

LA GUNMAN WAS NEARLY DEPORTED IN '96; BUT YEAR LATER HE GAINED RESIDENCY THROUGH WIFE

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)
July 7, 2002 Sunday Five Star Lift Edition

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Section: NEWS ; Pg. A2

Length: 459 words

Byline: The Associated Press The Los Angeles Times Contributed To This Report.

Dateline: LOS ANGELES

Body

The government had started deportation proceedings in 1996 against the Egyptian immigrant who gunned down two people at Los Angeles International Airport. But the following year, the man gained U.S. residency because his wife received a valid visa, officials said Saturday.

It was unclear what caused the Immigration and Naturalization Service to reject Hesham Mohamed Hadayet's first petition for residency and begin the deportation process, said INS spokesman Francisco Arcaute.

A year later, in 1997, Hadayet was granted permanent resident status because his wife, Hala, had become a permanent resident, Arcaute said. The INS allows foreign nationals to work and live in the United States if they have a relative who is a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.

Hadayet's uncle, Hassan Mostaffa Mahfouz, said in an interview in Egypt that Hadayet was happy in the United States and had about a year remaining before he qualified for U.S. citizenship.

Hadayet was the fourth person in line Thursday at the ticket counter for El Al, Israel's national airline, when he began firing, killing two people and wounding three others, authorities said. He fired off 10 or 11 bullets before he was shot dead by an El Al security guard.

In response to the shooting, the new U.S. Transportation Security Administration announced Saturday that it would station armed law enforcement officers at airport ticket counters and other public areas of airports.

A suspicious piece of luggage forced an evacuation of a section of the Tom Bradley Terminal at 4:30 p.m. local time Saturday.

The bag was found on the departure level near the Thai Airways ticket counter, said airport spokesman Tom Winfrey. Scores of people were led out of the building, but international flights continued to come and go, he said.

The evacuation was called off about an hour later, when a bomb squad determined that the luggage contained no explosives. The bag contained a broken bottle of liquor, Winfrey said.

FBI agent Richard Garcia said Saturday that it still wasn't known why Hadayet targeted the El Al ticket area.

Hadayet walked into the airport armed with a .45-caliber semiautomatic Glock pistol, a 9 mm handgun and a 6-inch hunting knife.

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His wife and sons, Adam, 8, and Omar, 14, were visiting family in Egypt at the time.

The FBI has searched the family's apartment and seized a computer, books, binders and other material but released no details Saturday.

Results from an autopsy conducted Saturday found that Hadayet died of a gunshot wound to the abdomen, said Dr. James Ribe of the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office.

Abdul Zahav, a man who said he worked for Hadayet until he was fired two years ago, said Hadayet once told him he hated all Israelis.

Graphic

PHOTO; (1) Photo by THE ASSOCIATED PRESS - Policeman Don Bender and his dog Tosca patrol near the El Al ticket counter on Saturday at Los Angeles International Airport. A gunman killed two people and injured three others there Thursday.; (2) Photo headshot - (Hesham Mohamed) Hadayet - FBI is searching for motive

Classification

Language: English

Subject: CITIZENSHIP (90%); SHOOTINGS (89%); IMMIGRATION (87%); DEPORTATION (87%); GUNSHOT WOUNDS (87%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (86%); AVIATION ADMINISTRATION (70%); AVIATION SECURITY (70%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (69%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (63%)

Company: EL AL (77%); EL AL (77%); FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (59%); FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (59%); US TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (55%)

Organization: FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (59%); FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (59%); US TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (55%)

Industry: AIRLINES (89%); AIRPORTS (89%); TRAVEL TICKETS (86%); AVIATION ADMINISTRATION (70%); AIRPORT OPERATION (70%); AVIATION SECURITY (70%); TRAVELER SAFETY & SECURITY (70%)

Geographic: CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (93%); EGYPT (92%); ISRAEL (79%)

Load-Date: July 9, 2002