



The Fort Dix Plot

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A NEFA analysis of U.S. v. Shnewer
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U.S.-Based Plotters

On May 7, 2007, federal agents made a series of arrests following a lengthy investigation that uncovered a plot to murder members of the U.S. military. In indictments filed in June 2007, prosecutors charged Serdar Tatar of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Mohamad Shnewer of Cherry Hill, New Jersey; and brothers Dritan, Shain, and Eljvir Duka of Cherry Hill, New Jersey with involvement in the planned attack.¹ (Shnewer is the Duka's brother-in-law.²) A superseding indictment, filed on January 15, 2008, charged the men with the attempted murder of military personnel.³ The Duka brothers, Shnewer,⁴ and Agron Abdullahu of Buena Vista Township, New Jersey were also indicted on weapons-related charges;⁵ Abdullahu pled guilty to those charges in October 2007.⁶

According to federal prosecutors, "there is abundant evidence that the defendants fully subscribed to al Qaeda's jihadist ideology."⁷ What's more, Christopher Christie, the U.S. Attorney for New Jersey, asserted that the men "were ready for martyrdom."⁸ And J.P. Weis, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Philadelphia office, commented, "We had a group that was forming a platoon to take on an army. They identified their target, they did their reconnaissance. They had maps. And they were in the process of buying weapons."⁹

However, there is no evidence that this "homegrown" cell was taking direction from Al-Qaida leadership abroad. As Christopher Christie assessed, "we believe they are

¹ "Five Indicted in Plot to Kill Soldiers at Fort Dix," Department of Justice Press Release, June 5, 2007.

² U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

³ U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Superseding Indictment, Filed January 15, 2008.

⁴ U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Superseding Indictment, Filed January 15, 2008.

⁵ U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Indictment, Filed June 5, 2007.

⁶ "Abdullahu Admits Supplying Guns and Ammunition to Illegal Aliens Charged with Planning Attacks on Military Personnel," Department of Justice Press Release, October 31, 2007.

⁷ U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Support of Motion for an Anonymous Jury, Filed July 9, 2007.

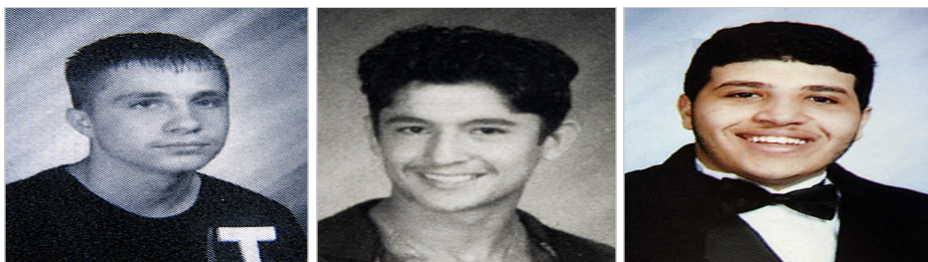
⁸ Susan K. Livio and Ted Sherman, "Just Ordinary Men, Shocked Neighbors Say," *The Newark Star-Ledger*, May 9, 2007.

⁹ David Kocieniewski, "6 Men Arrested in a Terror Plot against U.S. Army Base," *International Herald Tribune*, May 9, 2007.

their own cell."¹⁰ Nonetheless, Christie pointed out, "This is a new brand of terrorism where a small cell of people can bring enormous devastation."¹¹

When analyzing the dynamics of the cell, Christie remarked that "unlike other cases we've done, there was no clear ringleaders." Instead, Christie noted, "they all seemed to feed off each other. They were clearly guys turning to this element for inspiration. They wanted to be jihadists."¹²

Although the FBI is aware of other individuals who participated in firearms training with the suspects, there is inadequate evidence to charge them in connection with the terrorist conspiracy. Jerri Williams, a FBI Special Agent, told the media, "We know where they are and the investigation continues. However, at this time we do not have evidence that would link them directly to the plot."¹³ Notably, a court filing states that Mohamad Shnewer claimed that Burim Duka, the youngest Duka brother, planned to participate in the plot.¹⁴



Eljvir Duka

Serdar Tatar

Mohamad Shnewer

The Target: The U.S. Army Base at Fort Dix, New Jersey

In early August 2006, Mohamad Shnewer told FBI informant Mahmoud Omar (see more on Omar below) that he, Tatar, the Duka brothers, and others were planning to attack the U.S. Army base at Fort Dix, New Jersey and "were not afraid to die."¹⁵

On August 1, 2006, in a recorded conversation, Shnewer said to Omar, "If you really want to do anything here, there is Fort Dix...I don't want to exaggerate...I assure you that you can hit an American base very easily." He continued, "You take a map and draw it and then you calculate that there are areas where there are 100-200 individuals and you should allocate 6-7 persons for this alone." Shnewer added, "When you go to a military base, you need mortars and RPGs."¹⁶

Mahmoud Omar was particularly attractive to the group because he had served in the Egyptian military, and they thus considered him an ideal candidate to help lead

¹⁰ "Brothers Charged in Terror Plot Lived Illegally in U.S. for 23 Years," *Fox News*, May 9, 2007.

¹¹ David Kocieniewski, "6 Men Arrested in a Terror Plot against U.S. Army Base," *International Herald Tribune*, May 9, 2007.

¹² Dale Russakoff and Dan Eggen, "Six Charged in Plot to Attack Fort Dix," *The Washington Post*, May 9, 2007.

¹³ Kevin Mooney, "FBI Knows Identity of Four Other NJ Jihadists," *CNSNews.com*, May 10, 2007.

¹⁴ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007 and Amanda Ripley, "The Fort Dix Conspiracy," *Time Magazine*, December 17, 2007.

¹⁵ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

¹⁶ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

the assault on Fort Dix. In fact, Shnewer stated to Omar, "I am at your services as you have more experience than me in military bases and in life."¹⁷

Four days later, on August 5, 2006, Shnewer stressed the "need to accumulate experience," "think about how many we need," and "gather the weapons." Shnewer was not particularly concerned with procuring the weapons, as he told Omar, "I can get the weapons, machine gun, hand gun...from the street as you cannot buy a machine gun from a store." (see more on the cell's acquisition of weapons below.) And confirming the Duka brothers' commitment to the plot, Shnewer remarked, "I spoke with them some time ago, and they are ready."¹⁸

Then, on August 11, 2006, Shnewer explained that he was interested in attacking Fort Dix because his "intent is to hit a heavy concentration of soldiers..."¹⁹

A March 10, 2007 recorded conversation between Dritan and Shain Duka further highlights the Duka brothers' willingness to launch attacks in the U.S. Shain Duka argued that it was not necessary to travel overseas to wage jihad: "...as far as people we have enough, 7 people. And we are all crazy. That's what is needed..." His brother Dritan later chimed in, "...7 people are a lot...We can do a lot of damage with 7 people." During that same conversation, Shain Duka told another FBI informant that Serdar Tatar "wanted to join the U.S. Army so that he could kill U.S. soldiers from the 'inside.'" Shain agreed with Tatar's suggestion, stating, "do them, we can." And analyzing Tatar, Dritan Duka assessed that "He had only one mind, how to kill American soldiers."²⁰

Additional insight into the Duka brothers' state of mind is evident during a conversation with Agron Abdullahu, in which Abdullahu stated that Islam forbids the murder of civilians; in response, one of the Duka brothers argued that that maybe "you could attack a military base."²¹

Procuring a Map of Fort Dix

Serdar Tatar had unique insights into the vulnerabilities of the base because his family owns SuperMario's Pizza, a restaurant near Fort Dix, and he had made deliveries there. As Mohamad Shnewer explained to Mahmoud Omar, the FBI informant, Tatar knows the base "like the palm of his hand."²²



SuperMario's Pizza; Newark Star-Ledger

Exploiting his inside access to the base, Tatar offered to provide a map to Omar to help him "make them [Americans] pay." Shortly after this initial conversation, on November 12, 2006, Tatar acknowledged he was "in" on the Fort Dix plot. Then, on November 28, 2006, despite concern that Omar was a FBI agent, Tatar told him, "I'm gonna do it. Whether you are or not [FBI] I'm gonna do it...It doesn't matter to me, whether I get locked up, arrested, or get taken away, it doesn't matter. Or I die, doesn't

