



“Target: America” The September 2009 New York/Denver Terror Plot Arrests

Report #21 in the “Target: America” series

A NEFA report on the plot to attack U.S.-based targets with TATP explosives

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Summary

The investigation into a plot to detonate explosive devices in the United States led by Afghan immigrant Najibullah Zazi and three yet-to-be-named accomplices is ongoing. To date, only three individuals have been arrested in connection with this case. Only one, Najibullah Zazi, appears to be implicated in an operational capacity. Two others, Bosnian immigrant Adis Mendunjanin, and New York City cab driver Zarein Ahmedzay, have been questioned, but have not been arrested.² A childhood acquaintance of Zazi’s, Naiz Khan, with whom Zazi stayed when he traveled to New York in September, is reported to be under surveillance in connection with the plot.³

This is the most advanced U.S.-based plot since 9/11 that is said to be tied to Al-Qaida. According to media reports, Zazi was in indirect contact with a high-ranking Al-Qaida operative, originally identified in media reports as Mustafa Abu al-Yazid.^{4 5} The claim of a link to al-Yazid has since been retracted by the Associated Press.⁶ Although we have seen Al-Qaida-linked individuals in the U.S. engage in terrorist-related activities – such as Lyman Ferris who surveilled the Brooklyn Bridge while in contact with Khalid

¹ The report was updated on October 30, 2009 to reflect the Associated Press’ retracted claim regarding Zazi’s link to Mustafa al-Yazid.

² Tom Hays, “Feds Question Two Others in NYC Terror Plot,” Associated Press, October 9, 2009.

³ “Friend of Suspected Terrorist Says Life Put ‘On Hold,’” CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/10/10/new.york.muslim.protest/>, October 10, 2009.

⁴ For more information on al-Yazid, see NEFA Senior Investigator Evan Kohlmann’s dossier at <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefayazid0608.pdf>.

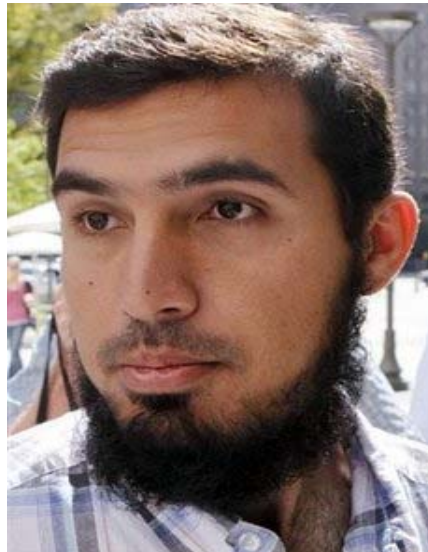
⁵ “NYC Terror Plot Suspect Contacted by Al Qaeda’s Afghan Head,” Associated Press, October 19, 2009.

⁶ “Correction: Terror Suspect Stories,” Associated Press, October 16, 2009.

Sheikh Mohammed⁷ – we have not seen a fully operational plot in which operatives received direct training from Al-Qaida.

According to early news reports, the Zazi plot was centered around attacking commuter trains with improvised explosive devices (IEDs).⁸ The exact targets for attack have not been detailed publicly, nor is it clear whether the conspirators intended to attack a single target or multiple targets simultaneously.

It is unknown whether the attack was imminent, although Zazi and the other conspirators had acquired ingredients necessary to build a TATP (Triacetone Triperoxide) explosive device. Zazi had experimented with mixtures in a hotel room outside of Denver, Colorado. Zazi did not, however, transport explosives to New York when he drove there from Denver on September 9, 2009. Investigators did not find any trace of chemicals in Zazi's rental car.⁹ At the time of the writing of this report, authorities have not discovered (or have not publicly disclosed the location of) the supply of explosive materials that Zazi and his co-conspirators acquired from Denver-area beauty supply stores.



Najibullah Zazi (Source: AP)

⁷ For more on Faris and his connections to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, see the NEFA "Target: America" reports at http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/BklynBridge_Plot.pdf and http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/ColumbusMall_Plot.pdf.

⁸ Brian Ross, Richard Esposito, Clayton Sandell, Megan Chuchmach, "Active Terror Cell Prepared NYC Attacks, Officials Say," ABC News, September 21, 2009.

⁹ Ivan Moreno and P. Solomon Banda, "Prosecutor: Terror Plot Focus was 9/11 Anniversary," Associated Press, September 26, 2009.

