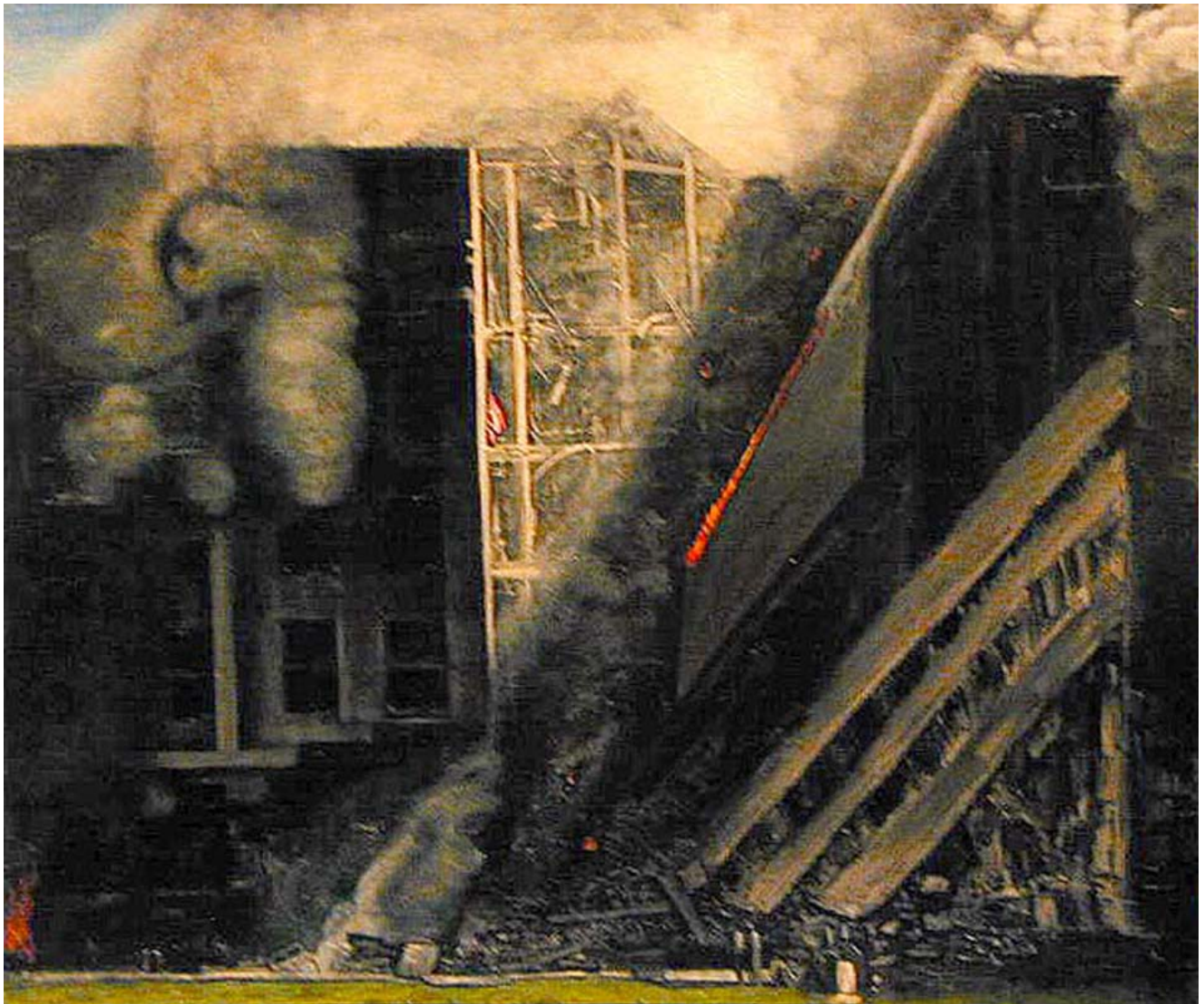


Mask of the Jihad

by [Peter Glassman](#) (March 2021)



Plan Accordingly, Gary Cassidy

“Josef, please be careful. The airport may have some who do not social distance or who wear masks improperly. Also, you must use the sanitizer between everyone who hands you their passport.” Nadah Asiaf, wife of Josef touched him goodbye on his shoulder.

“Every morning you say this to me. I wear my mask and

change it after every six immigrants even with the plexiglas barrier. I do the same with my gloves and use the disinfectant after I change the glove. You worry too much.” Airport Customs Officer, Josef Asiaf touched her elbow with a single finger.