¹⁷ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

¹⁸ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

¹⁹ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

²⁰ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

²¹ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

²² U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

matter, I'm doing it in the name of Allah."²³ That same day, Tatar directed Omar to the location at which he had hidden a map labeled "Cantonment Area Fort Dix, NJ."²⁴ (When interviewed by law enforcement, Tatar denied providing the map.²⁵)

Conducting Surveillance on Fort Dix

To prepare for the assault on Fort Dix, one of the conspirators carried out pre-operational surveillance. Discussing his plan with Mahmoud Omar on August 5, 2006, Mohamad Shnewer warned about tight security at the base, saying, "you cannot take pictures as it is very difficult to do so." Instead, Shnewer advised that Omar "make as if you are talking on the cell phone and you will take a video...we will drive slow and what is nice with the phone is that if you are stopped by...police, you will delete it from memory." Shortly after this conversation, on August 11, 2006, Shnewer and Omar drove by the base to conduct surveillance.²⁶

Possible Operational Details of the Attack

According to a court filing, during surveillance of Fort Dix, Mohamad Shnewer "drove into a specific area at Fort Dix" and said, "this is exactly what we are looking for. You hit 4, 5, or 6 humvees and light the whole place [up] and retreat completely without any losses."²⁷

Additionally, the same court filing alleges that on November 12, 2006, Serdar Tatar "described a place at Fort Dix they could target that would cause a power outage and allow for an easier attack on the military personnel there."²⁸

Procuring Weapons

In preparation for their attack, the conspirators procured a number of firearms and sought access to even heavier weaponry.

For instance, according to Dritan Duka, the group bought a shotgun and a .357 magnum firearm on the black market. The men also possessed a number of other firearms, including semi-automatic assault weapons.²⁹

On August 18, 2006, in an effort to secure additional firepower, the Duka brothers met with Mahmoud Omar's weapons "source,"³⁰ who was also an FBI informant. Eager to purchase AK-47 fully automatic machine guns, Dritan Duka recognized that the weapons would have to be purchased "from the streets" since fully automatic machine guns were illegal.³¹ In a December 29, 2006 conversation, Mohamad Shnewer similarly acknowledged the illegality of this weapon, commenting, "it is forbidden to use fully automatic."³² In other instances, Shnewer admitted that "in all of

²³ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

²⁴ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

²⁵ U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Superseding Indictment, Filed January 15, 2008.

²⁶ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

²⁷ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

²⁸ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

²⁹ U.S. v. Duka, Complaint, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

³⁰ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

³¹ He also spoke of buying a handgun "from the streets" for \$400.

³² U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

the U.S. it's illegal to sell machine guns" and that "there is nothing legal about" them.³³ (Shnewer also expressed interest in acquiring rocket propelled grenades that "would increase the number of killings the group could cause."³⁴)

Unfazed by the criminal nature of their actions, the conspirators pressed forward on their quest to procure machine guns. Court filings note that on March 16, 2007, Shnewer told Omar, "Let him bring four [AK-47 machine guns]...I know these guns as I used it in my country and I shot with it." The group formally placed their weapons orders in April 2007, as Dritan Duka and Shnewer ordered a total of five AK-47 Kalishnikov fully-automatic machine guns, as well as M-16 rifles and handguns.³⁵

On May 7, 2007, Shain and Dritan Duka took possession of four handguns,³⁶ as well as what prosecutors label "seven powerful weapons of war" from a cooperating witness: four fully-automatic M-16 machine guns and three semi-automatic AK-47 assault rifles.³⁷ Following the weapons deal, the Duka brothers were arrested, along with the rest of the cell.³⁸ (The FBI was concerned that cell members might acquire weapons from outside sources. FBI Director Robert Mueller commented, "when we started to lose control of their weapons purchases, a determination was made that now's the time to make the arrest."³⁹)

Throughout the course of the conspiracy, members of the cell consistently took steps to obscure their interest in and possession of weapons from law enforcement. For one, Shnewer admitted to Mahmoud Omar that he concealed his weapons in his air conditioner.⁴⁰ And, in August 2006, Tatar transferred ownership of two weapons to another individual "to prevent those weapons from being traced to...members of the conspiracy."⁴¹

But, undoubtedly, the Duka brothers – who repeatedly made statements demonstrating awareness that, as illegal immigrants without "green cards,"⁴² they could not own weapons – went to the greatest lengths to avoid detection. For example, due to their immigration status, they avoided "regular gun ranges."⁴³ Moreover, Eljvir Duka admitted to Mahmoud Omar that he "had one brother buy" a weapon for him "with a Pennsylvania license." Duka confirmed, "It's my gun but he bought it under his name."⁴⁴

³³ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

³⁴ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

³⁵ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

³⁶ U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Superseding Indictment, Filed January 15, 2008.

³⁷ U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Government's Brief in Opposition to Defendants' Motions to Terminate Administrative Detention and for Alternative Relief, Filed December 11, 2007.

³⁸ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

³⁹ Ronald Kessler, *The Terrorist Watch: Inside the Desperate Race to Stop the Next Attack*, Crown Forum, New York, N.Y., © 2007.

⁴⁰ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), Complaint, No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁴¹ U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Indictment, Filed June 5, 2007.

⁴² U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

⁴³ U.S. v. Duka, Complaint, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁴⁴ U.S. v. Duka, Complaint, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

To address this problem, the Duka brothers had Agron Abdullahu and another individual store their weapons.⁴⁵ When searching Abdullahu's residence on May 7, 2007, federal agents seized a 9 millimeter Beretta handgun, a Mossberg 12 gauge shotgun, a Beretta 9 millimeter CX4 Storm rifle, a Yugo rifle, a bayonet, and ammunition.⁴⁶ Moreover, prosecutors note that Abdullahu "admitted that he purchased approximately 2,500 rounds of ammunition to be used by the Dukas and others."⁴⁷

Training

To prepare for their assault on Fort Dix, the conspirators repeatedly engaged in tactical and firearms training.

According to court documents, on January 3, 2006, Shnewer, Dritan, Eljvir, and Shain Duka, Tatar, Abdullahu and four others conducted firearms training in the Pocono mountains (Gouldsboro, Pennsylvania).⁴⁸ The group videotaped this session, in which the men shot "assault weapons at a firing range in a militia-like style while calling for jihad and shouting in Arabic 'Allah Akbar.'"⁴⁹ Shnewer reported that five firearms were used and "each shooter had fired approximately 400 bullets."⁵⁰

Then, in early February 2007, fourteen individuals – including Shnewer, the three indicted Duka brothers, Abdullahu,⁵¹ and Abdullahu's thirteen and eighteen-year-old brothers – traveled to a rented house at 2717 Eagleview Drive in Gouldsboro.⁵² On February 2, 2007, federal agents conducting surveillance watched the Duka brothers train at a firearms range with a 9 millimeter Beretta handgun, a Mossberg 12 gauge pump shotgun, an SKS semi-automatic rifle, and a Beretta Storm semi-automatic rifle. They also noted that Abdullahu was instructing members of the group how to hold the shotgun when shooting it.⁵³ Three days later, some of the men were recorded discussing "bombs,



The shooting range; Newark Star-Ledger

⁴⁵ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007 and "Abdullahu Admits Supplying Guns and Ammunition to Illegal Aliens Charged with Planning Attacks on Military Personnel," Department of Justice Press Release, October 31, 2007.

⁴⁶ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

⁴⁷ "Abdullahu Admits Supplying Guns and Ammunition to Illegal Aliens Charged with Planning Attacks on Military Personnel," Department of Justice Press Release, October 31, 2007.

⁴⁸ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007 and U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

⁴⁹ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

⁵⁰ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁵¹ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007. Note: Both FBI informants attended the training session as well.

⁵² Dunstan McNichol and John Martin, "Pa. Playground Becomes Terror Training Ground," *The Newark Star-Ledger*, May 20, 2007.