Federal prosecutors argue that Zazi intended to perpetrate the attacks on New York, on the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks, but he abandoned his plans once he realized he was under investigation.¹⁰ In response to on-going questions and concerns, New York City Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly said there was no imminent threat of a terrorist attack, despite reports of other suspects still at large. Kelly further stated that the plot had been broken up by the arrest of Zazi.¹¹

Initially, Zazi was charged with making a false statement in a matter involving international and domestic terrorism.¹² The charges were then upgraded to conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction.¹³ If found guilty on the charge of conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction against persons or property in the United States, Zazi could face life in prison.¹⁴

Profile of Conspirators and Other Persons of Interest

Najibullah Zazi

Zazi was born in the Paktia region of Afghanistan in 1985.¹⁵ His family moved to the Peshawar area of Pakistan when he was approximately 7 years old.¹⁶ Around that time, Zazi's father, Mohammed, moved to New York and began working as a cab driver.¹⁷ Najibullah Zazi and the rest of the family moved to New York in 1999.¹⁸ He is a legal resident of the United States.¹⁹

¹⁰ Ivan Moreno and P. Solomon Banda, "Prosecutor: Terror Plot Focus was 9/11 Anniversary," Associated Press, September 26, 2009.

¹¹ Tom Hays, "NYC Terror Suspect Pleads Not Guilty, Kept in Jail," Associated Press, September 29, 2009.

¹² U.S. v. Najibullah Zazi, (D.CO), No. 09-MJ-03001, Complaint, Filed September 19, 2009.

¹³ U.S. v. Najibullah Zazi, (S.D.N.Y.), No. 1:09-cr-00663-RJD, Indictment, Filed September 24, 2009.

¹⁴ "Najibullah Zazi Indicted for Conspiracy to Use Explosives Against Persons or Property in the United States, Press Release," United States Department of Justice Press Release, September 24, 2009.

¹⁵ Karl Gehring, "Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial," The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

¹⁶ Karl Gehring, "Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial," The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

¹⁷ Karl Gehring, "Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial," The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

¹⁸ Richard Esposito and Brian Ross, "Officials Worry NY Terror Plot 'Still Alive' as Case Broadens," ABC News, September 22, 2009.

¹⁹ "Three Arrested in Ongoing Terror Investigation," United States Department of Justice Press Release, September 20, 2009.

Zazi has two sisters and two brothers and is the middle sibling.²⁰ The family lived in a two-bedroom apartment on Parsons Boulevard in Flushing, Queens.²¹ Zazi attended Flushing High School, but did not graduate.²²

Zazi was religiously observant from a young age.²³ His family worshipped at an Afghan mosque in Flushing called Masjid Hazrat Abu Bakr, where Zazi volunteered as a janitor.²⁴ After the 9/11 attacks, the mosque became divided over support for the Taliban and Usama Bin Laden. The imam was opposed to Bin Laden and the Taliban, and was eventually ousted by pro-Taliban members of the mosque community.²⁵

According to statements made by Naiz Khan, with whom Zazi grew up and with whom he stayed in New York on the night of September 10, 2009, Zazi enjoyed playing pool and video games as a teenager. Also, according to Khan, Zazi was style conscious, with an interest in “nice clothes and nice shoes.”²⁶

Zazi operated a coffee cart in the Wall Street area of lower Manhattan before moving to Denver in January 2009.²⁷

In 2006, Zazi married his cousin, who lives in Pakistan with their two children.²⁸ Zazi traveled to see them annually. Zazi’s coffee cart customers noticed Zazi’s appearance and manner change in the years following his marriage. Zazi grew a beard,

²⁰ Karl Gehring, “Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial,” The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

²¹ Karl Gehring, “Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial,” The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

²² Karl Gehring, “Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial,” The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

²³ Karl Gehring, “Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial,” The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

²⁴ Karl Gehring, “Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial,” The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

²⁵ Karl Gehring, “Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial,” The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

²⁶ Brian Ross, Megan Churchmach, Anna Schecter, and Bilal Sarwary, “Terror Plot Case: Man Under Surveillance Denies Terrorist Connection,” ABC News, September 30, 2009.

