



## Report #20 in the NEFA Series "Target: America" August 2009

Report #20 in a NEFA series, "Target: America"  
A NEFA report on the Plot to Attack Jewish Centers in the Bronx  
and a Military Facility in Newburgh, New York  
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### **Overview of the Plot**

- Over the course of a year, four Muslim converts contemplated, then attempted to act upon, a plot to attack Jewish religious centers in the Riverdale section of the Bronx and to shoot down an Air National Guard aircraft in Newburgh, New York, using a surface-to-air missile (SAM).
- The FBI utilized a confidential informant (CI), a Pakistani immigrant who had also worked with the FBI on a high-profile money-laundering case in Albany<sup>1</sup> in order to avoid deportation on fraud charges.
- The conspirators resided in Newburgh, New York, approximately an hour-and-a-half north from the Riverdale section of the Bronx, where two of the intended attack targets were located: the Riverdale Temple and the Riverdale Jewish Center. They intended to attack the Bronx targets and the aircraft in Newburgh on the same day.
- The conspirators conducted surveillance in the Bronx in April 2009, using a digital camera to photograph prospective targets. While conducting surveillance on the Riverdale Jewish Center, the alleged leader of the cell, James Cromitie, remarked that the attack on that particular target would be a "piece of cake."
- The conspirators also conducted surveillance at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh in April 2009.
- Through the FBI, the CI arranged for the conspirators to procure explosives and a SAM, leading them to believe that the weapon and explosives were to be supplied by Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), a Pakistan-based terrorist group. The explosives and the SAM that were provided to the conspirators by the FBI were not viable.
- The operational phase of the plot (surveillance and acquisition of material), until the date of the intended attack, took place over the course of six weeks.
- The conspirators were arrested on the night of May 20, 2009, just after they had planted the bombs in cars outside of each of the Bronx targets.

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<sup>1</sup> Murray Weiss and Dan Mangan, *Informant Fingered Money Launder Duo*, New York Post, May 22, 2009.

## **Conspirators**

### **James Cromitie**

James Cromitie was born on December 24, 1964.<sup>2</sup> He was raised in the Bronx as an Episcopalian and converted to Islam while in prison.<sup>3</sup>

According to New York City Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly, Cromitie had been arrested 27 times.<sup>4</sup> He was convicted in 1987 on a misdemeanor drug felony. He spent time in several New York State prisons before he was released from the Fishkill Correctional Facility in 1991.<sup>5</sup> Twelve of his arrests were on drug offenses, which resulted in three additional convictions in 1989, 1990, and 1992.<sup>6</sup> His most recent arrest was for selling drugs to an undercover officer near a New York City school.<sup>7</sup> He was paroled on his last conviction in September 2004.<sup>8</sup>

Cromitie served his sentences under three different names: his own; a variation of his name, “James Cromitie”; and also “David Anderson”.



James Cromitie taken into FBI/NYPD custody [source: New York Daily News]

He worked at a Newburgh Walmart until three months prior to his arrest in the Bronx terror plot.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Al Baker, *Suspects in Terror Bombing Plot*, New York Times, May 21, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Chuck Bennett and Katie Cornell, *Explosive Evidence Dooms these Goons*, New York Post, May 22, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Al Baker, *Suspects in Terror Bombing Plot*, New York Times, May 21, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Chuck Bennett and Katie Cornell, *Explosive Evidence Dooms these Goons*, New York Post, May 22, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> *Profiles, Criminal Histories of Men Suspected of Plotting to Bomb NYC Temples*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> *Profiles, Criminal Histories of Men Suspected of Plotting to Bomb NYC Temples*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Chuck Bennett and Katie Cornell, *Explosive Evidence Dooms these Goons*, New York Post, May 22, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> *Profiles, Criminal Histories of Men Suspected of Plotting to Bomb NYC Temples*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

He resided in Newburgh and attended the local mosque, Masjid al-Ikhlās.