⁵³ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

nitroglycerin, and the explosive C-4."⁵⁴ (Notably, prior to the group's arrival, the FBI rented the house for a short period, presumably to install surveillance equipment.⁵⁵) If there were any confusion about the purpose of the group's trip to the Poconos, Eljvir Duka clarified the issue, explaining that it "had been a training mission." Duka added, "at the end when it comes to defending your religion, when someone is trying attacks [on] your religion, your way of life, then you go jihad."⁵⁶

Following the Poconos trip, the Duka brothers continued training for jihad. On February 26, 2007, Dritan and Eljvir "conducted tactical training in Cherry Hill, New Jersey"; on March 15, 2007, again in Cherry Hill, Dritan and Shain also "conducted tactical training."⁵⁷

Training for Jihad: Paintball

In addition to live fire training, cell members readied themselves for jihad by playing paintball. As Dritan Duka explained prior to a February 26, 2007 paintball exercise with three of his brothers and Mahmoud Omar, "they use this in U.S. Army...It's how they train you."⁵⁸

Additional Information – Interest in Attacking Other Military Targets

While the cell eventually settled on Fort Dix as their primary target, at least one of the conspirators also considered assaulting a handful of other military locations. Court documents allege that Mohamad Shnewer suggested attacking two American warships when they docked in the Port of Philadelphia and bemoaned the fact that "they had missed an opportunity to attack United States military personnel during the Army-Navy football game that had been recently played in Philadelphia."⁵⁹ According to Shnewer, in the lead up to the game, the nearby Navy base was "full of people," presenting a golden "opportunity" because "you can hit it from...New Jersey."⁶⁰ And, as discussed below, Shnewer physically assessed the vulnerability of the U.S. Army base at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey; the Lakehurst Naval Air Station in Lakehurst, New Jersey; the U.S. Coast Guard Building in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Dover Air Force base in Dover, Delaware.

Additional Information – Conducting Surveillance on Other Military Targets

To analyze other targets for attack, Mohamad Shnewer conducted a number of surveillance runs. On August 11, 2006, the same day he surveilled Fort Dix, Shnewer conducted surveillance of the U.S. Army base at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey and the Lakehurst Naval Air Station in Lakehurst, New Jersey. On his way to the Naval Station, Shnewer told Mahmoud Omar, "this is going to be easier to hit specially if you have 8 or 9 shooting with machine guns and they are good shooters."⁶¹ During a previous conversation about the naval base, Shnewer had remarked, "Maybe it is easy to hit them, there are nights when the squad is out and doing exercises without

⁵⁴ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

⁵⁵ Dunstan McNichol and John Martin, "Pa. Playground Becomes Terror Training Ground," *The Newark Star-Ledger*, May 20, 2007.

⁵⁶ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁵⁷ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁵⁸ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁵⁹ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁶⁰ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁶¹ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

weapons...the only problem is that they may have protection and scouts watching." To address this concern, Shnewer suggested that they "go one day to a nearby restaurant and observe the whole base."⁶²

Two days later, on August 13th, Shnewer carried out surveillance on the U.S. Coast Guard Base, Sector Delaware Bay, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Dover Air Force Base in Dover, Delaware. Discussing security at the Air Force base with Omar during their surveillance mission, Shnewer commented that Eljvir Duka, "told me they have high security over there." He added, "You can see the planes taking off. Sometimes, there are 300 soldiers." Arriving at the base, Shnewer examined the perimeter fence and "other security features" and "agreed with Eljvir Duka's assessment that the base was too difficult of a target because of its high security." During the trip, Shnewer also showed Omar a video detailing how to build a grenade.⁶³

Additional Information - Radicalization

While information is sparse on the multitude of factors that may have led to the radicalization of cell members, some clues do exist. For one, press reports indicate that the Duka's uncle, who reportedly became radicalized while jailed in New York State⁶⁴ and was eventually deported, played a role in his nephews' transformation. Media sources claim that several years ago, Eljvir, Shain, and Dritan became increasingly fervent in their beliefs, giving up alcohol and growing beards. Dritan and Eljvir also wed 15-year-old girls in religious ceremonies.⁶⁵ Additionally, Mohamad Shnewer's mother told a reporter that her son was upset about images of the Iraq war he saw on television.⁶⁶

It is also clear that jihadist videos played a role in strengthening the beliefs of cell members. As the indictment states, "It was part of the conspiracy that defendants Mohamad Ibrahim Shnewer, Dritan Duka, Eljvir Duka and Shain Duka acquired, distributed and/or viewed DVDs and videos which depicted violent attacks on United States military personnel, which espoused jihadist propaganda produced by al Qaeda and others, and which attempted to recruit the viewer to engage in armed attacks against the United States government."⁶⁷

For instance, on April 28, 2006, Shnewer provided Mahmoud Omar with a DVD that, according to the complaint, "contains video footage of various jihadist images while a narrator recruits the observer to the jihadist movement."⁶⁸ Then, on May 26, 2006, Shnewer instructed Omar to watch the martyrdom video of two 9/11 hijackers, as well as a video containing "images of Osama Bin Laden and other Islamic extremists"⁶⁹ making various speeches in which the speakers call the viewer to join the jihadist movement.⁷⁰

⁶² U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁶³ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁶⁴ Kareem Fahim and Andrea Elliott, "Religion Guided 3 Held in Fort Dix Plot," *The New York Times*, May 10, 2007.

⁶⁵ Amanda Ripley, "The Fort Dix Conspiracy," *Time Magazine*, December 17, 2007.

⁶⁶ Kareem Fahim and Andrea Elliott, "Religion Guided 3 Held in Fort Dix Plot," *The New York Times*, May 10, 2007.

⁶⁷ U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Indictment, Filed June 5, 2007.

⁶⁸ U.S. v. Duka, Complaint, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁶⁹ The superseding indictment identifies one of those extremists as Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, currently serving a life sentence for his role in the New York landmark bombing plot. See: U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Superseding Indictment, Filed January 15, 2008.

⁷⁰ U.S. v. Duka, Complaint, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

Two months later, during a meeting with the second FBI informant and the three indicted Duka brothers, Shnewer showed the informant videos depicting attacks on U.S. military forces. According to the criminal complaint, the informant "observed that Shnewer seemed to enjoy watching the video and smiled during the viewing." And on October 6, 2006, Shnewer informed the same informant that he wanted him to watch a handful of new videos, including one of the 9/11 hijackers training for their attack.⁷¹

Finally, during the February 2007 Poconos trip, Shnewer played jihadist videos that featured the bombing of U.S. military vehicles. A court filing alleges that when "Shain Duka pointed out that a United States Marine's arm had been blown off...laughter erupted from the group."⁷²

Additional Information - Recruitment Efforts

Court filings allege that cell members "have recruited and attempted to recruit others to radical Islamic theology..."; while prosecution filings reflect attempts to target the two FBI informants for recruitment, no further information is publicly available on these efforts.⁷³

Additional Information – The Connections between the Suspects

The connections between the conspirators can be traced as far back as 1999, when Eljvir Duka, Mohamad Shnewer, and Serdar Tatar attended Cherry Hill West High School in New Jersey.⁷⁴ Moreover, Eljvir Duka is married to one of Shnewer's sisters.⁷⁵ The Duka brothers are further tied to Shnewer through the Al-Aqsa Islamic Society Mosque in Philadelphia⁷⁶ and the Islamic Center of South Jersey in Palmyra, which their families attended.⁷⁷



Tatar & Dukas; Time

Additional Information – The Suspects' Backgrounds

The five plot conspirators, as well as Agron Abdullahu, had varied experiences and backgrounds before coming together to plot their attack on Fort Dix. However, one common string throughout their stories is that none of the men were born in the United States.

A lawyer for the Duka brothers reports that the family, which hails from Debar, Macedonia,⁷⁸ illegally entered the United States through Mexico in 1984.⁷⁹ In 1989, their

⁷¹ U.S. v. Duka, Complaint, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁷² U.S. v. Duka, Complaint, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

⁷³ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

⁷⁴ Kareem Fahim and Andrea Elliott, "Brothers Charged with Plotting Terrorism Trace Roots to Macedonia," *International Herald Tribune*, May 10, 2007.