²⁷ Karl Gehring, “Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial,” The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

²⁸ Karl Gehring, “Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial,” The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

and began wearing traditional Islamic clothing, and was less friendly to his customers than in the past.²⁹

In August 2008, Zazi traveled to the Peshawar region of Pakistan, where he attended an al-Qaida training camp. He returned to the United States, from Pakistan, in January 2009 and moved to Denver a few days after his return. Zazi is also reported to have made several trips to Canada, although the nature of those trips has not been disclosed publicly.³⁰



*Zazi arrested September 19, 2009
(Source: Chris Schneider/Denver Post)*

When he first moved to Denver, he worked as an airport shuttle bus driver for a company called Big Sky. He then went to work for a company called ABC Transportation.³¹ Co-workers at ABC described Zazi as hardworking, often working 16-18 hours a day to earn extra money.³²

²⁹ Karl Gehring, "Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial," The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

³⁰ Clayton Sandell and Joseph Rhee, "Terror Suspect's Ties to Canada Investigated," ABC News, September 25, 2009.

³¹ Karl Gehring, "Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial," The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

³² David Von Drehle and Bobby Ghosh, "An Enemy Within: The Making of Najibullah Zazi," Time Magazine, October 1, 2009.

In Colorado, Zazi initially lived with an uncle, but was kicked out after a few months for not paying rent. Zazi moved to an apartment complex a few miles away from his uncle's residence and, in July 2009, he was joined by his father.³³

In March 2009, Zazi filed for bankruptcy. He had opened several credit card accounts and was spending beyond his means. According to bankruptcy records, Zazi's expenses amounted to approximately \$1,100 per month and his stated income was only \$800 per month. On the bankruptcy application, he claimed to be unmarried and to have \$51,000-worth of debt.³⁴

Mohammed Wali Zazi

Mohammed Wali Zazi is the father of Najibullah Zazi. He was born in Afghanistan in 1955,³⁵ and is a naturalized U.S. citizen.³⁶



Mohammed Wali Zazi (Source: AFP)

Zazi worked as a cab driver in New York for 15 years.³⁷

He was freed under court supervision in Denver, pending trial.³⁸

³³ Karl Gehring, "Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial," The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

³⁴ Karl Gehring, "Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial," The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

³⁵ U.S. v. Mohammed Wali Zazi (D.C. CO), No. 09-MJ-03000, Complaint, filed September 19, 2009.

³⁶ "Three Arrested in Ongoing Terror Investigation," U.S. Department of Justice Press Release, September 20, 2009.

³⁷ Karl Gehring, "Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial," The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

³⁸ Tom Hays and Devlin Barrett, "Feds: Suspects Hit Beauty Stores for Bombs," Associated Press, September 24, 2009.

Ahmad Wais Afzali

Originally from Afghanistan, Afzali, 37 years old,³⁹ is a legal, permanent resident of the U.S.⁴⁰ His family moved from Afghanistan to Fresh Meadows, Queens when Afzali was 7 years old.⁴¹ He is married with three children.⁴²

Afzali became religious in high school, and preached at Masjid Hazrat Abu Bakr until 2007, when he opened a funeral business.⁴³



Ahmad Wais Afzali
(Source: Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times)

In 1992, when he was 20 years old, Afzali was arrested on sexual abuse charges for allegedly grabbing a woman's buttocks. He pled guilty to lesser charges of attempted sexual abuse and served six months in prison with five years probation.⁴⁴ Afzali then became a confidential informant for the New York City Police Department (NYPD).

³⁹ "Three Arrested in Ongoing Terror Investigation," U.S. Department of Justice Press Release, September 20, 2009.

⁴⁰ "Three Arrested in Ongoing Terror Investigation," U.S. Department of Justice Press Release, September 20, 2009.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Hays and Helen Kennedy, "FBI Says Imam Ahmad Afzali Worked Both Sides and Tipped Off Suspects," New York Daily News, September 21, 2009.

⁴² Elizabeth Hays and Helen Kennedy, "FBI Says Imam Ahmad Afzali Worked Both Sides and Tipped Off Suspects," New York Daily News, September 21, 2009.

⁴³ Elizabeth Hays and Helen Kennedy, "FBI Says Imam Ahmad Afzali Worked Both Sides and Tipped Off Suspects," New York Daily News, September 21, 2009.

⁴⁴ Rocco Parascandola and Corky Siemaszko, "Queens Imam Tied to Alleged Al Qaeda Plot Targeting NY Spent Time in Jail for Sexual Abuse Rap," New York Daily News, September 24, 2009.

