

deadly attack and provides a snapshot of the Saudi Hizballah and its relationship with then-members of the Iranian government. No Iranian is named or charged in the indictment.

According to the indictment, the Saudi Hizballah, or Hizballah Al-Hijaz, was one of a number of related Hizballah terrorist organizations operating in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Kuwait and Bahrain, among other places. The Saudi Hizballah was a terrorist organization which promoted violence against Americans and U.S. property in Saudi Arabia. Since the group was outlawed in Saudi Arabia, its members frequently met in neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Syria or Iran.

The indictment traces the carefully organized bomb plot back to on or about 1993 when Al-Mughassil, under Saudi Hizballah leader Al-Nasser, was head of the "military wing" of the Saudi Hizballah. It is alleged that, at that time, Al-Mughassil was in charge of directing terrorist attacks against Americans and American interests in Saudi Arabia. Al-Mughassil instructed defendants Al-Qassab, Al-Yacoub and Al-Houri, later joined by Al-Sayegh, to begin surveillance of Americans in Saudi Arabia. This operation produced reports that were provided to Al-Mughassil, Al-Nasser and officials in Iran. Al-Mughassil carefully reviewed the surveillance reports, according to the indictment.

During the same time, Al-Jarash and Al-Marhoun conducted surveillance of other sites where Americans lived, worked or frequented, including the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh and a fish market nearby, according to the charges. Later, in early 1994, Al-Qassab began surveillance of locations in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, an area which includes Khobar. Reports of this operation were provided to Al-Nasser and to Iranian officials, the indictment alleges.

In the Fall of 1994, defendants Al-Marhoun, Ramadan and Al-Mu'alem began watching American sites in Eastern Saudi Arabia at Al-Mughassil's direction, and Al-Bahar looked at other sites at the direction of an Iranian military officer, according to the indictment. It was during this time that Al-Marhoun, Ramadan and Al-Mu'alem determined Khobar Towers to be an important American military location and began an effort in the region to locate a storage site for explosives.

In 1995, an Iranian military officer directed Al-Bahar and Al-Sayegh to conduct surveillance on the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia for sites of possible future attacks against Americans. During this time, Al-Mughassil told Al-Marhoun during a live-fire practice drill in Lebanon that he enjoyed close ties to Iranian officials who were providing financial support to the party, according to the indictment. Al-Mughassil then gave Al-Marhoun \$2,000 in U.S. currency to support continued efforts to identify American sites.

The indictment alleges that it was in or about June 1995 that Al-Marhoun, Al-Ramadan and Al-Mu'alem began regular surveillance of Khobar Towers, at the direction of Al-Mughassil. By late Fall 1995, the three learned that Al-Mughassil had decided that Hizballah would attack Khobar Towers with a tanker truck loaded with explosives. According to the indictment, the attack would serve Iran by driving the Americans from the Gulf region.

In early 1996, Al-Mughassil instructed Al-Marhoun to find places to hide explosives, and in February Ramadan drove a car loaded with explosives from Beirut, Lebanon, to the city of Qatif in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, the indictment alleges. In March 1996, Al-Alawe attempted to drive another explosives-filled car from Lebanon to Saudi Arabia, but he was searched at the Saudi border and arrested. Follow-up Saudi investigation led to the arrests of Al-Marhoun, Al-Mu'alem and Ramadan in April 1996.

Meanwhile, according to the indictment, Al-Mughassil continued planning for the Khobar attack and sought replacements for those arrested. Joining Al-Mughis, Al-Mughassil formed a team consisting of Al-Jarash, Al-Houri, Al-Sayegh and a Lebanese Hizballah member. During this time in 1996, Al-Houri and Al-Mughis began to hide explosives around the Khobar area.

In early June 1996, according to the indictment, a tanker truck was purchased by the conspirators, who then spent two weeks converting the truck into a truck bomb. The group consisted of Al-Mughassil, Al-Houri, Al-Sayegh, Al-Qassab and John Doe, assisted by Al-Mughis and Al-Jarash. The indictment alleges that Al-Mughassil discussed a plan at this time to bomb the U.S. consulate at nearby Dhahran.