⁷⁵ Kareem Fahim and Andrea Elliott, "Brothers Charged with Plotting Terrorism Trace Roots to Macedonia," *International Herald Tribune*, May 10, 2007.

⁷⁶ Note: The Duka brothers were working on the Al Aqsa Islamic Society's roof around the time of their arrest, but, according to a mosque spokesman, they "very rarely" attended services. See: George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

⁷⁷ George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

father, Ferik,⁸⁰ applied for asylum for the brothers and other family members, but the fate of this application has not been revealed in open sources. The Duka family also sought to normalize its status by participating in a 1995 immigration lottery; however, according to *Newsweek*, "this application...apparently ended up in some kind of bureaucratic limbo..."⁸¹

In 1996, the Duka family laid down roots in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, having spent time in Texas and Brooklyn, New York.⁸² As children, the three indicted Duka brothers modeled in New York City; *Time* reports that "Eljvir appeared in a rock-music video, Dritan was an extra in Law & Order, and Shain was in a commercial for the World Wrestling Federation."⁸³

High school classmates remember that Eljvir and his older brother Shain, who also attended Cherry Hill West, "had...a gangster attitude", "talked about fighting a lot," and "were in trouble all the time."⁸⁴ A retired assistant principal at the school confirmed these reports, telling a reporter that the two brothers were "incredibly disruptive." What's more, police were even called to Cherry Hill West to remove Ferik Duka, who threatened to assault the principal over a disciplinary incident involving Eljvir.⁸⁵

Neither Eljvir nor Shain graduated from high school.⁸⁶ Along with Dritan,⁸⁷ they went on to operate a roofing company.⁸⁸ Dritan and Shain Duka also owned a pizza restaurant in Turnersville, New Jersey but sold it in June 2005.⁸⁹ The individual to whom they sold the shop described the brothers as "surlly" and "arrogant."⁹⁰ He asserted that the business "was a rat trap" when he bought it and claimed, "I don't think they did any business. It was horrible."⁹¹ (The president of the Islamic Center of South Jersey, Ismail

⁷⁸ "3 Brothers Implicated in Fort Dix Plot had Roots in Fiercely Pro-American Region of Balkans," *The Associated Press*, May 9, 2007.

⁷⁹ George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

⁸⁰ Note: In May 2007, Ferik was reportedly arrested on immigration violations, while his wife was issued a summons. See: "Father of Fort Dix Suspects Arrested on Immigration Charges," *Newark Star-Ledger*, May 10, 2007.

⁸¹ Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenball, "Fort Dix Suspects Illegally in U.S. for 20 Years," *Newsweek*, May 16, 2007.

⁸² George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

⁸³ Amanda Ripley, "The Fort Dix Conspiracy," *Time Magazine*, December 17, 2007.

⁸⁴ Jason Laughlin, "Suspects in Terror Case Fought Hard to Fit In," *Courier-Post*, May 14, 2007.

⁸⁵ George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

⁸⁶ George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

⁸⁷ Note: In 2001, Dritan Duka wed a U.S. citizen, an Italian-American convert to Islam, though he waited until 2005 to apply for a green card. See: Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenball, "Fort Dix Suspects Illegally in U.S. for 20 Years," *Newsweek*, May 16, 2007 and Amanda Ripley, "The Fort Dix Conspiracy," *Time Magazine*, December 17, 2007.

⁸⁸ Amanda Ripley, "The Fort Dix Conspiracy," *Time Magazine*, December 17, 2007.

⁸⁹ Kareem Fahim, "Six Ordinary Lives that Took a Detour into a World of Guns," *The New York Times*, May 9, 2007.

⁹⁰ George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

⁹¹ George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

Badat, presented a different perspective on the Duka brothers, describing them as "religious kids. They were hardworking boys. They were very friendly, well-behaved, well-mannered. There was nothing to indicate they were going off the path."⁹²)

In addition to jointly owning businesses, the brothers lived together, along with their parents and other relatives.⁹³ A neighbor reported that the Duka brothers were extremely close: "they did everything together...it was like they were attached at the hip."⁹⁴

The Duka's brother-in-law, Mohamad Shnewer, moved to the U.S. from Jordan when he was two years old, according to Shnewer's attorney. Prior to Cherry Hill, New Jersey, his family lived in Philadelphia for nine years.⁹⁵

Shnewer, who also lived at home,⁹⁶ dropped out of Camden County College to assist his family financially.⁹⁷ After quitting his job at the family store following a dispute with his father, he began driving a taxi his father owned in Philadelphia.⁹⁸ His mother described Shnewer, who watched Nickelodeon and played video games, as being "like a baby."⁹⁹ A business associate of Shnewer's father thought Shnewer "seemed like a great kid" who was "sensible," polite, and "bright,"¹⁰⁰ while a neighbor reported that Shnewer "seemed like any other teenaged or post-teenaged kid."¹⁰¹

The fifth and final member of the indicted plotters, Serdar Tatar, moved to the U.S. with his family from Turkey in 1992. Although Tatar failed to graduate from Cherry Hill High School West, dropping out his junior year,¹⁰² he earned his G.E.D. (general equivalency degree)¹⁰³ and worked at his father's restaurant, SuperMario's Pizza.¹⁰⁴ Workers there remember Tatar as "really intense" and extremely devout; one former employee told the media, "The only thing that I ever noticed is that he just prayed a

⁹² Kitty Caparella and Gloria Campisi, "Terror Shock," *The Philadelphia Daily News*, May 11, 2007.

⁹³ Dale Russakoff and Dan Eggen, "Six Charged in Plot to Attack Fort Dix," *The Washington Post*, May 9, 2007

⁹⁴ Dale Russakoff and Dan Eggen, "Six Charged in Plot to Attack Fort Dix," *The Washington Post*, May 9, 2007

⁹⁵ George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

⁹⁶ Amanda Ripley, "The Fort Dix Conspiracy," *Time Magazine*, December 17, 2007.

⁹⁷ Kareem Fahim and Andrea Elliott, "Religion Guided 3 Held in Fort Dix Plot," *New York Times*, May 10, 2007.

⁹⁸ Amanda Ripley, "The Fort Dix Conspiracy," *Time Magazine*, December 17, 2007 and George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

⁹⁹ Amanda Ripley, "The Fort Dix Conspiracy," *Time Magazine*, December 17, 2007.

¹⁰⁰ George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

¹⁰¹ John Doyle and Patrick Gallahue, "'Plotters' Blended in Like Bunch of Regular Guys," *The New York Post*, May 9, 2007.

¹⁰² George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

¹⁰³ Susan K. Livio and Ted Sherman, "Just Ordinary Men, Shocked Neighbors Say," *Newark Star-Ledger Staff*, May 9, 2007.

¹⁰⁴ Kareem Fahim and Andrea Elliott, "Religion Guided 3 Held in Fort Dix Plot," *New York Times*, May 10, 2007 and George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

lot."¹⁰⁵ Tatar's father has admitted that their relationship became strained in recent years, as his son veered into radical Islam. Interviewed by *The New York Times*, Muslim Tatar stated, "I'm not a religious person...I don't want my son to be a religious person, but he was a religious person."¹⁰⁶ Seeking space from his father, Tatar left SuperMario's and took a job at a Philadelphia 7-Eleven, working his way up to manager.¹⁰⁷

Though Agron Abdullahu has not been indicted in connection with the plot, he "provide[d] weapons to persons whom he knew to be preaching jihad," and his background is thus worth examining.¹⁰⁸ Born in Gilan, Kosovo,¹⁰⁹ Abdullahu fled his strife-torn homeland in 1999 along with his parents, three siblings, and grandmother. Abdullahu, then sixteen-years-old, and his family spent five weeks in a United Nations refugee camp on the Macedonian border. After winning an immigration lottery, the Abdullahu clan traveled to the U.S., ironically entering through Fort Dix and settling in Williamstown, New Jersey.¹¹⁰

Shortly thereafter,¹¹¹ Abdullahu dropped out of Williamstown High School, focusing his attention on his job at a ShopRite supermarket; he eventually moved up from a maintenance position to become a bread baker.¹¹² A co-worker described him as an "easygoing guy" who "made you laugh all the time" and "was somebody you really enjoyed working with."¹¹³

A filing by Abdullahu's attorney paints Abdullahu and his family as fervently pro-American. According to that document:

"The Abdullahu family is eternally grateful to the United States. The United States' participation in the Kosovo refugee lottery system allowed the Abdullahu family to escape war-ravaged Kosovo intact. The family has taken full advantage of their new life in America. [His mother] Vaxhide Abdullahu and three of her children have become naturalized United

¹⁰⁵ John Doyle and Patrick Gallahue, "Plotters' Blended in Like Bunch of Regular Guys," *The New York Post*, May 9, 2007.