**David Williams** (no relation to co-conspirator Onta Williams)

David Williams was born on February 9, 1981<sup>10</sup> and grew up in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. According to his mother, his official residence was in East New York, Brooklyn, but he spent a lot of time at her house in Newburgh, which is located a few doors down from Cromitie's residence.<sup>11</sup>



David Williams [source: New York Times]

He and his father are converts to Islam.<sup>12</sup>

Williams served less than a year in prison in 2005 for drug and weapons charges,<sup>13</sup> and was released from Fishkill Correctional Facility in April 2005.<sup>14</sup> He was re-arrested in 2005 for violating parole<sup>15</sup> and was released from the Willard Correctional Facility in December 2005.<sup>16</sup>

Williams has a daughter and a son.<sup>17</sup> He worked for six months in the kitchen of a Brooklyn steak house, but left the job approximately two months prior to his arrest in the Bronx.<sup>18</sup>

**Onta Williams** (no relation to co-conspirator David Williams)

Onta Williams was born on June 29, 1976 and is the father of two.<sup>19</sup>

He was raised as a Baptist in Newburgh.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Al Baker, *Suspects in Terror Bombing Plot*, New York Times, May 21, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Al Baker, *Suspects in Terror Bombing Plot*, New York Times, May 21, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Chuck Bennett and Katie Cornell, *Explosive Evidence Dooms these Goons*, New York Post, May 22, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> *Profiles, Criminal Histories of Men Suspected of Plotting to Bomb NYC Temples*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Chuck Bennett and Katie Cornell, *Explosive Evidence Dooms these Goons*, New York Post, May 22, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> *Profiles, Criminal Histories of Men Suspected of Plotting to Bomb NYC Temples*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Chuck Bennett and Katie Cornell, *Explosive Evidence Dooms these Goons*, New York Post, May 22, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Hill and Jim Fitzgerald, *Plotters in NYC Terror Case Were Ex-Convicts Who Were Done-In by FBI Infiltration*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Al Baker, *Suspects in Terror Bombing Plot*, New York Times, May 21, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Al Baker, *Suspects in Terror Bombing Plot*, New York Times, May 21, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Chuck Bennett and Katie Cornell, *Explosive Evidence Dooms these Goons*, New York Post, May 22, 2009.

In 2003, he was sentenced on federal drug charges and served his time in federal prison in Orange County,<sup>21</sup> converting to Islam while behind bars.<sup>22</sup>

According to his lawyer, Williams had been addicted to both cocaine and crack cocaine from the time he was 15 or 16 years old.<sup>23</sup>

He worked at a warehouse loading trucks.<sup>24</sup>



Onta Williams [source: New York Times]

### **Laguerre Payen**

Laguerre Payen was born on September 24, 1981 in Haiti.<sup>25</sup> He was described as having “serious psychological problems” by Hamin Rashada, an assistant imam from the Masjid al-Ikhlās. Rashada also said that Payen was illiterate<sup>26</sup> and lacked knowledge of Islam.<sup>27</sup> He described Payen’s behavior at the mosque, which he had attended since February 2009, as disruptive.<sup>28</sup> Payen’s lawyer stated that Payen was on medication to treat schizophrenia.<sup>29</sup>