She smiled, “Maybe it is that I am too much a healthcare person.” Nadah was the senior pharmacist at a nearby Walgreens.



Fear of the coronavirus had cut down the traffic in-and-out of Delaware’s Newcastle Airport. There were not as many travelers at the international gates or even at the domestic arrivals anymore. Everyone wore masks. Josef looked at his first passenger of the day who pressed his passport against the plexiglass barrier.

“Welcome to the United States,” Josef scanned the passport barcode. “You come from Pakistan.” He took the man’s picture with his mask pulled down for a three-second exposure. The man needed a shave. “At this time you must stay at your Delaware address for fourteen days. You are to call this number at day fourteen. The next day a virus test will be done at your residence. If negative, you will have a copy of the test, which enables you to move about outside.” Josef then scanned the man’s Visa. “Your work status is for one year only. The immigration office will contact you a month before you are to leave. Do you have any questions?”

The Pakistani reached into the front chest pocket of his olive drab winter coat and withdrew a bright red quarter-size coin. He touched it to his paper blue mask, “May I keep this? It is from my family. It is to bring me luck and be safe.”

Josef’s pulse shot up. This would make three this week. He looked at the list he was keeping. They all went to different addresses near Rehoboth Beach after quarantine.

Something significant must be going on.



The rest of Josef's day was a continuum of up-and-down masks and photos. Few were from the Middle East. He was told by a directive to highlight only the ones he suspected of being a jihadist. His patience was getting thin. He called his contact at the CIA.

"Agent Noller, this is Customs Officer Asiaf. I had another red coin today."

The husky voice of the CIA Agent was slow and deliberate, "Please give me the information on him. The ones with the coin are soldiers from Al Qaeda. They take orders from senior operators only. As long as we identify and surveil them there is no worry." Noller cleared his throat. "I have news for you from this morning's report."

"About my parents and brother?"

"Yes, our Lebanon contact has a plan in place to get them out of Beirut."

"When?"

"I can only say soon. Giving you an exact date could jeopardize the safety of the operation."

Josef sighed, "What can I do to accelerate their movement out of Lebanon to Delaware?"

Agent Claude Noller knew the answer and was told to use it at his discretion with Josef, his longtime Immigration Control contact. "There is one thing, Josef. If we can identify an important Al Qaeda or Jihadist gaining entrance into the US, we could use him in trade with the Hamas for your family in Lebanon."

Josef's pulse quickened, "The three I've flagged so far this week. They go to Rehoboth, could any of these be of such value? "

"Yes, but not right now. We are keeping track of them. So far they are not key threats. To use them now would scare away the one we really are on the lookout for. Our foreign agents do tell us that there will be one or two agents who will try to establish a Washington, DC address. They may be from Afghanistan or Pakistan."

"Will they be using the special coin held up to their mask for a signal that I should pass them through without question?"

"No, but it does involve the anti-COVID mask they wear. I just received the picture today. I'll fax it to you now. When you see this mask at Immigration Control, press your CIA alarm on your duty cellphone. Also, be on guard for this mask on the airport grounds or when you are out and about the Newcastle area. We don't know if any have already sneaked through. But they are ordered by their Middle East and Iranian controllers to wear it always when in public."

Josef picked up the fax sheet. "It's just came over." He looked at the yellow mask. It was the color of a Corvette sports car owned by a neighbor. "I see a tiny red crescent moon in the upper right corner near the elastic ear loop."

"Correct, we are told that the position of the red crescent moon is key to their terrorist level. Any with this red crescent is to be scrutinized. The one we want most, and we want all of them, has the moon on the left side of the nose. That one will be embedded in Washington, DC."



The day seemed to drag on very slowly. Josef was fatigued when he walked through his door and greeted his wife.

"Hope your day was better than mine." He gave her Noller's update as to the current status of getting his parents out of Lebanon, not telling of the secret trade possibility.

"We must be true to our daily Salat. Five prayers each day to Allah will help us. Patience, my husband...patience."

Josef finally told her of the mask and the scarlet half-moon symbol as indicative of a most important terrorist agent. "I am telling you this because two observers, you and I, are better than one."

Nadah's mouth dropped open. She stared her husband, "Did you say a crescent red moon at the left side of the nose?"

"Yes, it is most important that this one is recognized and caught." He paused. "Especially for us."

Nadah tugged at his shirt sleeve, "I will keep this as secret between us, Josef."