¹⁰⁶ Kareem Fahim and Andrea Elliott, "Religion Guided 3 Held in Fort Dix Plot," *New York Times*, May 10, 2007.

¹⁰⁷ Kareem Fahim and Andrea Elliott, "Religion Guided 3 Held in Fort Dix Plot," *New York Times*, May 10, 2007 and George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

¹⁰⁸ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

¹⁰⁹ Note: The complaint alleges that the "conspirators believe Agron Abdullahu was a sniper in Kosovo." However, a defense filing counters, "Abdullah asserts that at no time was he ever a sniper in Kosovo or anywhere else. Mr. Abdullah was a child when the conflict in the region he is from began, and only sixteen when he came to the United States." Abdullahu was born in 1982. See: U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007 and U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law in Support of Defendant's Motion for Release on Bail, Filed May 14, 2007.

¹¹⁰ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law in Support of Defendant's Motion for Release on Bail, Filed May 14, 2007.

¹¹¹ Abdullahu dropped out after one year.

¹¹² U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law in Support of Defendant's Motion for Release on Bail, Filed May 14, 2007.

¹¹³ George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007.

States citizens. [His father] Sejdulla's [sic] is a lawful permanent resident and his citizenship application is currently pending. Mr. Abdullahu has also obtained lawful permanent resident status. Sejdulla, Vaxhide, and Mr. Abdullahu have moved steadily up through the ranks of the ShopRite company...The family's proudest accomplishment has been being able to purchase their own home, owned jointly by Mr. Abdullahu and his mother."¹¹⁴

The same filing states that "Abdullahu has also found America a wonderful place for pursuing his own passions. He enjoys mechanical projects and has spent a great deal of his free time refurbishing cars and a boat. He is also a gun enthusiast." In light of these facts, Abdullahu purportedly has a "great feeling of indebtedness...toward the United States."¹¹⁵

Additional Information – The Origins of the Investigation

The FBI investigation of the plot began when Circuit City employee Brian Morgenstern became alarmed while transferring the suspects' video of their January 3, 2006 training session onto DVD. While the full contents of the video have not been revealed,¹¹⁶ prosecutors note that "the DVD depicted 10 young men who appeared to be in their early twenties shooting assault weapons at a firing range in a militia-like style while calling for jihad and shouting in Arabic 'Allah Akbar' ('God is Great')."¹¹⁷

Morgenstern told the media that after he "saw some stuff on the film that was disturbing," he battled with a "moral dilemma" as he "thought about whether or not it should be reported." Morgenstern explained, "I actually waited that night and weighed out my decisions. I went home. I talked to my family about it, thought their input would be very helpful on the situation."¹¹⁸ He added, "I was considering whether or not this was really a threat, or something serious. I came to the conclusion that that's not my job or decision to make."¹¹⁹ Then, he went to work, informed management of his concerns, and called police, who quickly involved the FBI.

Highlighting Morgenstern's role, J.P. Weis, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Philadelphia office, labeled Morgenstern an "unsung hero" who displayed "courage and heroism."¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law in Support of Defendant's Motion for Release on Bail, Filed May 14, 2007.

¹¹⁵ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law in Support of Defendant's Motion for Release on Bail, Filed May 14, 2007.

¹¹⁶ A December 2007 *Time* article claims that "the Circuit City video is far from conclusive. It features a group of friends and relatives vacationing in the Poconos in Pennsylvania and speaking mostly English. It includes shots of the men skiing, hiking and joking around, according to multiple people who have seen it." The youngest Duka brother, Burim, who was among those dropping off the video, explained, "We dropped it off because it's easier. We didn't think anything of it. If it was [a terrorism training video], why would I do that?" See: Amanda Ripley, "The Fort Dix Conspiracy," *Time Magazine*, December 17, 2007.

¹¹⁷ U.S. v. Duka, Complaint, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

¹¹⁸ *CNN*, May 29, 2007.

¹¹⁹ "Fort Dix Tipster Agonized Over Tape," *The Washington Times*, May 30, 2007

¹²⁰ *CNN*, May 29, 2007.

Additional Information – The FBI Informants

The FBI's primary source in the case, Mahmoud Omar – a car dealer/mechanic and legal immigrant from Egypt – has a criminal history. In 2001, he served six months in prison after pleading guilty to three counts of bank fraud for depositing fake checks. In 2004, police arrested Omar for fighting with a neighbor. He has also declared bankruptcy¹²¹ and twice been the subject of deportation orders by the U.S. government.¹²²

Despite his history, the FBI assesses that Omar "has proven to be credible and reliable." According to prosecutors, "shortly before CW-1's [Omar's] involvement in the...investigation, CW-1 had provided the FBI with information regarding significant criminal conduct. The FBI independently corroborated CW-1's information. CW-1's credibility in that matter was further supported when federal charges were filed and at least two individuals pled guilty and admitted the conduct CW-1 had reported to the FBI." Nonetheless, prosecutors admit that Omar "has had one instance of not fully reporting truthful information. In January 2006, CW-1 self-reported to his/her handler that he/she mis-stated the identity of a friend with whom he/she had contact in an effort to protect that individual." Following this incident, "no derogatory information concerning CW-1 has been reported." What's more, "the FBI has been able to independently corroborate the information provided by CW-1 through consensual recordings and surveillance operations."¹²³

Omar gained access to the cell in March 2006, first repeatedly visiting Plaza Food Market & Halal Meats, a New Jersey grocery store owned by Mohamad Shnewer's father.¹²⁴ Members of the Shnewer and Duka families describe Omar as "needy for companionship and sometimes for money." Shnewer's sister (and Eljvir Duka's wife) noted that Omar "acted like a young guy, like he was cool and everything."¹²⁵

Omar exploited his relationship with Mohamad Shnewer, with whom he regularly played pool and chatted, to meet the other cell members. Although Omar established solid relationships with the cell members, Serdar Tatar grew concerned that he was a "fed." As the complaint notes:

"In a possible effort to determine whether CW-1 [Omar] was a law enforcement officer, Serdar Tatar on November 15, 2006 contacted a sergeant with the Philadelphia Police Department and stated that he had been approached by an individual who had pressured him to acquire maps of Fort Dix. Tatar also told the police officer that he did not supply the map and was fearful that the incident was terrorist-related. The sergeant telephoned the FBI in Tatar's presence."¹²⁶

The FBI also successfully integrated a second paid informant who "has previously proven to be credible and reliable..." The complaint states, "On or about July 7, 2006, a

¹²¹ At the time, Omar was nearly \$38,000 in debt to creditors.

¹²² Amanda Ripley, "The Fort Dix Conspiracy," *Time*, December 17, 2007.

¹²³ U.S. v. Duka, Complaint, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

¹²⁴ George Anastasia, "A Radical Shift in Reputation for Six Men," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2007 and Amanda Ripley, "The Fort Dix Conspiracy," *Time*, December 17, 2007.

¹²⁵ Amanda Ripley, "The Fort Dix Conspiracy," *Time*, December 17, 2007.

