

ARRESTS STARTLE FEW IN PORTLAND

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By Sally Bourrie

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PORTLAND, Ore. - The arrest of four local residents on terrorism charges is at odds with the image of this city as a haven for liberalism and a countercultural lifestyle. But few residents were surprised to discover terrorists in their midst, and there is much diversity of opinion on how to respond to terrorism. "We've been cracking down hard on the Muslims," said Tristan Todd, 31, a Portland computer operations manager. "I give Al Qaeda more credit than training in the open in the US. I'm skeptical until the facts are in."

Rosella Sharp, 79, a retired telephone company executive, voiced alarm, not surprise, at the arrests. "This is not an easy time in the world and so it calls for more strict surveillance of everybody," Sharp said.

Larry Wilson, 49, of Salem was blunter. "Hang 'em." he said.

US Representative Greg Walden, Republican of Oregon, said officials have watched the Northwest since the December 1999 arrest at the Canadian border of an Algerian with explosives and plans to blow up Los Angeles International Airport during millennium celebrations.

"You think you're immune from that kind of activity - you're a long way from ground zero," Walden said. "Then you discover you're not immune at all. You may be in the middle of it."

These arrests "won't be the last time," said Damascus, Ore., homemaker Elsie Johnson, 45, citing the recent jailing of Portlander Ali Khaled Steitiye, on firearms, fraud, and immigration charges, and James Ujaama, accused of plotting to train Al Qaeda recruits in rural Bly, Ore.

The refusal last November of Portland's mayor and police chief to interview Middle Eastern immigrants in cooperation with the federal government's sweeping terrorism investigation was a dangerous mistake, said Johnson. "If you have to profile, you have to profile. I'd rather hurt somebody's feelings than have another 3,000 to 300,000 people dead."

Portland was "a hotbed of radical Muslim activity" a decade ago, said Gary Perlstein, Portland State University professor emeritus and terrorism specialist. He said he recalled finding the newsletter for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a terrorist group, in his university's student union.

Israel stopped sending scholarship students to Portland State, fearing for them, he said.

Said Rabbi Emanuel Rose, of Portland's Congregation Beth Israel: "There have seemed to me to be here a significant number of people who are extremely intense in their feelings about the entire Middle East situation, such extreme feelings that they have not been logically thought out."

Anarchists in Eugene have vomited on the mayor and smashed storefronts. The late former Oregon State University physics professor William Pierce founded the white power group the National Alliance and authored "The Turner Diaries," which the FBI said Timothy McVeigh used as a blueprint for the Oklahoma City bombing.

The Earth Liberation Front, which the FBI considers a leading domestic terrorist group, has its press office in Portland.

Earth Liberation Front estimates it has caused \$40 million in arson and vandalism damages nationwide to protest anything it considers anti-environment. Its sister group, the Animal Liberation Front, has created destruction on a similar level.

The nonprofit group Oregon Spotlight lists nearly 30 Oregon hate groups.