In 2002, he and others fired a BB gun out of a car window, hitting two people in the head. Later that same day, he snatched purses.<sup>30</sup> He was released from prison on the assault charges in August 2005.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Profiles, Criminal Histories of Men Suspected of Plotting to Bomb NYC Temples*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Hill and Jim Fitzgerald, *Plotters in NYC Terror Case Were Ex-Convicts Who Were Done-In by FBI Infiltration*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Al Baker, *Suspects in Terror Bombing Plot*, New York Times, May 21, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Hill and Jim Fitzgerald, *Plotters in NYC Terror Case Were Ex-Convicts Who Were Done-In by FBI Infiltration*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Al Baker, *Suspects in Terror Bombing Plot*, New York Times, May 21, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> *Accused NY Plotter’s Behavior Made Others Wary*, Reuters, May 21, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Rachel Zoll, *2 NY Plot Suspects Had Been in Mosque Where State Prison Chaplain Helped Ex-Convicts*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> *Accused NY Plotter’s Behavior Made Others Wary*, Reuters, May 21, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Hill and Jim Fitzgerald, *Plotters in NYC Terror Case Were Ex-Convicts Who Were Done-In by FBI Infiltration*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Hill and Jim Fitzgerald, *Plotters in NYC Terror Case Were Ex-Convicts Who Were Done-In by FBI Infiltration*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

Upon entering the prison system, he declared his religion as Roman Catholic. He converted to Islam while serving his sentence.<sup>32</sup>

Payen, who lived in a home for parolees, had been fighting deportation and for custody of his three-year old son.<sup>33</sup>

### **Association Among Conspirators**

It remains unclear how the conspirators became associated with one another; whether they knew each other from prison, or if they had all met at the Masjid al-Ikhlās, where all were reported to have spent time, and where the a government court filing states Cromitie initially met with the CI.<sup>34</sup>



Masjid al-Ikhlās [source: Masjid al-Ikhlās]

Denying that any of the conspirators had been a member of its community, the Masjid al-Ikhlās published a notice in its June newsletter, which read, in part:<sup>35</sup>

“In May, 2009 four men were arrested and held on charges of conspiracy to commit terrorism. They were vilified in the media as terrorists and charged with being members of Masjid Al Ikhlas - giving the world community the impression that we condone this behavior.

#### **WE DO NOT!!**

It was then realized that they were not members of our community and it was also revealed that an FBI informant bribed and enticed these men into joining his cause of terrorist acts with promises of money, jobs or whatever he thought he could offer to employ his scheme of entrapment. It was also revealed that this same informant had entered our community attempting to do the same with the believers of Masjid Al Ikhlas, but to no avail.”

Masjid al-Ikhlās is led by Imam Salahuddin Muhammad, who has also been a chaplain at the Fishkill Correctional Facility in Beacon, New York since 1985. He also serves as a chaplain one day a week at Bard College.<sup>36</sup>

Muhammad converted to Islam while serving a 12-year prison sentence for robbery.<sup>37</sup> He began as an adherent to the Nation of Islam, then left to follow Imam W.D.

<sup>31</sup> *Profiles, Criminal Histories of Men Suspected of Plotting to Bomb NYC Temples*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Al Baker, *Suspects in Terror Bombing Plot*, New York Times, May 21, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Hill and Jim Fitzgerald, *Plotters in NYC Terror Case Were Ex-Convicts Who Were Done-In by FBI Infiltration*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.masjidalikhlas.org>, last accessed on July 1, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Rachel Zoll, *2 NY Plot Suspects Had Been in Mosque Where State Prison Chaplain Helped Ex-Convicts*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

Mohammed.<sup>38</sup> Muhammad knew Warith Deen Umar, formerly in charge of appointing Muslim chaplains for the New York State Prison system, from the time when they were both incarcerated in the late 1970s;<sup>39</sup> in 1985, Umar recruited Mohammed to work for him as an Imam at Fishkill Correctional Facility, where he continues to work.<sup>40</sup> Umar was eventually banned from the New York State Department of Corrections for praising the 9/11 terrorists.<sup>41</sup>

Salahuddin Muhammad has been accused of being an extremist - possibly supporting and being supported by Saudi Wahabbis. He is alleged to have distributed anti-Shiite literature produced by the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), which is a Saudi-based Wahabbi organization.<sup>42</sup>

New York City Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly stated that it is believed that the conspirators knew each other from their time spent in prison.<sup>43</sup> However, it is difficult to determine from news reports where they may have overlapped.

