

L.A. Airport Shooting Was Planned, Investigators Say; Officials Believe Egyptian Immigrant Acted Alone

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Body

FBI investigators said Friday that the gunman who went on a rampage inside Los Angeles International Airport on July 4 was an Egyptian immigrant living in Southern California who had no criminal history or known ties to terrorist groups but apparently planned the attack in advance.

The FBI identified the gunman as Hesham Mohamed Hadayet, 41, who ran a limousine service from his home in the middle-class suburb of Irvine, Calif. Hadayet fatally shot two people near a ticket counter for El Al Israel Airlines and wounded three others before he was shot dead by a security guard for the airline. The exchange of gunfire sent scores of travelers ducking for cover and forced thousands more to evacuate.

Israeli officials are calling Hadayet's attack an act of terrorism, but the FBI again refused to do so Friday -- even though bureau investigators said they have not ruled out that possibility.

Richard Garcia, the FBI official leading the investigation, said details of Hadayet's life and his motive for the attack are still sketchy but investigators believe he acted alone, shot his victims randomly and came to the airport "with the intention of killing people." Investigators said Hadayet carried no identification and was armed with two handguns and a six-inch hunting knife.

Hadayet's name has not been on any law enforcement "watch lists" for terrorist activity in the United States or abroad, and investigators have found no evidence to suggest he was part of an organized conspiracy, Garcia said.

"So far we have no indication of any type of prejudice against any particular organization or nationality," Garcia said.

But a former employee of Hadayet's, Abdul Zahev, told reporters Friday that his boss often expressed hatred for Israel and felt the United States was biased against Arabs. "He kept all his anger inside," said Zahev, who said he worked as a driver for Hadayet for a few weeks. "He couldn't hold it anymore."

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Killed in the attack were ticket agent Victoria Hen, 25, and Yaakov Aminov, 46, a jeweler and father of eight who was dropping off a friend.

Investigators said they are also examining whether Hadayet may have been despondent because of family troubles. Police in Irvine **said** that in recent years officers have been summoned three times to Hadayet's home, once for **an** allegation of domestic abuse.

Hadayet lived with his wife and two sons. **Investigators said** his family returned to Egypt the week before the **shooting**.

Neighbors describe Hadayet as a quiet person who often sat in a plastic lawn chair on the porch of his ground-floor apartment, smoking cigarettes.

"It's a cliché[acute], but it's true. He kept pretty much to himself," **said** Noah Thurman, who lives across the street from Hadayet's apartment.

Hadayet displayed a bumper sticker on his front door that urged: "Read Koran." After the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Hadayet's upstairs neighbors hung from their balcony large American and Marine Corps flags.

One neighbor **said** the flags angered Hadayet, who felt they were a personal affront, a challenge to him as a Muslim and **an immigrant**.

Hadayet entered the United States through **Los Angeles** as a visitor in December 1992, and he was granted a green card in March 1993. He gained permanent residency in August 1997 after the same status was given to his wife, **said** Russ Bergeron, a spokesman for the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

INS paperwork and one of Hadayet's California driver's licenses list his birthday as July 4, 1961.

Staff writer Dan Eggen contributed to this report.

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