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NY Car Bomb Suspect Keeps on Talking

On May 5, Faisal Shahzad, the 30-year-old son of a retired senior Pakistani vice air marshal, waived his right to a speedy arraignment, which might be a sign of his continuing cooperation with investigators. American officials also said on that day that they now feel it is possible the Pakistani Taliban aided and abetted Shahzad's car bombing attempt in Times Square, a scenario they were wary of believing just days earlier, when they believed any such claim might have been just be an opportunistic grab for attention.



A final determination has not been made, but this has raised concerns that other militant organizations may have similar plans for an attack on U.S. soil. According to Reuters news service, officials said Mr. Shahzad had discussed his contacts with the group, and investigators had accumulated other evidence that they would not disclose.

Within 48 hours of his arrest, Shahzad waived his right to an initial court appearance and other U.S. constitutional rights, a U.S. official and sources said. Unless he negotiates a lesser sentence in exchange for cooperation, he faces life in prison if convicted of the charges against him

A law enforcement source familiar with the investigation said, "[Shahzad] was giving them intricate details as to what he did overseas. There was a determination that there wasn't anyone else in the [New York] area to target."

Shahzad has been [charged with attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction](#) and trying to kill and maim people within the United States as well as other counts.

Referring to Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, the official said, "TTP is entirely plausible but we're not ruling out other groups. It's important to develop a complete intelligence picture before reaching any final conclusion, but all the brush strokes aren't there yet."

It would be the first attack on U.S. soil from this organization, if it proves true that they were behind Saturday's attack. Some of its leaders have been killed by CIA-operated drones targeting Taliban figures in Pakistan's tribal areas, and the group has vowed to avenge these missile strikes.

U.S. prosecutors said Shahzad has admitted to receiving bomb-making training in a Taliban and al Qaeda stronghold in Pakistan. A law enforcement source said investigators believed the Pakistani Taliban financed that training.

Much more has been learned about Faisal Shahzad, his background and his activities in the hours and days since he drove his bomb-filled car into New York City on Saturday night (May 1) to be arrested Monday night.

After saying that law enforcement officials were seen at a Bridgeport, Connecticut mosque on the



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morning of May 4 and had so far concluded that, according to acquaintances, he is not yet known to have expressed extreme religious views, the *New York Times* reported:

Mr. Shahzad initially lived in the U.S. under visas designed to facilitate his education and employment. In December 1998, he was granted an F-1 student visa. Immigration officials noted then there was "no derogatory information" on him in any database, a law enforcement official said.

He first attended Southeastern University in Washington, D.C., a small school that lost its accreditation last year. In 2000, Mr. Shahzad transferred to the University of Bridgeport.

In April 2002, he was granted an H1-B visa for skilled workers; he stayed in the U.S. for three years on that visa, gaining his M.B.A. It is not clear what company sponsored the visa, which is used to attract workers with a "specialty occupation," such as information technology.

Mr. Shahzad worked in Norwalk, Conn., for international marketing firm Affinion Group from 2006 to June 2009, according to Affinion spokesman James Hart, and left the firm "of his own accord." He was a junior financial analyst, Mr. Hart said, one of 50 such analysts at the 3,500-employee firm that helps larger companies offer royalty point programs and runs a leisure travel agency.

"He definitely was very regimented and cared very much about what he did," said Timothy Dileo, 43, of Norwalk, who said he worked with Mr. Shahzad at Affinion for a year and a half until January 2009. "He was always a very nice person," Mr. Dileo added, but never talked about his personal life.

"We've reached out to the federal government and are providing all of the assistance they need," Mr. Hart said, adding that government investigators have begun interviewing employees who knew Mr. Shahzad.

On Oct. 20, 2008, Mr. Shahzad reported his marriage to a woman he identified as Huma Asif Mian, a U.S. citizen. He became naturalized as a U.S. citizen on April 17, 2009.

The New York *Daily News* was able to continue Faisal Shahzad's saga and follow the current international expansion of the investigation surrounding him, saying:

The *News* also learned that Shahzad's transformation from suburban father to urban terrorist was a slow process, rather than prompted by any single event.

A former neighbor in Shelton, Conn., remembered Shahzad standing apart from the crowd at a picnic a little over a year ago, drinking water and watching a CNN report on U.S. drones attacking targets in Afghanistan.

"They shouldn't be shooting people from the sky. You know, they should come down and fight," Shahzad told 17-year-old Dennis Flanner.

Shahzad purchased a Kel-Tec Sub 2000 9mm rifle in Connecticut last month in the days before assembling his homemade bomb, NYPD Commissioner Raymond Kelly said. The 5-foot-11, 165-pound suspect showed his Connecticut license to buy the gun on March 15, according to federal records. Nine days later, he bought the used car that he converted into a rolling bomb. The firearms paperwork indicated Shahzad had no criminal history. The suspect was carrying the weapon as he drove to Queens in hopes of hopping a flight to Dubai barely two days after his attempt to detonate the car bomb in Times Square.