¹²⁶ U.S. v. Duka, Complaint, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

second individual who was cooperating with the FBI ('CW-2') was approached by six males who were unknown to CW-2. One of the males...invited CW-2 to his home."¹²⁷ Like Omar, he also recorded meetings and telephone conversations with cell members. No information is publicly available about his background.¹²⁸

Additional Information – The FBI's Disruption Strategy

FBI Director Robert Muller has remarked, "Before September 11th, we would have been probably inclined to disrupt them earlier than we did. We wanted to play it out to determine what ties they may have had to other individuals in the U.S. or overseas."¹²⁹

Additional Information - Agron Abdullahu's Interest in Explosives

Agron Abdullahu, who was not charged in connection with the Fort Dix plot, displayed a strong interest in explosives. During interviews with federal agents, he detailed how "he has used gun powder to blow up logs in his back yard." He "explained that he ignited the gun powder with a fusing system that incorporated an extension cord and a 'lighter-wire' that he placed into an electrical socket which heated the lighter-wire which, in turn, ignited the gun powder."¹³⁰ What's more, a former co-worker told the media that Abdullahu, who purportedly called Usama bin Laden "Uncle Benny," had bomb recipes in his car.¹³¹

And during the February 2007 trip to the Poconos, Abdullahu discussed explosives with members of the group, as he explained, "You have to have the perfect temperature. You have nitroglycerin. You can make a bomb with the fucking ammonium. Fucking Windshield viper...Burns like fucking gasoline." He added, "you can use it in an assault." When asked about his interest in bombs, Abdullahu responded,

"I love that shit. I looked for it, I learnt about it . . . I like to know everything in case very time comes. Because it the times. If any moment if somebody turns against me. If they turn against me, I would have a fighting chance. You don't have to have that fucking military [stuff] to making bombs. You can break into fucking house and steal stuff to make a bomb. You can break into a gun store and steal the stuff and make the bomb...I can break into the Home Depot and make a fucking bomb."¹³²

Nonetheless, when talking to federal agents, "Abdullahu claimed that he had neither formal military training nor bomb-building training." Federal prosecutors assess that "Abdullahu clearly minimized his knowledge of explosives to the interviewing agents..."¹³³

¹²⁷ U.S. v. Duka, Complaint, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

¹²⁸ U.S. v. Duka, Complaint, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Filed May 7, 2007.

¹²⁹ Ronald Kessler, *The Terrorist Watch: Inside the Desperate Race to Stop the Next Attack*, Crown Forum, New York, N.Y., © 2007.

¹³⁰ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

¹³¹ David Porter, "Friend: Terror Suspect Had Bomb Recipes," *Associated Press*, May 10, 2007.

¹³² U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007. Note: During the trip, Abdullahu claimed that he would never kill anyone and was simply interested in explosives because "knowledge is power" "just in case somebody pushes me to the limits."

¹³³ U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Bail, Filed May 16, 2007.

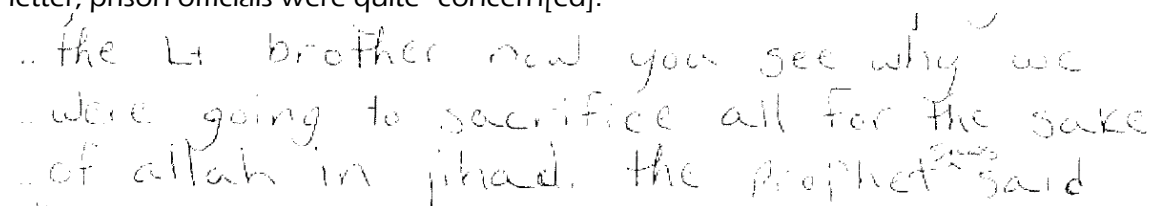
Additional Information – Interest in Plots Involving Fuel Tankers

According to press reports, some of the suspects talked about crashing fuel tankers into crowded buildings; however, they decided the plot was impractical because, as illegal immigrants, they would be unable to obtain the necessary licenses.¹³⁴

Additional Information – Problematic Behavior in Prison

While incarcerated, a number of the individuals charged in connection with the probe have created additional problems for themselves.

Most significantly, according to a prosecution filing, Eljvir Duka wrote a letter to a fellow inmate¹³⁵ in August 2007 that stated, "now you see why we were going to sacrifice all for the sake of allah in jihad...fight in the way of allah first with the mouth then with the sword...we weren't able to finish."¹³⁶ Given the "violent nature of" Duka's letter, prison officials were quite "concern[ed]."¹³⁷



.. the brother now you see why we
.. were going to sacrifice all for the sake
.. of allah in jihad. the prophet said

(Duka has denied he authored the letter, and two handwriting examiners, hired by *Time Magazine*, "found that Duka's writing in the sample letters does not match the writing in the note." The federal government has not revealed the findings from its own investigation.¹³⁸)

Then, on November 22, 2007, a corrections officer discovered a DVD hidden in a book in the prison's law library. At that point, "Dritan Duka began yelling and stated that the DVD was his." Court documents reveal that:

"the DVD contained one of the many videos that were recovered from defendant Shnewer's laptop computer during the course of the investigation. The video was produced by Al Qaeda. The video is slightly more than one hour of clips depicting the plight of Muslims around the world, and of Usama Bin Laden and other Islamic extremists making speeches which call the viewer to join the jihadist movement..."

An inmate later advised corrections officers that Shnewer had given him the DVD to watch. This DVD is the same one Shnewer gave to Mahmoud Omar in May 2006. Analyzing this incident, prosecutors wrote, "the fact the defendant Shnewer and,

¹³⁴ "Sources: Fort Dix Suspects Talked of Exploding Tanker Trucks," *WNBC.com*, May 11, 2007.

¹³⁵ According to *Time*, he is jailed for a parole violation. See: Amanda Ripley, "Playing Tricks with the Fort Dix Six?" *Time*, January 14, 2008.

¹³⁶ Duka has claimed that the message pertained to poor prison food.

¹³⁷ U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Government's Brief in Opposition to Defendants' Motions to Terminate Administrative Detention and for Alternative Relief, Filed December 11, 2007.

¹³⁸ Amanda Ripley, "Playing Tricks with the Fort Dix Six?" *Time*, January 14, 2008.

perhaps, his co-conspirators may be spreading jihadist recruitment videos to other inmates clearly raises grave security concerns..."¹³⁹

Responding to prosecution allegations, Shnewer asserted he was required to leave discovery materials in the law library and "was told that the staff would remove the materials..." He claimed that inmate Andre Henry improperly accessed that discovery material and viewed the DVD, actions that were purportedly observed by Dritan Duka. Notably, Henry signed a sworn affidavit, in which he stated, "I...reject/deny any assertion by the government/correction officers...that 'Muhammad Shnewer' gave me any D.V.D. to review. Furthermore, it was none other than F.D.C. staff that permitted me to view various legal materials in an attempt for my cooperation with the government against the defendant."¹⁴⁰ (Henry has reportedly admitted he has "serious psychiatric problems."¹⁴¹)

Months before this controversy, Agron Abdullahu also disturbed prison officials with his actions. On May 25, 2007, a corrections officer noticed that Abdullahu had "etched into his cell door a depiction of an AK-47 machine gun firing bullets at the words 'FBI,'" as well as the words "Rainca Kosova UCK." Prosecutors explained that "UCK" is an acronym for the "Kosovo Liberation Army," an "ethnic Albanian paramilitary organization which fought for the independence of Kosovo from Yugoslavia in the late 1990s. Some prominent KLA members have recently been charged with committing war crimes. As recently as December 2006, the Albanian National Army or AKSH, with which some former KLA members appear to have been linked, has been involved in violent attacks against legitimate police forces in Western Kosovo." Court documents further note that "although Abdullahu has publicly attempted to disassociate himself with the KLA, his promotion of it paints a different picture." In addition to the two etchings, Abdullahu also removed a screw from the metal light switch plate in his room and bent it from the wall. Officials feared he may have been attempting to create a weapon with the plate.¹⁴²



Pictures of Agron Abdullahu's prison cell

¹³⁹ U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Government's Brief in Opposition to Defendants' Motions to Terminate Administrative Detention and for Alternative Relief, Filed December 11, 2007.