### **Details of Plot**

The CI initially met Cromitie at the Masjid al-Ikhlās in Newburgh, New York in June 2008.

Cromitie told the CI that his parents had lived in Afghanistan prior to his birth, and that is why he felt particularly angry about the war there, as well as the violence in Pakistan.<sup>44</sup> After his arrest, Cromitie's mother told reporters that neither she, nor Cromitie's father, who left when Cromitie was young, had lived in Afghanistan.<sup>45</sup> Cromitie stated to the CI that if he died as a martyr he would go to paradise and expressed a will to "do something to America."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Rachel Zoll, *2 NY Plot Suspects Had Been in Mosque Where State Prison Chaplain Helped Ex-Convicts*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Rachel Zoll, *2 NY Plot Suspects Had Been in Mosque Where State Prison Chaplain Helped Ex-Convicts*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Barrett, *Captive Audience: How a Chaplain Spread Extremism to an Inmate Flock*, Wall Street Journal, February 5, 2003.

<sup>40</sup> Perry Chiaramonte and Jennifer Fermino, *Mosque's Imam is Prison Chaplain*, New York Post, May 22, 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Perry Chiaramonte and Jennifer Fermino, *Mosque's Imam is Prison Chaplain*, New York Post, May 22, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> *Black America, Prisons and Radical Islam*, Center for Islamic Pluralism, September 2008.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Hill and Jim Fitzgerald, *Plotters in NYC Terror Case Were Ex-Convicts Who Were Done-In by FBI Infiltration*, Associated Press, May 21, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009

<sup>45</sup> Michael Wilson, *In Bronx Bomb Case, Missteps Caught on Tape*, New York Times, May 22, 2009.

<sup>46</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

The CI claimed to Cromitie that he was involved with the Pakistani terrorist group, Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and, upon learning of this connection, Cromitie expressed an interest in becoming involved with JeM too.<sup>47</sup>

Reports claim that the CI appeared flush with cash and paid for everything, including Cromitie's rent. Associates of the conspirators are accusing the FBI of entrapment by luring the conspirators with such gifts and money.<sup>48</sup> David Williams' family alleges that the CI even offered to pay for a liver transplant for Williams' ailing younger brother.<sup>49</sup>

Beginning in October 2008, the CI began meeting with Cromitie and the other defendants at a house in Newburgh ("the Newburgh House"), which was wired with video and audio equipment by the FBI.<sup>50</sup>

At the Newburgh House, Cromitie discussed his desire to attack a synagogue in the Bronx, and a military aircraft located at an Air National Guard base in Newburgh, New York.<sup>51</sup>

Cromitie and the CI traveled to Philadelphia to attend a meeting of the Muslim Alliance of North America.<sup>52</sup> During the trip, Cromitie again discussed his desire to attack a synagogue.<sup>53</sup>

During a December 2008 meeting at the Newburgh House, Cromitie asked the CI if he could get a SAM. The CI told the conspirators that he could obtain a SAM through his contacts in Jaish-e-Mohammed.<sup>54</sup>

During the same meeting, Cromitie stated that it was necessary to begin using code words when referring to weapons and explosives in order to avoid detection by

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<sup>47</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Lorena Mongelli, *Jihad Bait and Snitch*, New York Post, May 24, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> Joe Kemp, *Informant Offered Liver Transplant For Terror Suspect's Brother Sez Mom*, New York Daily News, May 24, 2009.

<sup>50</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>51</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Siraj Wahaj, unindicted co-conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center attack, is the Emir of the Muslim Alliance of North America. (see <http://www.mana-net.org/subpage.php?ID=faqs>). Wahaj is the imam at the Al-Taqwa mosque in Brooklyn, New York.

