


# Were Israelis Detained on Sept. 11 Spies?

By ABC News
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June 21 -- Millions saw the horrific images of the World Trade Center attacks, and those who saw them won't forget them. But a New Jersey homemaker saw something that morning that prompted an investigation into five young Israelis and their possible connection to Israeli intelligence.

Maria, who asked us not to use her last name, had a view of the World Trade Center from her New Jersey apartment building. She remembers a neighbor calling her shortly after the first plane hit the towers.

She grabbed her binoculars and watched the destruction unfolding in lower Manhattan. But as she watched the disaster, something else caught her eye.

Maria says she saw three young men kneeling on the roof of a white van in the parking lot of her apartment building. "They seemed to be taking a movie," Maria said.

The men were taking video or photos of themselves with the World Trade Center burning in the background, she said. What struck Maria were the expressions on the men's faces. "They were like happy, you know ... They didn't look shocked to me. I thought it was very strange," she said.

She found the behavior so suspicious that she wrote down the license plate number of the van and called the police. Before long, the FBI was also on the scene, and a statewide bulletin was issued on the van.




The plate number was traced to a van owned by a company called Urban Moving. Around 4 p.m. on Sept. 11, the van was spotted on a service road off Route 3, near New Jersey's Giants Stadium. A police officer pulled the van over, finding five men, between 22 and 27 years old, in the vehicle. The men were taken out of the van at gunpoint and handcuffed by police.

The arresting officers said they saw a lot that aroused their suspicion about the men. One of the passengers had $4,700 in cash hidden in his sock. Another was carrying two foreign passports. A box cutter was found in the van. But perhaps the biggest surprise for the officers came when the five men identified themselves as Israeli citizens.

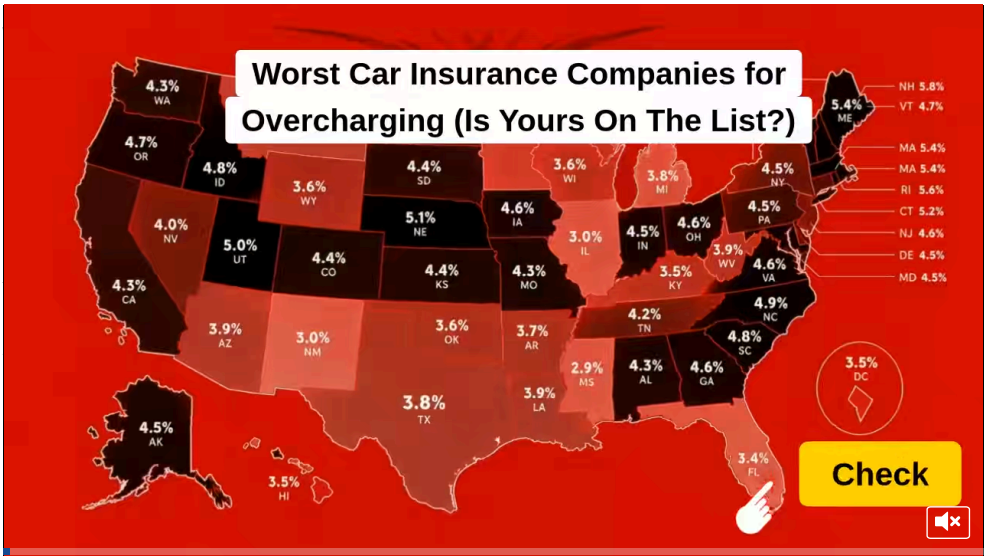
'We Are Not Your Problem'

According to the police report, one of the passengers told the officers they had been on the West Side Highway in Manhattan "during the incident" — referring to the World Trade Center attack. The driver of the van, Sivan Kurzberg, told the officers, "We are Israeli. We are not your problem. Your problems are our problems. The Palestinians are the problem." The other passengers were his brother Paul Kurzberg, Yaron Shmuel, Oded Ellner and Omer Marmari.


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