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British detain flight trainer

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U. S. authorities began extradition proceedings in a London court Friday against a British-based Algerian pilot suspected of being the flight instructor for four of the 19 hijackers who attacked U.S. landmarks **Sept. 11**.

Investigators consider the arrest a breakthrough in the search for living co-conspirators to the New York and Pentagon attacks.

Lotfi Raissi, 27, the first of dozens of suspects arrested throughout Europe to be officially linked to the U.S. hijackings, was ordered held without bail after a British prosecutor told the court that Raissi may have helped the hijackers acquire their piloting skills.

"What we say is that he was in fact a lead instructor for four of the pilots responsible for the hijackings," said the prosecutor, Arvinda Sambir. **"He was in the background to facilitate training of these pilots. His job was to ensure the pilots were capable and trained."**

Sambir said Raissi's mission related to American Airlines Flight 77, the plane that crashed into the Pentagon. It was unclear whether he was suspected of training hijackers on other jets.

Raissi, whose name appeared on the **FBI's** watch list immediately after the hijackings, made several trips to the U.S. over the summer and made contact with some of the suspected hijackers in Las Vegas, Sambir said. A source close to the investigation confirmed that five of the 19 hijackers made trips to Las Vegas over the summer.

Sambir confirmed that Raissi was in Las Vegas on June 23 with his wife. The FBI has surveillance videos of him traveling to Arizona with one of the hijackers after that, she said.

The owner of a Phoenix-area flight school said Raissi dropped by in June or July to inquire about taking a refresher course on flying a Boeing 737.

"He wanted to get additional training," said the owner, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "He was going to come back for the training at the end of October. He asked about what kind of simulator we have and he asked about the cost.

"He didn't say what he wanted to do with the training," the man added.

Raissi, who was detained Sept. 21 after the FBI reportedly traced him from records of phone calls made by the suspected hijackers, attended the same flight schools as four of the hijackers and also supervised their training, Sambir told the court. He lived in a Phoenix apartment complex as late as September 2000.

Raissi's attorney, Richard Egan, said his client was not involved in the hijackings.

"He adamantly denies any involvement in the recent appalling tragedies," Egan said.

Raissi did not speak except to confirm his name.

Sambir did not name the four hijackers linked to Raissi.

Las Vegas link

Those identified as being in the Las Vegas area on trips between May and August were **Mohamed Atta, Marwan Al-Shehhi, Ziad Samir Jarrah, Nawaf Alhazmi** and **Hani Hanjour, sources** involved in the investigation said.

No:	Reference:
12	FBI
9	Arvinda Sambir (aka Arvinder Sambei)
3	Robert Mueller
3	Mohamed Atta
3	Hani Hanjour
1	Marwan Al-Shehhi
1	Ziad Samir Jarrah
1	Nawaf Albazmi]

Atta and Al-Shehhi learned how to fly at training centers in Florida, investigators have said. Jarrah was on the hijacked aircraft that crashed in Pennsylvania, officials have said. Alhazmi and Hanjour were on the plane that struck the Pentagon, according to the FBI.

Authorities have said they believe Atta, the 33-year-old suspected ringleader of the group, flew American Airlines Flight 11 into the north tower of the World Trade Center.

Al-Shehhi, 23, is suspected of piloting United Airlines Flight 175, the hijacked jetliner that slammed into the south tower minutes later. Hanjour is suspected of flying American Flight 77 into the Pentagon.

Formal charges have not been filed against Raissi. His extradition is being sought on the basis of an international arrest warrant issued by the U.S. attorney in Phoenix, accusing him of falsifying Federal Aviation Administration forms, one of which he used to obtain a pilot's medical certificate.

The arrest warrant alleges that Raissi made false claims in Arizona on June 19 when he did not acknowledge undergoing knee surgery or a 1993 criminal conviction for theft in Britain, according to an affidavit filed by a Phoenix FBI agent.

Raissi submitted the form to a Phoenix doctor when he received a physical examination. The doctor, John McCarville, said Friday that the FBI had asked him not to comment.

Sambir promised the court in London that the FBI would present evidence that Raissi was more deeply involved in a conspiracy.

"We are looking at far more serious charges," she said. "It is no secret that conspiracy to murder is being looked at."

In Washington, Atty. Gen. John Ashcroft and FBI Director Robert Mueller declined to comment on Raissi's possible role in the hijackings.

The FBI agent who filed the arrest warrant, Michael Grabber, stated that he was investigating the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

'Network around the world'

Mueller reiterated that the investigation is global and involves more than just direct links to Osama bin Laden, the prime suspect in this month's attacks.

"We shouldn't focus on just one person, but a network around the world," he said.

An experienced pilot, Raissi studied at several Arizona flight schools that also were attended by four hijackers between 1997 and 2000, Sambir said. According to pilot certification records, he was qualified as a flight instructor.

When police raided Raissi's apartment in suburban London, they confiscated his pilot's logbook. Pages dating from March 2000 to June of this year were missing, Sambir said.

U.S. authorities have up to 60 days to present a case to the court that extradition is justified.

Raissi is one of dozens of people arrested throughout Europe in the wake of the hijackings, but until now none has been directly linked to the terrorist attacks. Most of those detained have since been released.

Raissi's wife, Sonia, 25, and his brother, Mohammed, were released earlier this week. A fourth man arrested in connection with the hijacking, Abu Imard, 44, was freed Friday night.

More than 480 people have been arrested or detained in connection with the investigation, Ashcroft said.

FBI agents disclosed Friday that a passenger arrested in Chicago after landing on a Royal Jordanian Airlines flight was wanted as part of an investigation into how 20 men of Middle Eastern descent fraudulently obtained trucker's licenses to haul hazardous chemicals.

According to federal authorities, Fadhil Jumaa Al-Khaledy was the last of the 20 to be apprehended. He was taken into custody shortly after passing through customs Thursday night at O'Hare International Airport.

Al-Khaledy and the others are suspected of paying cash bribes, usually \$50 or \$100, to a former state motor vehicle worker in Pennsylvania from 1999 to early 2000 in exchange for a trucker's license with a hazardous materials permit.

Additional attack threats

The manhunt for the 20 began after the Sept. 11 attacks and took on added importance after FBI agents received unspecified threats of additional terrorist attacks using hazardous chemicals.

Mueller on Thursday said none of those arrested in the bribery scheme appeared to be linked to the hijackers or to bin Laden's terrorist network.

Al-Khaledy appeared Friday in federal court in Chicago before U.S. Magistrate Judge Arlander Keys. Keys ordered Al-Khaledy detained and sent to Pittsburgh after prosecutors objected to his release on bond.

Standish Willis, Al-Khaledy's court-appointed lawyer, said Al-Khaledy was not a risk to flee, saying outside court that he was a U.S. citizen, had children and operated a small business in Detroit.

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