

# FBI Willing To 'Work' With Detainees With Terror Plot Info

(Newark-AP, September 27, 2001) — Facing distrust from Muslims scared of being rounded up for questioning, the FBI is offering help resolving minor immigration violations in exchange for leads that advance the terrorism probe.

"We're not just going to lock them up if they can provide good information for us," said FBI Special Agent Sherrie Evanina in New Jersey, where at least 20 people have been detained on immigration violations for questioning in the hijackings.

Evanina said that if immigrants have relevant, accurate information about the attacks, but "they haven't quite got their paperwork in order, I'm sure we can work together with" Immigration and Naturalization Service officials.

INS spokesman Russ Bergeron said federal law allows officials give immigrants temporary visas when they help with criminal investigations.

He said the visas are "a tool for law enforcement (that) certainly can be used as an inducement to get cooperation from people who have no legal status in the U.S."

Lawyers and Arab-American groups nationwide have complained that authorities are detaining and questioning people of Middle Eastern descent who are not citizens but have no connections to the attacks.

Under federal law, they can be held indefinitely because their cases are considered civil, not criminal.

Abe Jaloudi, a Paterson attorney who has visited three detainees at the Hudson County Jail in Kearny, said some people have been detained for minor violations that would not have resulted in detentions before the Sept. 11 attacks.

And he questioned the value of the tactic.

"Most, if not everyone, who's being detained has no information to offer," Jaloudi said.

Sandra Carroll, a spokeswoman for the Newark FBI office conceded "not a huge part of our tips" are coming from detainees.

In other New Jersey developments on the investigation, the hijacker who flew a jet into the World Trade Center bought a plane ticket to Spain a few months earlier from a Paterson travel agency.

Munther Ammar, the owner of Apollo International Travel, said Mohamed Atta bought a one-way ticket to Madrid the first week in July, paying \$550 in cash.

"He was very quiet, normal," Ammar said.

That's the same period in which Spanish newspapers reported that Atta met with three or four other Islamic extremists at a hotel in Salou, a beach resort near Barcelona, before flying back to Miami, where he was taking flying lessons.

On July 6, Atta boarded a Swissair jet at Miami International Airport and arrived in Madrid the next day after catching a connecting flight in Zurich.

The Spanish newspaper La Vanguardia reported that Atta met on July 16 with Waleed Alshari and Wail Alshari. All three men were aboard American Airlines Flight 11, which crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center.

The FBI raided an apartment in Metuchen on Wednesday, questioning as many as five people, but "that turned out to be a wash," said Carroll, the FBI spokeswoman, declining to say what prompted the raid.

The building's landlord, Jagdish Deol, said FBI agents questioned him a week ago about reports that occupants of the apartment were celebrating on the day of the attacks.

And the landlord of a Paterson apartment building who previously said one of his tenants was hijacker Hani Hanjour said Thursday another hijacker, Salem Alhamzi also rented the unit.

Jimi Nouri said four other suspected hijackers he identified from FBI photos later joined the two men in the apartment, but he did not know their names.

The FBI said an Ocean County man widely identified earlier this week by neighbors and customers of a Bayville gas station as the hijacker who flew the second jet into the World Trade Center was a victim of mistaken identity.

A half-dozen neighbors and customers of a gas station identified a man who once worked there as Marwan Alshehhi, who piloted United Airlines Flight 175 into the trade center's south tower.

But the man, who bears an uncanny resemblance to Alshehhi, is actually Akram Mena, a relative of the gas station owner, Magdy Beshara. Carroll confirmed that Mena, who was never taken into custody, was the victim of mistaken identity based on facial similarities.

In Wayne, the Palestinian owner of a Blimpie sandwich store whose front window was shot at Tuesday night or Wednesday morning called whoever committed the act "stupid."

Mahmoud Ashi, a native of the Gaza Strip who came to America in 1988 and became a citizen in 1992, said his store had received telephone threats before the incident.

He said someone called his landlord on Saturday and falsely reported that store employees celebrated after the terrorist attacks, which might have led to the shooting.

No one was inside the store when the shots were fired. Wayne police had been protecting the store while it was open.

"It's very scary," Ashi said. "I feel unsafe. Whoever did this should pay the price. They are terrorists."

He said the only good thing to come out of the incident has been the expressions of support from regular customers.

"They say this sort of thing should not happen to innocent people," he said.

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