

THE NEW JERSEY STATE POLICE

AND THE

FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

**THE CASE OF
YU KIKUMURA**



A New Jersey State Police Museum Exhibit

“This is the story of the road stop that resulted in an investigation that led to the prevention of what would have been the first major international terrorist attack on American soil.”

*—Colonel Joseph R. Fuentes,
New Jersey State Police*



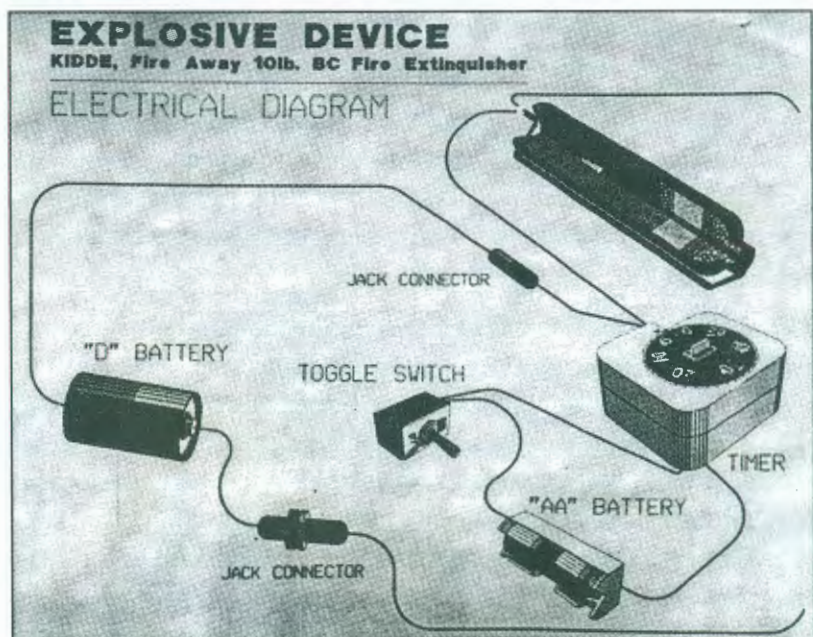
The first successful major international terrorist attack on United States soil was the bombing of the World Trade Center in February 1993. However, five years earlier, on April 12, 1988, New Jersey State Trooper Robert A. Cieplensky foiled what would have been a deadly attack on a United States Recruiting Center in Manhattan by a terrorist from Japan.

At 5:10 AM on April 12, 1988, Trooper Robert Cieplensky reported for duty as usual at the Newark Station and by 6:10 am was out on patrol. His patrol route took him to the Vince Lombardi Rest Area on the New Jersey Turnpike. The rest area included a large parking lot, gas station, restrooms and a restaurant.

At 7:00 AM, while in the parking lot, Trooper Cieplensky observed a man acting suspiciously, "milling around" outside of his car. Twice he watched the man begin to walk from his car to the service area, only to return to his car when he made eye contact with the Trooper.

The suspect again walked back toward the restaurant, but he saw that Trooper Cieplensky was also heading there, so he quickly returned to his car and "milled around" once more. When Trooper Cieplensky drove passed him in his Troop Car, the suspect started his car and drove away in a reckless fashion, cutting across two parking lanes within feet of parked vehicles at a rate of 25-30 miles per hour. Trooper Cieplensky chased after him and pulled him over. The suspect exited his car, and met the Trooper outside.

Trooper Cieplensky observed fresh burn marks on the suspect's neck and hands. He also noticed a large black bag, its contents in plain view inside the car. It contained seven empty "Hercules" brand gunpowder canisters and a pouch of lead shot. "Full, the canisters would have contained several times the amount of gunpowder needed for an entire hunting season. Trooper Cieplensky concluded that the suspect could not use that amount of gunpowder simply for recreational purposes. He frisked him, but found no weapon. He then noticed a cardboard box containing three red cylindrical objects with black tape and wires. When asked what was in the box, the suspect replied, "Souvenirs. Go ahead, check it out." Cieplensky did, and discovered three bombs. The three red cylinders were fire extinguishers that had been emptied and refilled with about three pounds of gunpowder, wadding and an additional three pounds of led shot. A flashbulb was connected to some wires running out of the top. On one of the bombs,



FBI rendition of the explosive device found in Yu Kikumura's possession.

there was an assembled fusing system made from an electric timer, a toggle switch, batteries and jack connectors. The timer would allow the bomb to be detonated up to an hour after it was set. The car also contained materials for making similar fusing systems for the other two bombs. The time that was found was functional and had the bombs been detonated, there would have been numerous casualties and significant property damage.