On September 24, 2009, Afzali was released on \$1.5 million personal recognizance bond secured by his parents' home.⁴⁵

Other Individuals Under Investigation

Bosnian immigrant **Adis Mendunjanin**, 25, and New York City cab driver **Zarein Ahmedzay**, 24, have been questioned in connection with the terror plot,⁴⁶ but neither has been charged. Ron Kuby,⁴⁷ Afzali's attorney, confirmed to the media that NYPD detectives had shown his client photos of Mendunjanin and Ahmedzay in connection with an initial investigation into Zazi's, as well as the co-conspirators', activities.⁴⁸

Mendunjanin arrived in the United States in 1994 and became a naturalized citizen in 2002.⁴⁹ He and Zazi knew each other from the Flushing neighborhood they grew up in.⁵⁰

Mendunjanin is a U.S. citizen who holds a master's degree in economics. He works at a building management company in New York City.⁵¹

Ahmedzay and Mendunjanin are alleged to have traveled to Pakistan during the same late-2008 to early 2009 period as Zazi, according to CBS News sources.⁵²

⁴⁵ "Ahmad Afzali, Imam in Terror Probe, Freed on \$1.5 Bail," Associated Press, September 24, 2009 and "Bail Set At \$1.5 Million For Queens Imam In NY Terror Case," Dow Jones, September 24, 2009.

⁴⁶ Susan Candiotti, "Two New Yorkers Questioned in Zazi Investigation," CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/10/09/us.terror.probe/>, October 9, 2009.

⁴⁷ Ron Kuby is a criminal defense lawyer, radio show host, and television commentator, who trained under William Kunstler, and defended El Sayyid Nosair, who was convicted for conspiracy in the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing. Nosair assassinated Meir Kahane.

⁴⁸ Susan Candiotti, "Two New Yorkers Questioned in Zazi Investigation," CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/10/09/us.terror.probe/>, October 9, 2009.

⁴⁹ Susan Candiotti, "Two New Yorkers Questioned in Zazi Investigation," CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/10/09/us.terror.probe/>, October 9, 2009.

⁵⁰ Pat Milton, "Exclusive: FBI Expands Terror Probe," CBS News, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/10/09/cbsnews_investigates/main5375086.shtml?tag=contentMain;contentBody, October 9, 2009.

⁵¹ Pat Milton, "Exclusive: FBI Expands Terror Probe," CBS News, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/10/09/cbsnews_investigates/main5375086.shtml?tag=contentMain;contentBody, October 9, 2009.

⁵² Pat Milton, "Exclusive: FBI Expands Terror Probe," CBS News, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/10/09/cbsnews_investigates/main5375086.shtml?tag=contentMain;contentBody, October 9, 2009.

Naiz Khan



Naiz Khan (Source: CNN)

Naiz Khan, 27, is from Flushing, Queens, and like Zazi, worked as a coffee cart vendor.⁵³ He is currently unemployed.⁵⁴

Khan is originally from Afghanistan and came to the United States in 1999.⁵⁵

Zazi stayed at Khan's apartment when he came to New York on September 10. Investigators recovered physical evidence from Khan's apartment, including an electronic scale and 12 backpacks. Additionally, Khan flew back from Pakistan on January 15, 2009, the same day as Zazi. Khan claims that the same return date is simply a coincidence.⁵⁶

Associations

Zazi and Khan knew each other from their neighborhood in Flushing, Queens. Khan claimed to reporters that he bumped into Zazi at the Masjid Hazrat Abu Bakr Mosque on September 10th. Khan said that Zazi told him that he was in New York, from

⁵³ "Friend of Suspected Terrorist Says Life Put 'On Hold,'" CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/10/10/new.york.muslim.protest/>, October 10, 2009.

⁵⁴ Brian Ross, Megan Churchmach, Anna Schechter, and Bilal Sarwary, "Terror Plot Case: Man Under Surveillance Denies Terrorist Connection," ABC News, <http://i.abcnews.com/Blotter/terror-plot-case-man-surveillance-denies-terrorist-connection/story?id=8711539>, September 30, 2009.

⁵⁵ Brian Ross, Megan Churchmach, Anna Schechter, and Bilal Sarwary, "Terror Plot Case: Man Under Surveillance Denies Terrorist Connection," ABC News, <http://i.abcnews.com/Blotter/terror-plot-case-man-surveillance-denies-terrorist-connection/story?id=8711539>, September 30, 2009.

⁵⁶ "Friend of Suspected Terrorist Says Life Put 'On Hold,'" CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/10/10/new.york.muslim.protest/>, October 10, 2009.

