

# Seven arrested on terrorism allegations

**By Kelli Kennedy**  
*Special to Sentinel-Voice*  
CHICAGO (NNPA) - Seven people were arrested a week ago in connection with the early stages of an alleged plot to attack Chicago's Sears Tower and other buildings in the United States, including the FBI office in Miami, a federal law enforcement official said.

As part of the raids related to the arrests, FBI agents swarmed a warehouse in Miami's Liberty City area, using a blowtorch to take off a metal door. One neighbor

said the suspects had been sleeping in the warehouse while running what seemed to be a "military boot camp."

The official told The Associated Press the alleged plotters were mainly Americans with no apparent ties to al-Qaeda or other foreign terrorist organizations. He spoke on condition of anonymity so as not to preempt news conferences planned for that Friday in Washington and Miami. Early photographs released show that the suspects are Black or African-American.

Miami U.S. Attorney R. Alexander Acosta said in a statement that the investigation was an ongoing operation and that more details would be released later.

"There is no imminent threat to Miami or any other area because of these operations," said Richard Kolko, spokesperson for FBI headquarters in Washington. He declined further comment.

FBI Director Robert Mueller, questioned about the case during an appearance on CNN's "Larry King Live," said he couldn't offer

many details because "it's an ongoing operation."

"We are conducting a number of arrests and searches" in Miami, Mueller said, which were reportedly wrapped up late last week.

Residents living near the warehouse said the men taken into custody described themselves as Muslims and had tried to recruit young people to join their apparently militaristic group.

The residents said FBI agents spent several hours in the neighborhood showing photos of the suspects and

seeking information. They said the men, who appeared to be in their teens or 20s, had lived in the area about a year.

The men slept in the warehouse, said Tashawn Rose, 29. "They would come out late at night and exercise. It seemed like a military boot camp that they were working on there. They would come out and stand guard."

She talked to one of the men about a month ago: "They seemed brainwashed. They said they had given their lives to Allah."

Rose said the men tried to recruit her younger brother and nephew for a karate class. "It was weird," she said.

Benjamin Williams, 17, said the group had young children with them periodically. Sometimes, he added, the men "would cover their faces. Sometimes they would wear things on their heads, like turbans."

Xavier Smith, who attends the nearby United Christian Outreach, said the men would often come by the church and ask for water.

"They were very private," said Smith, 33. "They spoke with like an accent, sort of a

Jamaican accent." The 110-floor Sears Tower is the nation's tallest building. Security was ramped up after the Sept. 11 attacks, and the 103rd-floor sky deck was closed for about a month and a half.

A spokesman for Gov. Rod Blagojevich said Illinois officials had been in contact with the FBI about the arrests and the investigation. He would not comment further, referring additional questions to the FBI.

Several terrorism investigations have had south Florida links. Several of the Sept. 11 hijackers lived and trained in the area, including ringleader Mohamed Atta, and several plots by Cuban-Americans against Fidel Castro's government have been based in Miami.

Jose Padilla, a former resident once accused of plotting to detonate a radioactive bomb in the U.S., is charged in Miami with being part of a support cell for Islamic extremists.

*Kelli Kennedy writes for the Chicago Defender. Mark Sherman, Associated Press Writer in Washington, D.C., contributed to this article.*

## Churches want jobs for Blacks

**By Gene C. Johnson Jr.**  
*Special to Sentinel-Voice*  
LOS ANGELES (NNPA) - Pastors from some of the largest churches in South Los Angeles churches united recently to kick off an initiative geared toward finding employment for African-American men who they believe are underrepresented in the county's workforce.

The United Job Creation Initiative seeks to find construction jobs for men who were at one time incarcerated and are now looking to make a positive contribution in their communities, said Jean Franklin, the initiative's executive director.

"We know a lot of people aren't interested in construction jobs, but we are targeting construction jobs because they are sensitive to the needs of the [formerly incarcerated]," said Franklin following a Tuesday morning news conference at City Hall. The initiative seeks to set aside 30 percent of those jobs for "at-risk individuals" living in communities where construction projects are planned or under way, she said.

Starting this week, members of several South L.A. churches will be asked to sign petitions asking the L.A. City Council to approve an ordinance that would establish "set aside" construction jobs for people in the communities where projects are being built.

Churches involved include City of Refuge, West Angeles Church of God in Christ, Crenshaw Christian Center, First and Second African Methodist Episcopal Churches, the Full Harvest International Church and Christ Liberty Tabernacle. An Aug. 31 deadline has been set for the collection of 180,000 signatures.

"I think the church has taken enough and it's time for the church to give something back," said Bishop Noel Jones, pastor of the City of Refuge. "We have to give something back that is significant to changing people's lives."

"We understand the plight. We understand the issue before us. And we realize that we have to do something about it," Jones said.

"We must do it to make our [entire] community better."

Following the petition drive, Franklin said, a Nov. 4 United Job Creation Summit will be held at the City of Refuge, bringing together churches and community-based organizations.

"This is the first time the large, medium, and small L.A. churches have endeavored to team up to leverage the spiritual and civic power of our congregations to make a public request of elected officials and employers to put our people to work," Jones said.

"We must have viable employment and livable wages to effectively dismantle the 'cradle-to-prison -to-early-death pipeline' that entraps a disproportionate number of African-American, Latino and other disenfranchised residents."

"We can break the cycle of repeat criminal offenders through jobs and education," added Brad Carson, a deputy probation officer and a supporter of the initiative. "And we can achieve the quality of life issues through jobs and

education for absolutely everyone."

During Tuesday's news conference, Councilman Herb Wesson told the assembled clergy that Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa was a supporter of their efforts.

"I, personally, will be a partner with you and the mayor to use whatever influences and relationships that I have," Wesson said.

"I am as committed to this as you are."

*Gene C. Johnson Jr. writes for WAVE News.*

## Justice Department OK's voter ID

ATLANTA (AP) - The U.S. Department of Justice on Wednesday approved rules governing Georgia's new photo IDs for voters, clearing the way for the State Election Board to decide whether to require them for the July 18 primary.

The rules establish what kinds of documents must be presented to obtain one of the free IDs, as well as where and when they will be distributed. Critics of the law — which mandates that all voters present a government-issued photo ID to cast a ballot — are expected to respond by seeking an injunction to block the law.

The Republican-backed law was passed in 2005, but a federal judge blocked enforcement, saying it amounted to an unconstitutional poll tax. The state Legislature amended the law early this year to make the IDs free of charge.

Under rules the Election Board adopted last week by a 3-1 vote, anyone needing a voter ID card must provide one or more documents showing date of birth, evidence of being registered to vote and proof of name and address.

Student ID cards, nursing home cards, a pilot's license, a birth certificate, a utility bill and a bank statement are among items on the long list of acceptable forms of ID.

Election Board members said last week that once they received approval from Washington they would decide whether the law could be implemented for the primary. A special meeting of the board has been called for Thursday.

However, board vice chairman Tex McIver said it was unlikely that the state could mount an effective voter education effort before the primary.

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