¹⁴⁰ U.S. v. Shnewer, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Affidavit of Andrew Henry, Filed December 19, 2007.

¹⁴¹ Troy Graham, "Al-Qaeda DVD Sparks Dispute Over Ft. Dix 5," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 21, 2007.

¹⁴² U.S. v. Abdullahu, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Supplemental Memorandum of Law of the United States in Opposition to Defendant Agron Abdullahu's Motion for Reconsideration of Denial of Bail, Filed June 18, 2007.

Additional Information – The Duka Brothers' Criminal Records

Prior to their arrest on terror charges, the Duka brothers ran into trouble with the law on numerous occasions.

Shain Duka has been arrested on charges of making physical threats, obstruction of justice, and hindering apprehension. He has also been cited for traffic violations five times. Eljvir Duka has been arrested on drug charges and amassed two motor vehicles citations.¹⁴³ And, Dritan Duka was arrested for disorderly conduct, drug possession, and possession of drug paraphernalia. Moreover, he was ticketed for speeding or driving with a suspended license a total of six times.¹⁴⁴ (Following the plot's interdiction, Duka's friend, Cherry Hill municipal court employee Debra Benecke, was charged with official misconduct and tampering for "fixing" two of Duka's tickets. There is no indication Benecke had any connection to the plot.¹⁴⁵)

Additional Information – Tatar Applied to be a Police Officer

According to media reports, Tatar first applied to become a police officer (at an undisclosed time) in Oakland, California. Then, on April 10, 2007, he applied to the Philadelphia police department.¹⁴⁶

Additional Information - Security Precautions

Security precautions were of paramount concern for cell members, as they desperately sought to avoid detection. For example, prosecutors allege that Eljvir Duka and Mahmoud Omar "discussed the need to use coded language" when speaking about their upcoming trip to train in the Poconos. And, as described in detail above, the Duka brothers, Serdar Tatar, and Mohamad Shnewer repeatedly attempted to hide their interest in and possession of firearms.

Additional Information – Family Denials of Their Loved Ones' Guilt

Despite the evidence amassed against the cell members, their relatives have steadfastly proclaimed their innocence. For example, Serdar Tatar's father blasted authorities for their alleged anti-Muslim bias, commenting, "It's persecution, religious persecution. Nothing more."¹⁴⁷ He has also stated, "I believe in my heart that my son is not guilty"¹⁴⁸ and claims that his son "loves the United States."¹⁴⁹ And Tatar's wife told the media, "I know he is not a terrorist...I know. I know my husband. He is not a terrorist."¹⁵⁰ Similarly, Mohamad Shnewer's mother commented that her son was a "good boy" and the allegations "made no sense."¹⁵¹ Finally, Dritan Duka's wife asserted that

¹⁴³ Jonathan Dienst, "Some N.J. Terror Suspects had Past Run-Ins with Law," *wNBC.com*, May 10, 2007.

¹⁴⁴ Jonathan Dienst, "Some N.J. Terror Suspects had Past Run-Ins with Law," *wNBC.com*, May 10, 2007.

¹⁴⁵ Sam Wood, "Worker Charged with Aiding Ft. Dix Suspect," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 16, 2007.

¹⁴⁶ Dave Schratwieser, "Suspect Applied to be Police Officer," *WTFX (Fox29)*, May 22, 2007.

¹⁴⁷ Susan K. Livio and Ted Sherman, "Just Ordinary Men, Shocked Neighbors Say," *Newark Star-Ledger*, May 9, 2007.

¹⁴⁸ "Sources: Fort Dix Suspects Talked of Exploding Tanker Trucks," *WNBC.com*, May 11, 2007.

¹⁴⁹ "Sources: Fort Dix Suspects Talked of Exploding Tanker Trucks," *WNBC.com*, May 11, 2007.

¹⁵⁰ John Doyle and Patrick Gallahue, "Plotters' Blended in Like Bunch of Regular Guys," *The New York Post*, May 9, 2007.

¹⁵¹ Kareem Fahim and Andrea Elliott, "Religion Guided 3 Held in Fort Dix Plot," *The New York Times*, May 10, 2007.

her husband was "always home or working. He would never [have] had time to do this."¹⁵²

Additional Information – Other Plots Targeting Military Facilities in the U.S.

Since 9/11, a number of other indicted terrorists have considered launching attacks against military facilities in the U.S.

In December 2007, three California men – Kevin James, Levar Washington, and Gregory Patterson – pled guilty¹⁵³ to conspiring to levy war against the U.S. government.¹⁵⁴ According to an FBI affidavit, one of the conspirators admitted that "the first group of targets considered...were military recruitment offices in the southern California area. The plan was to attack approximately 10 recruitment offices for which they estimated 30 to 40 casualties."¹⁵⁵ The same FBI affidavit cites an interview with another co-conspirator in which he laid out details of the planned attack:

"Samana said that the plan was for co-conspirator #1 to enter the military location selected as the first target, followed by co-conspirator #2 and Samana. All three participants would then begin shooting the people in the military location. The plan was not to become martyrs during this attack, but rather to attack and then flee in a car they drove to the location. Co-conspirator #1 told Samana that they would be 'quiet' about the attack while they planned their next action. In other words, the group would not claim credit for the attack."¹⁵⁶

In preparation for the attack, members of the group conducted surveillance of U.S. military facilities in the Los Angeles area.¹⁵⁷

Also in December 2007, court filings in a Connecticut case shed light on another alleged plot targeting U.S. military facilities. Between 2003 and 2006, Derrick Shareef, who has pled guilty to plotting a grenade attack on a Chicago-area mall,¹⁵⁸ and Hassan Abujihad, who has been indicted on terrorism and espionage charges for passing classified military information to an Al-Qaida webmaster,¹⁵⁹ discussed a series of plans.

According to Shareef, "in or about 2003," Shareef and Abujihad talked about attacking a U.S. military recruiting station in a Phoenix mall. At Abujihad's direction, Shareef visited the recruiting station, where he took the Armed Services Vocational

¹⁵² John Doyle and Patrick Gallahue, "Plotters' Blended in Like Bunch of Regular Guys," *The New York Post*, May 9, 2007.

¹⁵³ **Note:** A fourth conspirator, Hammad Samana, was ruled mentally unfit to stand trial. See: "Two Plead Guilty to Domestic Terrorism Charges of Conspiring to Attack Military Facilities, Jewish Targets," Department of Justice Press Release, December 14, 2007.

¹⁵⁴ "Two Plead Guilty to Domestic Terrorism Charges of Conspiring to Attack Military Facilities, Jewish Targets," Department of Justice Press Release, December 14, 2007.

¹⁵⁵ *U.S. v. Samana*, (C.D. CA.), No. 05-16662M, Affidavit of FBI Special Agent James Clinton Judd, Filed August 2, 2005.

¹⁵⁶ *U.S. v. Samana*, (C.D. CA.), No. 05-16662M, Affidavit of FBI Special Agent James Clinton Judd, Filed August 2, 2005.

¹⁵⁷ *U.S. v. Samana*, (C.D. CA.), No. 05-16662M, Affidavit of FBI Special Agent James Clinton Judd, Filed August 2, 2005.

¹⁵⁸ "Rockford Man Pleads Guilty in Foiled Plan to Set Off Grenades in Rockford Shopping Mall," Department of Justice Press Release, November 28, 2007.

¹⁵⁹ *U.S. v. Abujihad*, (D.C. CT.), No. 3:07-CR-57, Indictment, Filed March 21, 2007.