Denver, to clear up a permit problem related to the coffee cart he had previously operated in Manhattan.⁵⁷

Zazi and Mendunjanin also knew each other from Flushing.

It is unclear how Afzali knew the conspirators and Mohammed Zazi. Likely, it was through the Masjid Hazrat Abu Bakr Mosque.

Operations/Acquisition and Fabrication of Explosives

According to U.S. intelligence officials, Zazi had connections to Al-Qaida leadership, which is how he came to the attention of CIA sources abroad. According to media reports, the CIA informed the FBI about Zazi in late August, which sparked the domestic investigation.⁵⁸

Unconfirmed reports allege that Zazi went to an Aurora, Colorado U-Haul rental location the week before his trip to New York to inquire about truck rentals. The store's surveillance tapes were taken as evidence; however, the U-Haul representative was unable to confirm whether the individual seen on the tape was in fact Najibullah Zazi.⁵⁹ Additionally, a CNN report quotes a "former counterterrorism official familiar with the case" as saying that a group of Afghan men tried to use three different credit cards to rent a truck on September 9 at a rental office in Queens, New York, but the cards were declined. The men, who held driver's licenses from Florida and Ohio, were also unable to use cash. A U-Haul staff member identified one member of the group as Naiz Khan.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Brian Ross, Megan Churchmach, Anna Schechter, and Bilal Sarwary, "Terror Plot Case: Man Under Surveillance Denies Terrorist Connection," <http://i.abcnews.com/Blotter/terror-plot-case-man-surveillance-denies-terrorist-connection/story?id=8711539>, September 30, 2009.

⁵⁸ Lolita Baldor and Brett Blackledge, "NY Suspect Had Senior A-Qaeda Contact," Associated Press, October 6, 2009. Note: According to ABC News, "Law enforcement and intelligence officials say the case began in 2008 when the CIA twice picked up on Zazi's presence in the Pakistani city of Peshawar, a place often used by al Qaeda to arrange meetings with foreigners." See: "Three Men Arrested by FBI in NYC Terror Plot," ABC News, September 20, 2009.

⁵⁹ Deborah Sherman, "Zazi on Video Trying to Rent U-Haul in Aurora," Denver Post, October 1, 2009 and "New Terror Plot Details Mirror Oklahoma City Bombing," 9News.com, September 30, 2009.

⁶⁰ Deb Feyerick and Jeanne Meserve, "Zazi Declines Fourth Day of Interviews in Terror Probe." CNN, <http://cnnwire.blogs.cnn.com/2009/09/19/zazi-declines-fourth-day-of-interviews-in-terror-probe/>, September 19, 2009.

In a joint FBI/NYPD investigation of Zazi, handwritten instructions were discovered on Zazi's laptop, which included specifications for Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP). The instructions had been downloaded to his computer from one of Zazi's three email accounts in June 2009.⁶¹

Zazi is connected to three email accounts, all three of which were used while he was in Pakistan. At his upcoming trial, the government intends to prove that Zazi used his email accounts to further his effort to manufacture explosive devices.⁶²

The notes on Zazi's computer listed ghee as a substance that can be used as an initiator;⁶³ ghee is a clarified butter that is a common ingredient in South Asian and Middle Eastern cuisine.

Zazi's laptop also indicated several internet searches for hydrochloric acid during the summer of 2009. The search also showed bookmarks created on two different browsers for "lab safety hydrochloric acid."⁶⁴



Image of man believed to be Najibullah Zazi shopping for beauty supply products outside of Denver (Source: CNN)

⁶¹ U.S. v. Najibullah Zazi, (S.D.N.Y.), No. 09-CR-663 (RJD), Memorandum of Law in Support of Government's Motion for a Permanent Order of Detention, Filed September 24, 2009.

⁶² U.S. v. Najibullah Zazi, (S.D.N.Y.), No. 09-CR-663 (RJD), Memorandum of Law in Support of the Government's Motion for a Permanent Order of Detention, Filed September 24, 2009.

⁶³ U.S. v. Najibullah Zazi, (S.D.N.Y.), No. 09-CR-663 (RJD), Memorandum of Law in Support of Government's Motion for a Permanent Order of Detention, Filed September 24, 2009.

⁶⁴ U.S. v. Najibullah Zazi, (S.D.N.Y.), No. 09-CR-663 (RJD), Memorandum of Law in Support of Government's Motion for a Permanent Order of Detention, Filed September 24, 2009.

