABROWNY. He was charged with a total of ten counts, including one count of Obstruction of Justice (a violation of Title 18, USC, Section 1503), two counts of Assaulting a Federal Officer (a violation of Title 18, USC, Section 111 a 1), one count of Assaulting a Federal Officer in the Execution of a Federal Search Warrant (a violation of Title 18, USC, Section 2231 a), one count relative to the Possession of Fraudulent Passports (a violation of Title 18, USC, Section 1028 a 3, B, and c 3), and five counts of Fraud and Misuse of Visas, Permits, and other Documents (a violation of Title 18, USC, Section 1546).

On May 26, 1993, a Federal grand jury in the SDNY returned a superseding indictment charging SALAMEH, AYYAD, ABOUHALIMA, AL-KAISI, AJAJ, and YOUSEF with a total of seven counts relating to the bombing. These seven counts included one count of Title 18, USC, Sections 844 (i) (Damage by Means of Fire or an Explosive), 844 (d) (Transport in Interstate Commerce an Explosive), and 33 (Destruction of Motor Vehicles or Motor Vehicle Facilities); one count of Title 18, USC, Sections 844 (i) 34 (Penalty of Death or Life Imprisonment When Death Results) and 2 (Aiding and Abetting); one count of Title 18, USC, Sections 844 (f) (Destruction by Fire and Explosives to Buildings and Vehicles) 34 and 2; one count of Title 18, USC, Sections 844 (d),

34, and 2; two counts of Title 18, USC, Sections 33, 34, and 2; and one count of Title 18, USC, Sections 924 (c) (Commission of a Crime of Violence through the use of a Deadly Weapon or Device) and 2. AJAJ and YOUSEF were charged with an additional eighth count of Title 18, USC, Sections 1952 (Interstate and Foreign Travel or Transportation in Aid of Racketeering Enterprises) and 2.

The trial of ELGABROWNY is tentatively scheduled for the latter part of 1993. The trial of SALAMEH, AYYAD, ABOUHALIMA, AL-KAISI, AJAJ, and YOUSEF is tentatively scheduled for September, 1993.