

Trade Center Bombing Seek 'Clarity of Motive'

o Ryder employees, had arrived
ck up the van in a red GM sedan
er officials said that roughly two
s after the explosion, Salameh
ared at the office and claimed
van had been stolen the night
re. He asked for his \$400 dam-
deposit, but was told he must
file a police report.

Salameh's name was already in the
s files. In 1990 he had demon-
ed publicly on behalf of El-Say-
Nosair, an Islamic firebrand who
been charged with, and acquitted
he 1991 slaying of Jewish De-
League founder Meir Kahane.
Salameh had visited Nosair at the
prison in Attica, N.Y., where he
serving a sentence on lesser
ges.

Salameh gave investigators a par-
ar suspect to consider, and, as
ortant, drew their attention to a
up of activists who orbited
ugh the larger Islamic commu-
in New York and New Jersey
attended the Abu Bakr mosque
Brooklyn and the Al-Salam
que in Jersey City. Rahman had
ched at both mosques.

he FBI had not previously con-
red these activists to be terror-
merely passionate militants. Yet
FBI had access to intelligence
mation about them gathered as
esult of at least three occur-
es: the prosecution of Nosair;
emergence of Rahman as a pres-
e in the New Jersey-New York
mic community; and the 1991
der of Mustafa Shalabi.

he Nosair trial was a watershed
it among Middle Eastern mili-
s in New York. Kahane, a hero to
y Jewish radicals, was viewed as
mbol of Zionist oppression to Is-
ic radicals. During the trial, the
l groups staged demonstrations,
on opposite sides of the court-

ment blames the Islamic Group for a
series of bombings and murders,
most especially the assassination of
Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in
1981.

Egyptian security forces are en-
gaged in a massive, nationwide
crackdown aimed at fundamentalist
militants, including members of the
Islamic Group. The government has
jailed 700 suspected extremists in
response to a wave of violence that
has left nearly 150 people dead, at
the hands of either police or extrem-
ists.

Before he emigrated to the United
States, Rahman was acquitted of in-
volvement in Sadat's death, but an
FBI intelligence briefing during the
Persian Gulf War persuaded at least
one senior official to believe that he
posed a potentially serious threat
from his new base in New Jersey.

When Rahman arrived in the Unit-
ed States, Shalabi found him a re-
sidence. Thereafter, they raised funds
for the Afghan resistance, but ulti-
mately had a falling out, according to
published statements by several as-
sociates. In March 1991, Shalabi was
found dead in his Brooklyn home,
shot and knifed. There have been no
arrests.

In addition, five months before the
trade center bombing, about 20
members of the two mosques who
attended Nosair's trial or visited him
at Attica were subpoenaed by a fed-
eral grand jury, according to the
New York Times. Ahmed A. Satta, a
postal worker, told the Times that
FBI agents grilled him about Nosair,
Shalabi and Rahman.

To officials, then, the circumstan-
tial clues being gathered by agents in
New Jersey seemed to fit into a larg-
er context. For example, Salameh's
New York state driver's license listed
his residence as 57 Prospect Park,
S.W. Brooklyn—the home of Ibrahim

**MOHAMMAD
SALAMEH, 25**
Jordanian.
Jersey City, N.J.,
handyman
arrested March
4. Indicted in the
bombing.



BILAL ALKAISI, 26
Jordanian.
New York area
resident arrested
March 25.
Charged with
aiding and
abetting the
bombing.



NIDAL AYYAD, 25
Kuwaiti.
Maplewood, N.J.,
chemical engineer
arrested
March 10.
Indicted in the
bombing.



**IBRAHIM
ELGABROWNY, 42**
Held Iraqi pass-
port. Brooklyn
contractor ar-
rested March 4.
Charged with
obstruction and
possessing fraud-
ulent passports.



**MAHMUD
ABOUHALIMA, 33**
Egyptian. Wood-
bridge, N.J., cab
driver arrested in
Egypt and brought
to the U.S. March
24. Indicted in
the bombing.



**RAMZI AHMED
YOUSSEF, 25**
Jersey City, N.J.,
resident who
reportedly fled the
country. Indicted
in the bombing.



SOURCE: News services and staff reports

—Compiled by Barbara J. Saffir

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office, agents arrested him. In his
pockets, they found the business card
of Nidal Ayyad, 25, a chemical engi-
neer.

Eventually, the FBI executed at
least 10 search warrants in New Jer-
sey.

Agents found evidence connecting
Salameh to a rental unit at the Space
Station Storage facility in Jersey
City. Employees identified Salameh
as the man who rented a shed in No-
vember under the name "Kamal Ibra-
ham."

Upon searching this unit March 5,
agents discovered several hundred
pounds of chemicals that, if properly
combined and triggered with a small
explosive, could produce a powerful
blast. They also discovered that the
chemicals—hundreds of pounds of
urea and nitric acid—were purchased
in November by "Kamal Ibrahim."

FBI that the day before the bombing
they saw a man they believe was

Ayyad's office phone. Agents learned
that Salameh and Ayyad had a joint
account at a local bank. They discov-
ered that on Feb. 15 Ayyad had
rented from National Car Rental the
same type of car that Salameh ar-
rived in at the Ryder van rental of-
fice. Moreover, "Salameh" was listed
as an additional driver on the rental
car. A witness from the Ryder office
identified Ayyad as the same man
who accompanied Salameh when he
rented the van.

On March 10 agents descended on
Ayyad's first-floor apartment at 60
Boyden Ave., Maplewood, N.J. In-
side, they found what a prosecutor
later described as a modified timing
mechanism that an explosives expert
described as a time delay firing sys-
tem. Ayyad was carrying an Ameri-
can Express card in the name of Bilal
Alkaiasi. At least one witness told the
Times that Ayyad had been accom-
panied Salameh to the storage shed
"on several occasions."

purported involvement with the Af-
ghan resistance. Associates said
Abouhalima traveled to Pakistan for
military training and that he was a
follower of Rahman and sometimes
served as his driver. Rahman has dis-
puted this claim and publicly de-
nounced the bombing.)

Aside from these characterizations
of Abouhalima—which will likely be
contested in court—there has been
no public disclosure of what direct
evidence, if any, connects him to the
bombing. He was eventually returned
to New York. U.S. officials have re-
fused to discuss their knowledge of
the arrest or treatment of Abou-
halima.

For weeks, the trade center bomb-
ing was an incomplete act of terror-
ism because it lacked a political mes-
sage. But on March 28 the New York
Times published a letter it received
four days after the bombing. The
Times quoted a law enforcement
source who said there was "incontri-