Zazi and three yet-to-be-named associates spent the summer going from one beauty supply store to another in Denver to buy large quantities of hydrogen peroxide and acetone, two of the ingredients required to fabricate the same sort of devices that were used in the transit bombings in London and Madrid.⁶⁵ They used stolen credit cards to purchase materials.⁶⁶ They purchased multiple bottles of “Liquid Developer Clairoxide,” which contains hydrogen peroxide, from Beauty Supply Warehouse in Aurora, Colorado on July 25, 2009.⁶⁷ When the cashier asked Zazi why he was purchasing such a large quantity of supplies, Zazi replied that he had “a lot of girlfriends.”⁶⁸

On August 28, 2009, Zazi returned to Beauty Supply Warehouse to purchase 12 32-ounce bottles of “Ms. K Liquid 40 Volume,” another hydrogen peroxide-based product.⁶⁹



Some examples of the items purchased by Zazi (Source: AP)

⁶⁵ Ivan Moreno and P. Solomon Banda, “Prosecutor: Terror Plot Focus was 9/11 Anniversary,” Associated Press, September 26, 2009.

⁶⁶ Ivan Moreno and P. Solomon Banda, “Prosecutor: Terror Plot Focus was 9/11 Anniversary,” Associated Press, September 26, 2009.

⁶⁷ “Denver Man Accused in Terror Plot Bought Bomb Supplies at Beauty Store,” The Fort Collins Coloradan, September 25, 2009.

⁶⁸ “Denver Man Accused in Terror Plot Bought Bomb Supplies at Beauty Store,” The Fort Collins Coloradan, September 25, 2009.

⁶⁹ “Denver Man Accused in Terror Plot Bought Bomb Supplies at Beauty Store,” The Fort Collins Coloradan, September 25, 2009.

On the evening of August 28, 2009, Zazi rented a hotel room with a kitchen in Aurora, Colorado, in order to experiment with explosive material ingredients. He stayed at the hotel again on September 6-7 to continue his experimentation.⁷⁰

During his September 6-7 hotel stay, Zazi made several attempts to contact another individual, who is not named in court documents, to confirm the correct mixture of ingredients to make the explosives. The documents describe Zazi's tone as more urgent with each attempt to contact the other individual. Specifically, Zazi's requests related to flour and ghee oil, two of the ingredients specified in the handwritten bomb-making instructions recovered on Zazi's laptop.⁷¹

The FBI found traces of acetone residue on the hotel room stove hood.⁷²



*Authorities search the storage closet next to Najibullah Zazi's apartment
(Source: RJ Sangosti/The Denver Post)*

On September 8, records show that Zazi searched the internet for home improvement supply stores in Flushing, Queens. Once he located the web site of the store, he searched for muriatic acid, which could constitute another component of TATP.

⁷⁰ "Denver Man Accused in Terror Plot Bought Bomb Supplies at Beauty Store," The Fort Collins Coloradan, September 25, 2009.

⁷¹ U.S. v. Najibullah Zazi, (S.D.N.Y.), No. 09-CR-663 (RJD), Memorandum of Law in Support of Government's Motion for a Permanent Order of Detention, Filed September 24, 2009.

⁷² "Denver Man Accused in Terror Plot Bought Bomb Supplies at Beauty Store," The Fort Collins Coloradan, September 25, 2009.

He viewed one particular brand four separate times. This particular brand claims to produce lower fumes and be safer to handle than standard muriatic acid.⁷³

Also on September 8, Zazi made reservations for a rental car, which he picked up the following day and drove to New York. Once in New York, Zazi stayed with his childhood acquaintance, Naiz Khan.

After Zazi's stay, FBI searched Naiz Khan's residence in Queens, New York, and recovered 12 black backpacks,⁷⁴ batteries, and an electronic scale suitable for performing several procedures described in the hand-written bomb-making instructions on Zazi's computer. Zazi's fingerprints were found on the batteries and the scale.⁷⁵ Khan claimed to reporters that the backpacks belonged to his uncle, who had received them for free from a friend who was in the wholesale business, and that he planned to bring them to relatives in Pakistan. He also claimed that neither he nor his five roommates had ever seen the scale before.⁷⁶

When Zazi originally made the reservation with the rental car agency in Denver, he stated that he would return the car on September 14. Instead, his plans were changed after investigators questioned Afzali, an NYPD Confidential Informant, about Zazi, Adis Mendunjanin, and Zarein Ahmedzay. On September 12, the day after he was interviewed by police, Afzali called Mohammed Zazi and Najibullah Zazi to inform them of the police investigations. The recording of the intercepted phone call revealed that Afzali said to Najibullah Zazi:

"I want to speak to you about something...I want a meeting with you [and others]. You probably know why I am calling you for this meeting...I was exposed to something yesterday from the authorities. And they came to ask me about your characters. They asked me about you guys..."

