



TO: NAA Members

FROM: Barbara Vassallo, Esq.
Director of State and Local Policy

DATE: May 17, 2002

In mid-April, NAA State & Local Policy staff was notified that a local apartment association in Cleveland was circulating information about an FBI alert regarding Al Queda members renting apartments and filling them with explosives. Staff contacted the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) to glean more about this threat. At that time, JTTF Special Agent Brian Boetig stated that the threat was listed as a non-specific, general threat – with no details on location, timing or suspects. That threat, which many of you have heard about recently from other sources, still remains a non-specific, general threat. The NAA/NMHC FBI Building Security Advisory from May 16th is attached to this memo.

A subsequent meeting held today with Special Agent Boetig and NAA staff has created a direct liaison relationship between the National Apartment Association and the JTTF. The JTTF will directly notify NAA of any threats/rumors that could affect the apartment industry, or real estate in general, allowing NAA to inform its members. Likewise, NAA staff can submit any reports from our members on suspicious behavior at their communities for follow up by the JTTF. Special Agent Boetig suggested that members should contact their local FBI/JTTF Field Office with any leads on suspicious behavior. For a directory of FBI/JTTF Field Offices go to <http://www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/info.htm>.

If you are unable to reach your local office, please contact NAA's State & Local Policy Department and we will report your information to the federal office.

Special Agent Boetig explained the elements that would cause this **general** threat on apartments to become a **specific** threat:

- ✓ Credible information on individuals who are planning this activity;
- ✓ Credible information on what the target is (a specific type of apartment building);
- ✓ Credible information on the location of the activity (city, county); or
- ✓ Other credible information to corroborate the threat.

What should apartment operators look for?

- ✓ Have on-site staff be alert to things out of the ordinary. Special Agent Boetig referred to items such as gunpowder, PVC or metal piping, nails, dismantled kitchen timers – items that can be used for pipe bombs.
- ✓ Verify the identification prospects use for leasing the apartment. Keep in mind that once a lease is signed, it can be used by the resident as identification and proof of residency. The agent referred to an incident where an illegal alien used his lease as identification to secure a legal state driver's license.
- ✓ If you ask for references during the application process, call them and verify the information the resident provided.
- ✓ Be aware of residents who are in the country on a student visa, but who never appear to leave their apartment for classes.
- ✓ Law enforcement officers need a warrant to gain access to search an apartment unit. To obtain copies of records or files, only a subpoena is necessary. If your company has a policy on requiring a warrant and/or subpoena, you can require an officer to present it to you.

A further benefit to this liaison relationship will be the addition of FBI-presented education sessions on timely topics on terrorism, crime prevention and awareness.

To: AIMS Members <aimsalerts@listserv.nmhc.org>

Date: 5/17/02 4:00:01 AM

The National Apartment Association/National Multi Housing Council Joint Legislative Program has been advised that the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Counter-Terrorism division is directing FBI field offices to pass general threat information to state and local law enforcement agencies to facilitate their coordination with appropriate public housing authorities, property management companies, and apartment management personnel.

The general, non-specific threat information being communicated essentially is:

"There are indications that discussions were held about the possibility of renting apartment units in various areas of the United States and rigging them with explosives. The FBI has no information indicating that this subject advanced beyond the discussion stage."

In passing this information along, the FBI emphasized the general, non-specific nature of the information. According to a senior FBI official, the Bureau is "continuing to work with other agencies to gather more information, if additional information is out there to gather."

The official further indicated that "if the FBI develops additional credible and specific information it will be passed along."

The FBI encourages the industry to take reasonable, common-sense measures in response to any suspicious activities. The agency is also asking apartment owners and property managers that "should they encounter suspicious renters or rental arrangements, they should contact the FBI supervisor of the Joint Terrorism Task Force in their local FBI office." Contact information for the FBI's field offices is at <http://www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/info.htm>.

A senior official with the FBI's Counter-Terrorism division passed along this information in order to have it communicated on a "top-down" basis within the apartment industry. That effort is intended to complement the "bottom-up" communication campaign through the Joint Terrorism Task Forces. NAA/NMHC are not aware of any additional details of this matter beyond what has been communicated in this memorandum.

In cooperating with this request, companies are advised to remember the Fair Housing Act prohibitions on discrimination on the basis of national origin, race, or ethnicity and limitations on sharing non-public resident and applicant data under state and federal resident privacy laws.