Aptitude Battery test. Sharing his observations with Abujihad, Shareef noted that recruiters from all four branches of the armed services were present, and that they "were very relaxed and...appeared to be unarmed." The men then pointed out that a recruiting station was an appealing target because "you could go in with a gun or a grenade and get them all at once."¹⁶⁰

The following year, in 2004, Abujihad purportedly developed a plan to attack U.S. military facilities in or near San Diego, California. Shareef told an FBI informant that that "Abujihad's plan called for diversionary fire that would draw soldiers from their barracks after which pre-positioned attackers would shoot the soldiers as they left their barracks."¹⁶¹ Then, in October 2006, Shareef and the FBI informant "discussed logistics for a possible attack" on the base; Shareef theorized that they "should be able to kill at least ten (10) people for each mujahideen fighter that they had."¹⁶²

Still another plot against U.S. military bases has been described in Georgia court filings. In July 2006, Syed Harris Ahmed and Ehsanul Islam Sadequee were indicted for conspiring to provide material support to terrorists.¹⁶³ During interviews with FBI agents, Ahmed admitted that while in Canada meeting with "like-minded Islamic extremists"¹⁶⁴ who have since been charged with terrorism offenses,¹⁶⁵ the men "discussed strategic locations in the United States suitable for a terrorist strike, to include...military bases."¹⁶⁶ The indictment notes that after returning from Canada, Ahmed and Sadequee specifically talked about "the possibility of attacking Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Marietta, Georgia."¹⁶⁷ Significantly, another FBI affidavit in a different case reveals that Ahmed had sustained contact with two members of a Chicago/Toledo cell indicted for planning to wage jihad against U.S. forces in Iraq.¹⁶⁸

Additional Information – Terrorist Exploitation of Paintball & Outdoor Training

As noted above, cell members prepared for jihad by playing paintball because, as Dritan Duka explained, "they use this in [the] U.S. Army...It's how they train you."¹⁶⁹

Terrorists have demonstrated a strong affinity for paintball in recent years. For example, throughout 2001, a Northern Virginia-based cell affiliated with Lashkar-e-Taiba

¹⁶⁰ U.S. v. Abujihad, (D.C. CT.), No. 3:07-CR-57, Motion in Limine and Memorandum in Support of the Admission of Evidence Pursuant to Federal Rules of Evidence 801(d)(2)(E) and 801(d)(2)(A), Filed October 19, 2007.

¹⁶¹ U.S. v. Abujihad, (D.C. CT.), No. 3:07-CR-57, Motion in Limine and Memorandum in Support of the Admission of Evidence Pursuant to Federal Rules of Evidence 801(d)(2)(E) and 801(d)(2)(A), Filed October 19, 2007.

¹⁶² U.S. v. Abujihad, (D.C. CT.), No. 3:07-CR-57, Motion in Limine and Memorandum in Support of the Admission of Evidence Pursuant to Federal Rules of Evidence 801(d)(2)(E) and 801(d)(2)(A), Filed October 19, 2007.

¹⁶³ U.S. v. Ahmed, (N.D. GA.), No. 1:06-CR-147-CC, Indictment, Filed July 19, 2006.

¹⁶⁴ U.S. v. Sadequee, (E.D. N.Y.), No. M-06-335, Affidavit of FBI Special Agent Michael Scherck in Support of Arrest Warrant, Filed March 28, 2006

¹⁶⁵ "Seventeen Arrested on Anti-Terrorism Charges," Royal Canadian Mounted Police Press Release, June 3, 2006.

¹⁶⁶ U.S. v. Sadequee, (E.D. N.Y.), No. M-06-335, Affidavit of FBI Special Agent Michael Scherck in Support of Arrest Warrant, Filed March 28, 2006

¹⁶⁷ U.S. v. Ahmed, (N.D. GA.), No. 1:06-CR-147-CC, Indictment, Filed July 19, 2006.

¹⁶⁸ U.S. v. Amawi, (N.D. OH.), Superseding Indictment, Filed February 2, 2007.

¹⁶⁹ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

regularly played paintball in Spotsylvania County, Virginia. A court ruling in the case notes that the men used "paintball as a vehicle for jihad" and in "preparation for real combat;" further, "to improve their paintball skills, the group asked those with military experience...to lead drills."¹⁷⁰ Further, the Syed Ahmed indictment alleges that Ahmed, Sadequee, and another individual "engaged in physical and rudimentary training, including activities with paintball guns, in Northwestern Georgia."¹⁷¹ Members of the Canadian cell with whom Ahmed/Sadequee had contact trained with paintball guns and live ammunition at a remote woodlands site in Washago, Canada during a ten-day "winter survival" exercise.¹⁷²

And, according to the BBC, investigators determined that 7/7 suicide bomber Mohammad Sidique Khan regularly played paintball with a group of radical associates "immediately after watching extremely violent videos depicting Muslim suffering around the world."¹⁷³ Reflecting this trend, the official British government report on the 7/7 bombings states,

"Camping, canoeing, white-water rafting, paintballing and other outward bound type activities are of particular interest because they appear common factors for the 7 July bombers and other cells disrupted previously and since...It is worth noting that for some extremist activities – e.g. fighting overseas – physical fitness and resilience are essential. They [such trips] may also be used to help with bonding between members of cells already established, or for more direct indoctrination or operational training and planning."¹⁷⁴

Additional Information – The Threat from "Insiders"

As noted previously, the conspirators considered Fort Dix an appealing target because Serdar Tatar delivered pizzas there and thus knew the base "like the palm of his hand."¹⁷⁵ Moreover, Shain Duka told an FBI informant that Tatar "wanted to join the U.S. Army so that he could kill U.S. soldiers from the 'inside.'" Duka agreed with Tatar's suggestion, stating, "do them, we can."¹⁷⁶ In light of this information, Tatar's desire to become a police officer¹⁷⁷ is also suspicious.

Like the Fort Dix cell, other terrorists have sought to exploit their "insider" status to scout possible targets. Russell Defreitas, charged in June 2007 with plotting to attack JFK Airport in New York, worked at JFK and claimed he "had conducted multiple tests of the security" there.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, convicted L.A. plotter Gregory Patterson, whose cell considered attacking the El Al terminal at Los Angeles International Airport,¹⁷⁹ spent several months working at a duty-free shop in the airport.¹⁸⁰ Kevin James' plea

¹⁷⁰ U.S. v. Khan, (E.D. VA.), No. 03-296-A, Memorandum Opinion, Filed March 4, 2004.

¹⁷¹ U.S. v. Ahmed, (N.D. GA.), No. 1:06-CR-147-CC, Indictment, Filed July 19, 2006.

¹⁷² Jackie Bennion, "The Radical Informant," *PBS*, January 30, 2007.

¹⁷³ "7 July Bomber's Motives Examined," *BBC*, November 17, 2005

¹⁷⁴ "Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005," House of Commons, May 11, 2006.

¹⁷⁵ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

¹⁷⁶ U.S. v. Duka, (D. N.J.), No. 1:07-CR-00459-RBK, Complaint, Filed May 7, 2007.

¹⁷⁷ Dave Schratwieser, "Suspect Applied to be Police Officer," *WTXF (Fox29)*, May 22, 2007.

¹⁷⁸ U.S. v. Defreitas, (E.D. N.Y.), Complaint, Filed June 1, 2007.

¹⁷⁹ U.S. v. James, (C.D. CA.), No. 05-CR-214, Indictment, Filed August 31, 2005.

¹⁸⁰ Amy Argetsinger and Dan Eggen, "L.A. Holdups Linked to Islamic Group, Possible Terrorist Plot," *The Washington Post*, August 17, 2005.

agreement states that "in March 2005, defendant wrote a letter to [co-conspirator Levar] Washington telling him that Patterson should keep his job at Los Angeles International Airport..."¹⁸¹ Similarly, Hassan Abujihad had been stationed at the San Diego military base he considered attacking with Derrick Shareef. Abujihad was aware that his intelligence on the target might be outdated: "whatever I can give you that's beneficial, I'll give it to you. But whatever's cold turkey...if it's cold turkey, I can't give it to you...I can't give you the fresh meal I ain't been there in X amount of years. You see what I'm saying?"¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ U.S. v. James, (C.D. CA.), No. 05-CR-214, Plea Agreement for Defendant Kevin James - Attachment A, Filed December 14, 2007.

¹⁸² U.S. v. Abujihad, (D.C. CT.), No. 3:07-CR-57, Motion in Limine and Memorandum in Support of the Admission of Evidence Pursuant to Federal Rules of Evidence 801(d)(2)(E) and 801(d)(2)(A), Filed October 19, 2007.