During the first half of June 1996, Al-Mughassil, Al-Houri, Al-Yacoub, Al-Sayegh, Al-Qassab and Saudi Hizballah leader Al-Nasser discussed the planned bombing. Al-Nasser confirmed that Al-Mughassil was in charge of the Khobar attack, according to the indictment.

The indictment details the attack as follows: On the evening of June 25, 1996, Al-Mughassil, Al-Houri, Al-Sayegh, al-Qassab, Al-Jarash and al-Mughis finalized plans for the attack that night. Shortly before 10 p.m, Al-Sayegh drove a Datsun, with Al-Jarash as his passenger, as a scout vehicle into the public parking lot in the front of Khobar Towers building # 131. Behind them was the getaway car, a white Chevrolet Caprice that Al-Mughis had borrowed. When the Datsun signaled that all was clear by

blinking its lights, the bomb truck, driven by Al-Mughassil and with Al-Houri as a passenger, entered the lot and backed up against a fence in front of building # 131. Al-Mughassil and Al-Houri then exited the truck and entered the back seat of the Caprice for the getaway, driving away followed by the Datsun. In minutes the blast devastated the north side of the building.

Immediately following the terrorist attack, the leaders fled the Khobar area and Saudi Arabia using fake passports. Only Al-Jarash and Al-Mughis remained behind. Al-Sayegh reached Canada in August 1996 where he was arrested by Canadian authorities seven months later. In May 1997, Al-Sayegh requested to meet with American investigators and denied knowledge of the Khobar attack. He also falsely described an estrangement between the Saudi Hizballah and elements of the Iranian government. He was later removed to the United States based on a promise to cooperate. Instead, he reneged on the promise and unsuccessfully sought political asylum in the U.S. The indictment charges that the defendants first conspired to kill Americans since at least 1988, when several of the group joined the Saudi Hizballah, and later, in the Khobar attack, carried out the murders of American military personnel who were serving in their official capacity in Saudi Arabia.

Following the deadly attack, FBI Director Freeh pledged the full support of the FBI to work closely with Saudi authorities in the investigation. FBI investigators and forensic experts were on the scene in the immediate aftermath of the bombing. Freeh first traveled to Dhahran on July 2, 1996, to meet with senior Saudi officials, visit the crime scene and be briefed by Saudi and American investigators. That trip was followed by several others over the next four years, at key junctures in the case and as events dictated.

From the investigation came the establishment of a permanent FBI liaison office in Riyadh, at the invitation of the Saudi government and with the full support of then-Ambassador Wyche Fowler and the State Department. The office is the first in the Gulf region, and today serves as a critically important law enforcement and counterterrorism partner to Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states.

In addition to the Saudis, Freeh also thanked the following: Canadian authorities for their "valuable assistance at key points in the investigation"; The Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs and the U.S. Air Force for "support at every step of the way"; Former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Fowler, whose "unswerving commitment to seeing progress made played a critical role in today's development"; and the Department of State, whose support is "essential to achieving international investigative successes like this case, the bombings of the embassies in East Africa and many others."

Freeh noted the efforts of prosecutors in the Eastern District of Virginia: "Acting United States Attorney Kenneth Melson and Assistant U.S. Attorneys James Comey and John Davis made a tremendous contribution with their hard work and dedicated efforts in organizing this complex case. They represent the highest ideals of public service."

Melson said: "The indictment should underscore the commitment of my office and the FBI to pursuing the case until all guilty parties are punished for the horrific attack on our servicemen at Khobar Towers. We look forward to working with our Saudi partners and law enforcement around the world to apprehend the fugitives and to bring all these defendants to justice."

Finally, Freeh thanked the "dedicated men and women of the FBI who have been working on the case — in Saudi Arabia, Washington, D.C. and elsewhere — with dedication and a single purpose of seeing justice served."

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