



U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Investigation

In Reply, Please Refer to
File No.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19106
January 24, 2002

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SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES-- [REDACTED]

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On September 21, 2001, the Philadelphia Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) initiated an investigation [REDACTED] in the Philadelphia area, subsequent to the terrorist events of September 11, 2001. The initiation of the investigation was predicated upon information from the Newark Division of the FBI. FBI Newark informed FBI Philadelphia that there were two Israelis who had been detained in York, Pennsylvania, by Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for violating their Visa status. These two Israelis worked for a moving company, Urban Moving Systems in Weehauken, New Jersey. FBI Newark had detained 5 other employees of Urban Moving Systems after they were observed on September 11, 2001, on the roof of their business building in Weehauken, NJ, taking pictures of the World Trade Center attacks. One report stated that these individuals were on the roof prior to either airplane crashing into the World Trade Center towers, suggesting there may have been prior knowledge on their part. As such, they were detained by local police, and identified. They were Israeli males which were in violation of their Visa status. FBI Newark had interviewed and conducted polygraphs of these individuals.

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[REDACTED] A request was made by FBI Newark for FBI Philadelphia to interview the 2 detainees in York, PA, regarding this matter.

On September 17 and again on September 21, 2001, FBI Philadelphia interviewed and polygraphed the two Israeli males at the INS detention center in York, PA. Both individuals stated that they had just completed their required military service in Israel and were in the United States vacationing. They were aware that their Visa status prohibited them from working, but admitted that they were both working for Urban Moving Systems as drivers and helpers to move furniture. After arriving separately in New York, both individuals flew to Miami, Florida, to obtain Florida driver's licenses. They indicated that there is a large Israeli population in Miami and that they went there to have fun. They returned to New York City and started working for Urban Moving Systems after answering an advertisement in the New York City Israeli newspaper. They did not know each other before

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coming to the United States, but met at a restaurant in the Israeli community in New York City, and began working as a team. They stated that working for a moving company was a great way to make some extra money and see more of the country without having to pay for a car and hotels.

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Both individuals failed the initial polygraphs on the question [REDACTED]

(S) [REDACTED] but one individual was re-polygraphed and passed. One individual claimed to have been trained as a paratrooper in the military. [REDACTED]

On October 12, 2001, INS Philadelphia contacted FBI Philadelphia regarding 6 more Israeli males that had been detained for violating their Visas. Each of these Israeli males worked for moving companies and were stopped by local police on traffic violations. Each individual was interviewed, and the information provided by each of these individuals was very similar to that provided by the 2 previous interviewees.

All six individuals had Florida driver's licenses, one indicated it was because a Social Security number is not necessary to obtain a driver's license in Florida. The addresses on their driver's license were those of friends or were simply faked. These individuals worked for Advanced Moving Systems in Sunrise, Florida, except for one who worked for Isaac's Moving and Storage in Philadelphia, PA. All had served their required time in the Israeli military, except one who stated he would have caused the military police too many problems. One of the individuals indicated he was a signals communications officer. Each of them stated they only worked for customer tips and took the jobs so they could make a little more travel money and see more of the country. Each of these individuals knew of Urban Moving Systems in Weehauken, NJ, as well as several other moving companies in Florida and New York City. Three of these interviewees stated that it was common knowledge amongst young Israelis in the military, that once serving time in the Israeli military, young Israeli's could come to the United States and make money by moving furniture, selling artwork door-to-door, selling ZoomCopters and other trinkets as mall kiosks, or cleaning carpets. One stated that he had a friend who sold artwork door-to-door in Canada.

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An investigation was initiated by FBI Philadelphia on Isaac's Moving and Storage. The owner of Isaac's leases an apartment where several young Israelis reside. One of these individuals had been previously interviewed by FBI Philadelphia regarding a PENTTBOMB lead. An individual matching his description in a vehicle matching the description of the individuals vehicle, was observed at a hotel in Florida City, Florida, asking directions to and inquiring about the Turkey Point Nuclear Power Plant in Homestead, Florida on September 17, 2001.

On October 16, 2001, an individual was detained by the Delaware River Port Authority for stopping his vehicle on the Walt Whitman Bridge at midnight, exiting his vehicle and taking pictures in the direction of a trash-to-steam facility located on the river. This individual was identified as a young Israeli male, who indicated he was taking pictures as souvenirs for his homeland. After the incident was reported to FBI Philadelphia, it was determined that this individual was one of at least 20 young Israelis working at local mall kiosks selling ZoomCopters. It was determined that there were at least 10 apartments in the Philadelphia metropolitan area that were being rented by one individual, identified by a local source as the "ring leader" of the group. This individual and his company, AvantGarde Marketing, also had leases with several local malls to rent kiosk space for ZoomCopters, Rainbow Art and Nail-It Naturally. Representatives of the local malls indicated that AvantGarde had leased this space for several years around the holidays. The specific individual who was observed taking pictures from the bridge could not be located and has not been interviewed.

On November 7, 2001, FBI Philadelphia received a telephone call from the Lancaster Police Department (LPD), Lancaster, PA. The LPD informed FBI Philadelphia that there were several kiosks at the local mall in Lancaster that had been abandoned suddenly. The information they received indicated that Middle Eastern males worked at these kiosks selling toy helicopters and other items. They left their merchandise at the kiosks and left their work stations abruptly. The LPD was notified about this suspicious activity, and in turn, notified FBI Philadelphia. It was determined they were Israelis. After receiving this information, FBI Philadelphia inquired about the kiosks in the local malls and learned that all had been abandoned in a similar fashion that same day. Further investigation revealed that the same day, toy helicopter kiosks in malls located in Washington, D.C., Hickory, North Carolina, Arlington, Texas and in all the malls in the local Philadelphia area had been abandoned within the same two hour period.

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A representative of the Rouse Company, the national mall management company that manages several local malls in the Philadelphia area, informed FBI Philadelphia that she had received several telephone calls reporting these merchants had not shown up for work. These merchants included not only AvantGarde Marketing, but also CART America and Marketing on Wheels. After contacting AvantGarde Marketing, the management company learned that rumors had been circulating that INS in Dallas, Texas, was arresting and detaining these kiosk employees for violating their Visa status. It was confirmed that employees were detained by INS Dallas on November 6, 2001. It was evident that an extremely well-organized and effective communication system existed between these Israelis, nationwide.

FBI Philadelphia attempted to locate the kiosk workers at the apartments where they were residing, only to learn that they had been vacated and the leases canceled. FBI Philadelphia was informed by FBI Kansas City and FBI Cleveland that Israeli mall kiosk workers had been detained in their areas as well. The same advanced photography equipment was found on the detainees in both locations. FBI Philadelphia was not able to confirm if the same equipment was utilized by the Israelis in this area.

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