⁷³ U.S. v. Najibullah Zazi, (S.D.N.Y.), No. 09-CR-663 (RJD), Memorandum of Law in Support of Government's Motion for a Permanent Order of Detention, Filed September 24, 2009.

⁷⁴ Brian Ross, Megan Churchmach, Anna Schechter, and Bilal Sarwary, "Terror Plot Case: Man Under Surveillance Denies Terrorist Connection," ABC News, <http://i.abcnews.com/Blotter/terror-plot-case-man-surveillance-denies-terrorist-connection/story?id=8711539>, September 30, 2009.

⁷⁵ U.S. v. Najibullah Zazi, (S.D.N.Y.), No. 09-CR-663 (RJD), Memorandum of Law in Support of Government's Motion for a Permanent Order of Detention, Filed September 24, 2009.

⁷⁶ Brian Ross, Megan Churchmach, Anna Schechter, and Bilal Sarwary, "Terror Plot Case: Man Under Surveillance Denies Terrorist Connection," ABC News, <http://i.abcnews.com/Blotter/terror-plot-case-man-surveillance-denies-terrorist-connection/story?id=8711539>, September 30, 2009.

I'm not sure if someone complained about you. And I don't want to know...They [the authorities] said, 'Please, we need to know who they are...what they're all about.'...And I told them they were innocent, law abiding...⁷⁷

Afzali then asked Zazi about the date he most recently traveled to Pakistan. Zazi responded that he had been eight months prior to visit his wife. Afzali also admonished Zazi not to “get involved with the Afghanistan garbage, the Iraq garbage,” and added that their phone call was being monitored.⁷⁸

Zazi's initial arrest came after authorities found that he had falsely denied ever seeing the handwritten instructions for bomb instruction saved on his computer. Zazi's father, Mohammed, denied receiving a telephone call from anyone from New York, and denied that he knew anyone named Afzali.

Afzali falsely claimed that he had never made calls to Zazi and his father to inform them that authorities had questioned him about Zazi.

Training

Zazi traveled to Peshawar, Pakistan on Qatar Airlines in August 2008, via Newark Airport.⁷⁹ Peshawar is an area known for training camps run by Al-Qaida.⁸⁰ Zazi received explosives training at an Al-Qaida training camp during his visit to Pakistan,⁸¹ which he confirmed in a September 17 interview with the FBI.⁸²

Target Selection

Zazi's computer contained information related to New York-area football and baseball stadiums, New York's Fashion Week event, and a video of Grand Central

⁷⁷ U.S. v. Mohammed Wali Zazi (D.C. CO), No. 09-MJ-03000, Complaint, filed September 19, 2009.

⁷⁸ U.S. v. Mohammed Wali Zazi (D.C. CO), No. 09-MJ-03000, Complaint, filed September 19, 2009.

⁷⁹ U.S. v. Najibullah Zazi, (S.D.N.Y.), No. BWB:JHKF.#2009R01793, Memorandum of Law in Support of the Government's Motion for a Permanent Order of Detention, Filed September 24, 2009.

⁸⁰ U.S. v. Najibullah Zazi, (D.CO), No. 09-MJ-03001, Complaint, Filed September 19, 2009.

⁸¹ Ivan Moreno and P. Solomon Banda, “Prosecutor: Terror Plot Focus was 9/11 Anniversary,” September 26, 2009.

⁸² “Three Arrested in Ongoing Terror Investigation,” U.S. Department of Justice Press Release, September 20, 2009.

Terminal, which is a hub for commuter trains located in midtown Manhattan.⁸³ However, the exact attack plan, if there was one, has not been detailed publicly.

According to law enforcement officials speaking to ABC News, intercepted text messages written by Zazi suggested that the attack was near readiness. One message read, “The wedding cake is ready.”⁸⁴ As ABC noted, “Al Qaeda operatives have frequently used references to weddings to disguise planned terror attacks.” The report does not specify to whom, or when, the texts were sent.