A law enforcement official told the Associated Press that it is now known Shahzad did a dry run three



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days before trying to detonate the car bomb. He drove the SUV to Times Square from Connecticut on April 28, then returned to the scene April 30 to drop off a different vehicle. He then went back Saturday to leave the SUV with the car bomb, but forgot the keys for both vehicles in the SUV and had to take public transit away from the area, the official said. A new surveillance video shows Shahzad wearing a white baseball cap and dark jacket as he walked away from the smoking, bomb-laden SUV heading east from Times Square to Grand Central Station, from which he took a Metro-north train home to Connecticut. The other video shows him buying a batch of weak firecrackers from a store in Pennsylvania.

According to the AP, Shahzad fled to the airport Monday from Connecticut after becoming spooked by news reports that authorities were seeking to arrest a man of Pakistani descent in Connecticut.

And again, according to the *Daily News*, Mr. Shahzad, now heading back to Pakistan via Dubai, "nearly pulled off his escape on a commercial flight late Monday, despite being added to a federal no-fly list at noon that day. He paid cash for his \$700 one-way ticket, passed through airport security, and grabbed his seat amid the unwitting passengers on Emirates Flight 202, officials said.

"Airline officials had failed to check afternoon updates to the no-fly list, officials said. A spokeswoman for Emirates declined to comment on the accusation. His last-minute boarding bid was noticed by Customs and Border Protection officials checking the flight's final passenger manifest — a typically routine task

"Agency workers quickly summoned help to nab Shahzad. He was arrested shortly after the plane's doors closed about 11 p.m. Shahzad was pulled off the plane, which was allowed to head to the runway, only to be summoned back so two more passengers could be questioned. They were later released.

"Passengers said police were so discreet they didn't know the three were removed until they saw a TV report in the airport lounge while waiting to reboard. The frantic scramble to stop Shahzad from bolting the city started a wild day of details from law enforcement about the 11th foiled New York terror plot since 9/11."

"I was expecting you. Are you NYPD or FBI?" local media reported Mr. Shahzad as saying to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents when they approached him on the plane.

One of the eight people detained in Pakistan after Monday night's arrest of Shahzad is a member of Jaish-e-Muhammad, the group reportedly involved in the 2002 killing of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl. The Pakistani suspect, Sheikh Mohammed Rehan, allegedly shared a ride in a pickup truck with Shahzad between Karachi and Peshawar last July, the *Los Angeles Times* reported. The duo returned to Karachi two weeks later.

Shahzad, in his cooperation with investigators, admitted that he received five months of explosives training in a recent visit to Pakistan, authorities said.

Several of Shahzad's relatives were arrested in Pakistan after he was taken from the plane, Pakistani officials said. Residents of his home village of Mohib Banda were in disbelief. "I never observed any inclination for militancy," a close family friend told Reuters.

The famous surveillance video from Saturday evening, May 1, showing a man near the SUV changing shirts and looking suspicious, was not the suspect but was of a still-unknown person who is not being aggressively sought. It is thought the police used it as a decoy to keep Mr. Shahzad feeling "safe."

A couple of twists are now appearing as regards the official presentation of this affair. One is how after



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alluding to the yet-unknown suspect behind the bomb attempt as possibly being the type of person "discontent over health care," New York Mayor Bloomberg backed down when the obviously non-right wing Mr. Shahzad surfaced. Another twist was how some of the officials involved, such as Attorney General Holder, took credit and referred to the event as one that was "thwarted" by the law enforcement involved. Such was not the case. They thwarted nothing, The bomb simply failed to detonate. As Ann Coulter put it while complaining about how defective Homeland Security measures have been in preventing these terrorist attempts:

So now, I gather, our only strategy is to hope the terrorists' bombs keep fizzling.

There's no other line of defense. In the case of the Times Square car bomber, the Department of Homeland Security failed, Immigration and Customs Enforcement failed, the CIA failed, and the TSA failed. (However, the Department of Alert T-Shirt Vendors came through with flying colors, as it always does!) Even after the NYPD de-wired the smoking car bomb, produced enough information to identify the bomb-maker, and handed it all to federal law enforcement authorities tied up in a bow, the federal government's crack "no-fly" list failed to stop Shahzad from boarding a plane to Dubai.

The final "twist" is the fight about whether such suspects should be read Miranda rights — and that discussion continues. But one thing we can be sure of as a result of Mr. Shahzad and those like him: The call for more gun control, more video cameras, and even tighter security screening at our airports to intensify — and all to be applied to the common American people who, as usual, must be protected from themselves.

Photo: A police officer approaches the vehicle containing a car bomb at New York's Times Square, May 2, 2010: AP Images



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