<sup>53</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>54</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

law enforcement. Cromitie also discussed his desire to conduct surveillance on prospective attack targets.<sup>55</sup>

On April 10, 2009, the conspirators and the CI traveled to a Walmart in Newburgh, New York, where they purchased a digital camera for the purpose of taking surveillance photographs. Cromitie, David Williams, and the CI drove to the Bronx and took photos of several synagogues and a Jewish community center.<sup>56</sup>



Riverdale Temple, Bronx, NY

During the surveillance of the Jewish community center, Cromitie stated that bombing this particular target would be “a piece of cake.”<sup>57</sup> He also pointed out people walking in the vicinity of the Jewish center and said that if he had a gun he would shoot each one of them in the head.<sup>58</sup>

During the surveillance trip, David Williams suggested that they refer to attack targets as “joints” to avoid detection.<sup>59</sup>

At an April 23, 2009 meeting at the Newburgh House, the conspirators discussed details of how the attacks would be executed, including.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>56</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>57</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>58</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>60</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

- Using a SAM to destroy a military aircraft at the Air National Guard base in Newburgh, and the use of explosives to bomb the Bronx targets.
- The use of code words.
- The need to travel to a location in Connecticut to pick up the SAM and the explosives.
- The logistics and timing of the attacks so that all of the attacks could be executed the same day.
- The roles and responsibilities of each of the conspirators on the day of the attacks.
- Their need for cell phones in order to communicate with each other on the day of the attacks.
- Their need to purchase hand guns for use during the attacks.

During the meeting, David Williams placed a call to a Newburgh-based gun dealer to arrange a meeting with her.<sup>61</sup>

On April 24, 2009, the conspirators drove to the area outside of the National Guard Air Base to locate a spot from which to launch the SAM. Once positioned, they used the digital camera to take pictures from the vantage spot.<sup>62</sup>

On April 28, 2009, David Williams, Cromitie, and the CI drove to see the Newburgh-based gun dealer. The gun dealer informed them she had already sold the guns to another buyer, which led Williams to begin calling other dealers.<sup>63</sup>

Later, on April 28<sup>th</sup>, the conspirators picked up Onta Williams, and they all went to a cell phone store to determine which phones to use on the day of the attacks.<sup>64</sup>

Onta Williams also called contacts in an effort to procure guns, but was unsuccessful.<sup>65</sup> David Williams successfully located a dealer in Brooklyn who was willing

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<sup>61</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>64</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

to sell to him. Dave Williams, Cromitie, and the CI drove to Brooklyn on April 30<sup>th</sup> and purchased a 9 millimeter handgun for \$700. Williams described the dealer to the CI as a “supreme Blood leader” and boasted that if he (the CI) had not been there he would have shot the gun dealer and kept the \$700.<sup>66</sup>

On May 1, 2009, the conspirators purchased four cell phone, for use on the day of the attacks, from a cell phone store in Newburgh.<sup>67</sup>

On May 2, 2009, the conspirators drove towards Stamford, Connecticut, in order to pick up the explosive material and the SAM they would use for the attacks. The FBI planted the supplies. The conspirators believed that they would be picking up a viable 30-pound improvised explosive device (IED) comprised of C-4, military grade plastic explosive.<sup>68</sup>

As they approached the Connecticut border, Onta Williams became nervous that they were being followed by law enforcement.<sup>69</sup> At that point, they turned the car around and returned to Newburgh, where they dropped Onta Williams off. David Williams, Laguerre Payen, Cromitie, and the CI drove around Newburgh for a while to determine if they were being followed. Once they were satisfied they were not being followed, they resumed their journey to Connecticut without Onta Williams.<sup>70</sup> Williams was present on the day of the attempted execution of the plot.

Once they arrived at the warehouse, Williams, Cromitie, and Payen inspected the SAM and the explosives. They tested the detonation device for the explosives, which was programmed with a cell phone.<sup>71</sup>

The conspirators returned to Newburgh and placed the materials into a storage locker.<sup>72</sup>

The conspirators were arrested after planting the inert IEDs into two cars parked outside of each of the Bronx targets.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Al Baker, *Suspects in Terror Bombing Plot*, New York Times, May 21, 2009.