Radicalizing Influences

According to reports, Zazi became a fan of Zakir Naik, a controversial Indian Islamic scholar who advocates the most fundamental practice of Islam, including the death penalty for apostates.⁸⁵ Zazi reportedly viewed Naik’s lectures on YouTube.⁸⁶ Naik’s web site features a link to the official Tanzeem-e-Islami (Tel) site.⁸⁷ Tel is a Deobondi Islamist group that promotes the establishment of an Islamic state. Tel member Qayyum Abdul Jamal was the oldest of the 18 suspected conspirators in the Toronto terror plot in 2006. Jamal led prayers at a small mosque where several of the conspirators prayed.

⁸³ Brian Ross, Richard Esposito, and Clayton Sandell, “Three Men Arrested by FBI in Terror Plot That Targeted New York,” ABC News, Richard Esposito and Brian Ross, “Officials Worry NY Terror Plot ‘Still Alive’ as Case Broadens,” ABC News, September 22, 2009.

⁸⁴ Brian Ross, Richard Esposito, and Clayton Sandell, “FBI Arrest Three Men in Terror Plot that Targeted New York,” ABC News, September 20, 2009.

⁸⁵ David Von Drehle and Bobby Ghosh, “The Enemy Within: The Making of Najibullah Zazi,” Time Magazine, October 1, 2009.

⁸⁶ Karl Gehring, “Terror Suspect is Transferred to New York for Trial,” The Denver Post, September 26, 2009.

⁸⁷ <http://www.ilovezakirnaik.com>, last accessed on September 27, 2009.



Zakir Naik (Source: www.ilovezakirnaik.com)

As stated earlier in this report, Zazi attended a mosque in Flushing that was split between supporters of Al-Qaida and the Taliban and those who did not support them. The debates would have exposed Zazi and other young worshipers to various perspectives, including the viewpoints of those who supported Al-Qaida.

Timeline of Events

August 28, 2008	Zazi travels to Peshawar, Pakistan.
December 2008	Zazi emails himself images of handwritten instructions on how to manufacture explosive devices to two of his three accounts.
January 15, 2009	Zazi returns to the U.S. from Pakistan.
January 2009	Zazi moves from New York to Denver, CO within days of his return from Pakistan.
March 2009	Zazi files for bankruptcy.
June 2009	Zazi transfers emailed instructions on how to manufacture explosive devices to his laptop computer.
July 2009	Zazi's father moves from New York to Aurora, CO.
July 25, 2009	Zazi purchases 12 32-ounce bottles of hydrogen peroxide from beauty supply

	store in a Denver suburb.
August 28, 2009	Zazi purchases hydrogen peroxide-based products from an Aurora, CO beauty supply store.
August 28, 2009	Zazi stays in an Aurora hotel to experiment with explosive mixtures.
September 6-7, 2009	Zazi experiments with explosive mixtures in a hotel room rented in Colorado.
September 8, 2009	Zazi conducts internet searches to a located home improvement store in Flushing. He views different brands of muriatic acid.
September 8, 2009	Zazi calls car rental agency to reserve a car.
September 9, 2009	Zaza drives a rental car from his residence in Colorado to New York. The car rental contract indicates that Zazi agreed to return the car on September 14.
September 10, 2009	Zazi was observed at a residence in Flushing, Queens, New York.
September 10, 2009	NYPD detectives meet with Afzali to interview him about Zazi and others.
September 11, 2009	Afzali calls Mohammed Wali Zazi to tell him that NYPD detectives are aware of his son's activities and that phone calls are being monitored.
September 11, 2009	Wali Zazi calls his son to inform him that he should expect to receive a call from Afzali.
September 11, 2009	FBI agents conducted a search of Zazi's rental car in which they recovered a laptop computer containing files describing the manufacturing of explosives.
September 12, 2009	Zazi flies from New York to Colorado. He does not return the rental car.
September 14, 2009	FBI agents conduct a search of Flushing,

	Queens residence. They recover a scale and batteries, both of which had Zazi's fingerprints on them.
September 16, 2009	FBI agents in Denver, Colorado interview Zazi. Zazi denies knowledge of the bomb-making instructions found on his computer in New York.
September 19, 2009	Zazi arrested by FBI agents in Colorado for making a false statement in a matter involving terrorism.
September 29, 2009	Zazi pleads not guilty in federal court in Brooklyn, New York.
October 8, 2009	Mohammed Zazi is indicted by a federal grand jury in Denver for making a false statement involving terrorism.