Upon making this discovery, Trooper Cieplensky immediately handcuffed the suspect and placed him under arrest. A further search of the car uncovered more explosives and bomb paraphernalia, including aluminum powder ("flash powder"), ammonium nitrate (NH_4NO_3) and mercury (Hg). The powder and nitrate could produce a 50-pound bomb capable of producing mass casualties and destruction. The mercury, obtained by emptying thermometers, could have been used as a booby-trap to set off a bomb when it was moved.

Along with the explosives was a map of New York City. Investigators found a small dot on the map of Manhattan that marked the location of the Navy and Army Recruiting Center at the corner of 7th Avenue and 24th Street. An American Airlines timetable with the handwritten notation, "Friday morning, 330.00, 4/15" was also found.

The following Station Record entry was made in the Newark Station's log:

7:09/AM Lt. Davidson, Div. HQ, New Brunswick HQ notified in ref. to possible bomb involved in Trooper Cieplensky's CDW [Controlled Dangerous Weapon] arrest. Sergeant Arthurs at Div. HQ. Will notify Arson Unit to respond. Lt. Davidson advises he will...26 at the scene 13-S parking lot. Lt. Villanova advised of the situation. DSG Paganelli and Det. Higgins both advised of situation with Det. Higgins responding to same.

At 10:45 am, Troopers McNally and Alston returned to the Newark Station with *Masatoshi Kishizono* under arrest. After his fingerprints were checked with Japanese authorities, it was learned that Masatoshi Kishizono was actually the alias of *Yu Kikumura*. He had stolen a passport that was issued to Masatoshi in 1986 and assumed his name. Kikumura, it was later learned, was affiliated with the Japanese terrorist organization known as the Red Army.



Yu Kikumura was born on July 18, 1952 in the village of Takahaura, on the island of Kyushu, Japan. He enrolled in Tokyo University at the time of strong anti-American fervor on Japanese campuses. He participated in rallies protesting the involvement of the United States in the Vietnam War.

In 1986, Kikumura joined the Japanese Red Army, an extreme left-wing Communist affiliated terror organization. Fusako Shigenobu founded the Red Army in 1971 in Lebanon and they carried out numerous terrorist attacks in Japan and around the world.

On April 5, 1986, a bomb exploded in a West Berlin discotheque that was frequented by U.S. Servicemen and women. One American and one German were killed in the attack and 150 were wounded, including 44 Americans. The Libyan leader, Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadaffi claimed responsibility. American President Ronald Reagan retaliated by ordering aerial bombings of the Libyan towns of Tripoli and Benghazi.

Fearing more terrorist attacks, security measures were tightened around the world. The increased security at Schiphol Airport, the main international airport in The Netherlands, led to the first arrest of Yu Kikumura. A search of his luggage revealed two pounds of TNT hidden inside a cardboard orange drink container and six bomb detonators hidden inside a transistor radio. Kikumura was arrested and spent four months in a Dutch jail. Dutch courts,

however, determined that the authorities had conducted an illegal search, so he was released from jail and extradited to Japan.

On December 12, 1986, Kikumura left Japan with a stolen passport that was issued to Masatoshi Kishizono. He made his way to the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon where he participated in the training of Red Army members in terrorist tactics.

From April 5 – 14, 1987, Kikumura was in Madrid, Spain. He left there for Yugoslavia the day before the attempted embassy bombing of April 15th. He returned to Japan on May 8th, and left again on January 23, 1988, surfacing in Milan, Italy in late February. By the end of the month, he was in Paris, having first flown to Zurich, Switzerland, where he opened a bank account in Kishizono's name with a deposit of \$5,100. While in Paris, Kikumura obtained a 90-day visa to enter the United States.

On March 8, 1988, Yu Kikumura flew from Paris to New York City, landing at JFK Airport. Posing as a tourist staying for a month, he rented an apartment on East 34th Street, paying \$1,400 for the first month's rent and security deposit. He paid using new \$100 bills. His roommate, an accountant named Chris Brande, stated that the AAA Apartment Sharing service had recommended Kikumura to him. "He was very polite, always called me mister. He received only two telephone calls, received no mail and had no visitors. He spoke English well enough to be understood and he said he liked baseball."