<sup>67</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>68</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>69</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>70</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>71</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>72</sup> United States of America v. James Cromitie, et al, U.S. Attorney, Southern District of New York, criminal charges submitted on May 19, 2009.

<sup>73</sup> *Suspects in New York Synagogue Plot to Be Held in Jail*, Reuters, May 21, 2009.

## **Lessons Learned**

Throughout the surveillance process, Cromitie remarked on the ease with which targets could be hit, and how egress would be simple from the target locations. The conspirators' criminal histories and the nature of their plot also made them acutely attentive to law enforcement and possible counter-surveillance measures, as evidenced when the group turned back to Newburgh after beginning their trip to Stamford, Connecticut because they believed they were being followed by law enforcement.

There have been several cases in the last few years of homegrown jihadis targeting military facilities and personnel for attack, such as the plot to attack Ft. Dix in New Jersey,<sup>74</sup> and the shooting in June of military personnel in Little Rock, Arkansas by an American convert to Islam.<sup>75</sup> Certainly, the U.S. military has been declared a target by Al-Qaida; however, in the Bronx case, it is unknown whether the conspirators were motivated by Al-Qaida's rhetoric or whether the Newburgh Air Base was chosen as a target because it seemed logical to the conspirators, who were angry about U.S. military action in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Targets for terrorist attack are not necessarily selected as a result of complex strategic planning or because conspirators have been told to attack specific places by experienced masterminds. Rather, targets may be chosen because they seem "obvious" given jihadist's motivations, or because they are simply "easy targets."

The time lag between what can be described as "idle chatter" about executing a terrorist attack to the actual operational phase may be very short. Also, the operational phase itself may be very short. In the case of the Bronx plot, the conspirators conducted surveillance, acquired weapons and explosives, crafted detailed plans about the execution of the operation, and put the plan into action, all in approximately six weeks. They conducted pre-operational surveillance on the targets only once, which means there was very little opportunity for observers to detect and deter a possible attack.

## **Timeline of Events**

June 2008	FBI's CI met Cromitie at Newburgh mosque. Cromitie informed CI, at that time, that he was unhappy about political and military environment in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
October 2008	Informant and Cromitie began meeting at a house in Newburgh to discuss Cromitie's desire to attack Bronx synagogue and military aircraft at the Air National Guard Base in Newburgh.
November 28-30, 2008	Cromitie and CI traveled to Philadelphia to attend a meeting of the Muslim Alliance of

<sup>74</sup> For more on this plot, see the NEFA Foundation "Target: America" report at <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/fortdixplot.pdf>.

<sup>75</sup> For more on this attack, see the NEFA Foundation "Target: America" report at [http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/NEFA\\_littlerockrecruitingshooting.pdf](http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/NEFA_littlerockrecruitingshooting.pdf).

	North America. During the trip, Cromitie, again, discussed his desire to destroy a synagogue.
December 2008	Cromitie discusses acquisition of SAM and explosives with CI.
April 10, 2009	Conspirators photograph synagogues and Jewish community centers in the Bronx. Digital camera used to take surveillance photos was purchased from a Newburgh Walmart on the same day as the trip down to the Bronx.
April 24, 2009	Conspirators selected location from which to launch SAM outside of Newburgh Air Base. They photographed the location and the planes on the airfield.
April 28, 2009	David Williams contacted gun dealer in Brooklyn, NY and arranged to purchase guns.
April 30, 2009	Cromitie, Williams, and CI traveled to Brooklyn and purchased one 9 mm semi-automatic handgun.
May 1, 2009	Conspirators purchased cell phones to be used to communicate with one another on the day of the operations.
May 6, 2009	Conspirators travel to Stamford, CT to pick up SAM and plastic explosives.
May 20, 2009	Arrested at 9 pm after dropping inert explosives in front of targets in the Bronx.