Josef eyed his wife with sudden alarm, "It is my hope that perhaps your work at the drug store might be helpful. Noller has told of one such jihadist as having a chronic illness requiring prescription medications." He brought his right hand to cover hers on his left arm. "You look so fearful Nadah."

She moved away from him. "Some prescriptions I fill require that I explain directions to the patient. Yesterday, I filled one for hydroxychloroquin. I remember this because it is a drug for malaria. I had to special order it for the man."

"Malaria? In Newcastle? That is unusual is it not?"

"The man was very rude and insistent on my just handing him the drug. I told him of dangers of certain dosages and drug interactions. He reached across the opened glass barrier and grabbed the vial from me."

"Did he take it without paying?"

"No, all patients must pay before I am called for the use guidance. This man...", Nadah swallowed, "he had a yellow mask with a red crescent moon on the left side of the nose covering."

This time Josef's mouth dropped open. "Great Allah, Nadah, You said refill? This man has come to your place before? That means he is living here." He stood up and paced the floor. "Of course you have not seen his face. Nadah, I must have this man's name and his address."

She stopped his oval path, "Why is it so important?"

"I don't know why the CIA wants this man. For me...for us, it means my family could come to America soon."

Nadah's eyes widened, "I can find such information for you, but how will it get your parents released from the Hamas in Lebanon?"

"If the jihadist is caught, he might be offered in trade for my family after the CIA is through their interrogation. You must get me this man's contact information, Nadah. You must do this as soon as you get to your Walgreens tomorrow morning."



Kobar Sedin hated taking the cholorquin drug. It gave him cramps and loose bowels. If he didn't take it once a day his severe malaria attacks with drenching sweats, shaking chills, fever, and delirium might kill him. He took the daily tablet from the new vial as soon as he locked the door to his condo apartment. Sedin went to the living room window and looked out. There were no cars or people of suspicion. He sensed no one noticed him as a person of interest. His phone rang two rings, stopped and rang three rings. Sedin dialed a

number after the second stopping.

"Salam Alaikum, praise be Allah." A voice answered and waited for Sedin to speak.

"Allah be praised, I just returned from drug store for my malaria medicine."

"Is this the medicine that can make you sick? It is soon time to meet for the final plan of the Washington assault at the ceremony of the American Presidents' Day."

"Not to be fearful. I will not take the medicine on that day or the day of our operation."

"What if you get a Malaria attack?"

"Such attacks of this Iraqi malaria takes five days absent from the medicine to be sick. I will be well except for needing the nearness of a bathroom. I get the stomach and bowel problem from the pill."

"You must meet with your people. The ones for your group are in Rehoboth. It will be best if they meet with you in your place in Newcastle."

Sedin felt a gurgling beneath his belly button. The large bowel side effect was working faster, but he must take the pill...unless. He remembered an ad on the television which could give him a possible way to take his medicine without getting the diarrhea reaction. He called the Walgreens as he moved with his cell phone to the bathroom.

"Yes, this is the Chief Pharmacist," Nadah answered.

"I recognize your voice," Sedin could picture the woman with the double cloth mask. "I am taking the malaria medicine and need something for cramps and bowel side effect."

Her pulse quickened, "Yes, I remember you did not give

me time to tell you how to treat this.”

“I am sorry for doing that. I was in a hurry to take my dose. I was without the medicine a few days.” Sedin took a deep breath. “Is it possible to get a medicine such as I am telling you from the television.”

“It is a prescription drug, but one your doctor can call in. I can have it for you in an hour if he calls now.” Nadah grabbed her cellphone.



“Josef, he is coming in one hour, the man with the crescent mask.” She explained about the chloroquin side effect and treatment.

“It is good. I must call Agent Noller right now.” Josef pressed the emergency contact button.

“Good work, Josef. I have several agents standing by. They’ll be there directly. Advise your wife to try not to act scared.” Noller motioned his secretary to action.

Josef was excited and relieved. He would soon be seeing his parents and brother.



Sedin was confident he could now proceed to Washington to activate his mission. With both the malaria and the diarrhea medicine, he would not be impeded by any health malady. He would surely go to Paradise as he triggered his explosives. He was additionally thrilled that he had thought of the extra drug. Sedin smiled that his bowel problem with chloroquin was solved by Allah’s interventions with the television and with his drug store. He had succeeded his infiltration into the United States completely undected. He would destroy Four live American Presidents on their day of celebration.

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