On March 13th, Kikumura went to Central Motors, a car dealership in the Morris Heights section of the Bronx, and purchased a used 1980 Mazda 626. The next day, he returned with \$1,401 in cash. He then secured auto insurance in New York State's assigned risk pool by making a \$185 down payment on a \$424-a-year policy at an insurance agency near Central Motors. He told the owner that he wanted to go to Mexico.

Kikumura spent the rest of March traveling nearly 7,000 miles through several states:

March 15 – he received a parking ticket in New York City

March 16 – he was in Gloucester, Massachusetts

March 19 – he received a second parking ticket in New York City

March 22 – he was in Avon Lake, Ohio

March 23 – he stayed at the Barnicks Bed and Breakfast in Dimondale, Michigan

March 24 – he stayed at the Harrison Hotel in Chicago

March 26 – he was in Hannibal, Missouri

March 28 – he stayed at the Baltimore Hotel in Union City, Tennessee

During his travels, Yu Kikumura began purchasing the components needed to make a bomb. In Nashville, Tennessee, he bought two cans of aluminum powder at an art supply store. The next day, he went to a Kmart in Lexington, Kentucky, where he purchased gas cans, a diet scale, coffee-maker accessories, a can of epoxy, contact cement, electrical wire, and electrical tape. He then spent the night at a campground in Huntington, West Virginia.

On April 1, 1988, while in Huntington, West Virginia, Kikumura purchased a toggle switch, circuit tester, phone jacks, phone plugs and wire from a local electronics store. Then, on April 4th and 5th, he returned to New York after a stop at Smiley's Motel in Hurricane, West Virginia. He transferred \$4,000 from a Swiss bank account to his New York account and then returned to the campground in West Virginia. The owners of the campground noticed bruises on his hands, bandages on his wrists and neck and a split lip.

On April 7, 1988, Kikumura once again left for New York. Along the way, he stopped in the West Virginia towns of Fairmont and Weirton; East Liverpool Ohio; and Cheltenham, Pennsylvania. He spent the night of April 8th in a motel in Weirton, West Virginia. On April 9th, he purchased a hacksaw, carton sealing tape, a file and a vinyl suitcase at a department store in East Liverpool. The following day he purchased two packages of Sylvania flash bulbs and a package of "D" cell batteries in a Clover Department Store in Cheltenham, Pennsylvania. On April 11th, Kikumura unsuccessfully attempted to sell his car and rent another car in Philadelphia.

Yu Kikumura stopped at the Vince Lombardi Rest Area on the New Jersey Turnpike on the morning of April 12th on his way to New York City where New Jersey State Trooper Robert Cieplensky, who was on routine patrol, spotted him.

Two days after his arrest, on April 14, 1988, the Japanese Red Army exploded a bomb at a USO club in Naples, Italy. United States Attorney Samuel A. Alito, Jr, who prosecuted Kikumura, stated that "evidence strongly suggests that

Kikumura was planning to detonate his bombs at approximately the same time as the deadly Naples bombing." It is believed that Kikumura's plot was to coincide with the Naples bombing on the second anniversary of the air strikes on Libya.



Trooper Cieplensky with Yu Kikumura under arrest

Famed Civil Rights lawyer William Kunstler and his associate, Ronald Kuby, took on Yu Kikumura's case. On November 28, 1988, Kikumura was indicted on 12 counts for unlawful possession by an illegal alien and transportation of explosives with intent to destroy property and harm individuals, the unlawful possession of explosives that were unregistered and without serial numbers, and violations of the passport and visa laws. He was found guilty in district court on all 12 counts and sentenced to 30 years in prison. This sentence was reversed in 1990 because the Court of Appeals found that the district court had incorrectly applied the federal sentencing guidelines. On March 1, 1991, the district court re-sentenced Kikumura to 25 years in a maximum-security federal prison.

On April 18, 2007, Yu Kikumura was released from a Colorado prison and deported to Japan. There, he was immediately arrested for questioning regarding his relationship with the Japanese Red Army and for falsifying documents. He was released in October 2007.

LIST OF NAMES

Samuel A. Alito, Jr. – United States Attorney for New Jersey who prosecuted Yu Kikumura. Currently Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

Army & Navy Recruiting Station – located at the corner of 7th Avenue and 24th Street, this is believed to have been the intended target of Yu Kikumura's bomb

Bekaa Valley – area in east Lebanon where the Japanese Red Army secretly trained Kikumura and others in the use of firearms, explosives and commando tactics. Today it is Lebanon's most important farming region.

Chris Brande – Yu Kikumura's roommate in Manhattan at 327 East 34th Street, Apartment 3F.

Trooper Robert Cieplensky – New Jersey State Trooper on routine patrol who foiled what would have been the first international terrorist attack on the United States mainland when, on the morning of April 12, 1988, he stopped Yu Kikumura's car because he believed he was acting suspiciously. The subsequent arrest led to an investigation that uncovered the terrorist plot.

Brian W. Dunbar – New Jersey State Police detective who was assigned to the investigation of Yu Kikumura.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) – The FBI is part of the Department of Justice and is both a federal criminal investigative agency that investigates federal crimes, including terrorism.

Joseph R. Fuentes – New Jersey State Police detective who was assigned to the investigation of Yu Kikumura. He traveled to the Netherlands where he interviewed police and crime laboratory personnel regarding their encounter with Kikumura. He is currently serving as the 14th superintendent of the New Jersey State Police.

Robert Heckman – FBI Special Agent assigned to the Kikumura case.

Huntington, West Virginia – location of campground where it is believed Yu Kikumura built his bomb.

Japanese Red Army – an ultra-left wing terror organization affiliated with the Japanese Community Party. Founded circa 1971 by Fusako Shigenobu in Lebanon, they carried out numerous terrorist attacks around the world. Now believed to be defunct.

Thomas Jobs – FBI Special Agent with the Joint Terrorism Task Force in Newark, New Jersey who was assigned to the investigation of Yu Kikumura.

Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) -- a *Joint Terrorism Task Force* is a partnership between various American law enforcement agencies that is charged with taking action against terrorism.

Yu Kikumura –member of the Japanese Red Army who was arrested on April 12, 1988 by Trooper Robert Cieplensky. Kikumura had explosives in his car that he planned to use to blow up the Army Navy Recruiting Center in Manhattan.

Masatoshi Kishizono – name on stolen passport and false identity assumed by Yu Kikumura when he left Japan in December 1986.

Ronald Kuby – civil rights attorney who was the assistant defense attorney for Yu Kikumura.

William Kunstler – famous civil rights attorney who was the lead defense attorney for Yu Kikumura.

John Lacey – Assistant United States Attorney who prosecuted Yu Kikumura.

Lebanon – country in the Middle East that suffered through a long civil war in the 1980s. At that time, it was a popular training ground for Middle Eastern terrorist groups.

Alfred J. Lechner, Jr. – US District Court Judge who presided over the Kikumura trial and sentenced him to 30 years in prison.

Drew Lieb – New Jersey State Police Bomb Squad detective who was called in when Yu Kikumura was arrested to examine and render safe the bombs found in Kikumura's car.

Mu'ammarr al-Qaddafi – leader of Libya and supporter of international terrorism. It is believed that he "sub-contracted" the Red Army and Yu Kikumura to explode bombs in the United States and Naples, Italy, in retaliation for President Ronald Reagan's bombing of Libya in April 1986.

Ronald Reagan – President of the United States from 1980 to 1988. He ordered the bombing of Libya in April 1986 as punishment for Libya's involvement in the bombing of a Berlin, Germany discothèque that resulted in the death of Americans.

Schiphol Airport – the main international airport in the Netherlands where Yu Kikumura was arrested in 1986 after his luggage was found to contain over two pounds of TNT and six bomb detonators. After four months in a Dutch jail, he was released on a technicality.

Abu Shams – Yu Kikumura's Arab alias.

US 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals – court that ruled that Judge Alfred Lechner had exceeded sentencing guide lines in 1989 when he sentenced Yu Kikumura to 30 years imprisonment; reduced his sentence to 22 years.

Special Thanks to Mark Falzini, New Jersey State Police Archivist, for compiling this booklet to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the arrest of Yu Kikumura.

September, 2013
