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# Threats, hate directed at Lynnwood mosque after terrorist attacks

*By Warren Cornwall  
Herald Writer*

Within hours of the East Coast terrorist attacks, the calls began trickling into the Dar Alarqam Mosque in Lynnwood.

"It's time for you people to get out of the country. Now," a woman's hoarse, angry voice said on the mosque's voice mail.

It was just the first of a flood of invective, fear, accusation and anger, peppered with occasional messages of support and concern, that filled the phone and confirmed the fears of county officials and others.

Speculation over the culprits behind the attacks, and repeated mention in the media of Islamic extremists as top candidates, spilled over locally Tuesday into isolated spasms of anger toward Muslims and Arabs.

In addition to the phone calls, the mosque's sign along the street was splattered on both sides with black paint Tuesday. Snohomish County Sheriff Rick Bart said he received several calls early in the day from people urging him to investigate particular businesses affiliated with an ethnic group, and one person made a threat against that group.

Some Arab students at Everett Community College left class early, fearing they could be targeted by people angered by the attacks.

"They are afraid if they are out in the public right now they could be a victim for people who are angry and want to get revenge," said Van Dinh-Kuno, executive director of the Refugee and Immigrant Forum of Snohomish County. The organization helps to organize language classes for recent immigrants at the college. Snohomish County Executive Bob Drewel, concerned about a possible backlash, urged Snohomish County residents to treat each other with respect, no matter what race or religion, and to not jump to any conclusions about who was responsible for the attacks.

The region is becoming an increasingly diverse place, he said, "and I would call on every citizen to be respectful of the diversity."

Bart said he was trying to contact leaders in different minority communities to tell them he was committed to protecting them and to encourage them to call law enforcement if they suffered any harassment.

"We're really concerned about backlash," he said.

Lynnwood police were investigating the mosque vandalism Tuesday.

Dinh-Kuno said her staff was also speaking with people from communities with ethnic ties to the Middle East, urging people to call 911 if they receive any threats and to "stay very, very low key."

One leader of the Lynnwood mosque said he was saddened by the phone messages and the vandalism. He said people needed to understand that Muslims are Americans as well and are also deeply troubled by the attacks in New York and Washington, D.C.

"My message to them is we denounce such an act, and it's clearly against the principle of Islam. We send our condolence to anybody directly affected by this," said Nasser, a member of the mosque's board of directors. He asked that his last name not be published, fearing it would make him a target of further harassment.

The mosque is one of the few in Snohomish County and has been in the north Lynnwood neighborhood since 1993, Nasser said. He could not remember receiving such calls before.

The calls ranged from questioning their patriotism to asking whether the mosque's worshippers were "declaring war against all Christians."

"He who lives by the sword dies by the sword," one caller said.

Some also called to express concern that local Muslims could be the victims of harassment and to offer support. Comparisons between the 1941 Japanese assault on Pearl Harbor and the terrorist attack abounded Tuesday, as people recalled the last time there was a major air attack on U.S. soil.

That comparison extends to the response by some along ethnic and racial lines, said University of Washington military historian Randolph Hennes.

Hennes recalled walking Seattle's Chinatown district with his father shortly after Pearl Harbor. His father pointed out broken windows in storefronts of newly vandalized businesses.

Eventually, Japanese Americans living along the West Coast were forced from their homes into concentration camps during the war, amid fears they could serve as insurgents for the Japanese government.

Hennes recalled an initial wave of anti-Arab sentiment immediately followed the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City as well. That was eventually blamed on American extremists Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols.

Such backlash from recent terrorist attacks may be augmented by the lack of an obvious enemy, Hennes said.

After Pearl Harbor, people could focus their rage at the Japanese government.

"Then, you had a palpable, tangible, detectable enemy. What's really so striking about this is we really don't," he said.

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# Flowers and good wishes shower Lynnwood mosque

*By Warren Cornwall  
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LYNNWOOD -- On Tuesday, the messages were of hate and anger.

But by Thursday, the cards, flowers, phone calls and visits that poured in to the Dar Alarqam Mosque in Lynnwood were ones of support, sorrow and solidarity.

"We came down to give our apologies for the response they have gotten," said Amy Dennis of Lynnwood, who delivered a card to the mosque Thursday afternoon with her 10-year-old son Devon. "We know that they felt the pain that we are feeling."

The Dennises were part of a steady stream of people seeking to metaphorically wipe away the black paint splattered on the mosque's sign and the menacing phone calls that came shortly after Tuesday's terrorist attacks on the East Coast.

Nasser, a member of the mosque's board, had one word to describe how the community response had made him feel: "Relieved."

"This is what we really expected from American people," he said.

Still, there remains a fear of harassment or attacks from people angered by the terrorism and by mounting speculation that Islamic extremists were behind it.

Nasser asked that his last name not be published, worried that he could be targeted. Attendance at evening prayer services has been half of normal since Tuesday. The gatherings are attended only by men, not the women and children who also usually come, Nasser said. Some families have urged mosque leaders to cancel weekend activities for children.

"Maybe some are staying home for fear of something," he said.

As news of anti-Arab or anti-Muslim incidents surfaced here and around the nation, local and national leaders have urged American's not to direct their outrage toward Arab-Americans and Muslims.

"Our nation must be mindful that there are thousands of Arab-Americans who live in New York City who love their flag just as much as the three of us do. And we must be mindful that as we seek to win the war, that we treat Arab-Americans and Muslims with the respect they deserve," President George Bush said during a televised phone conversation with New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and New York Gov. George Pataki. Lynnwood Mayor Tina Roberts-Martinez welcomed the support that came to the mosque.

"I think it shows that they have community support," she said.

No further incidents at the mosque have been reported to police, Roberts-Martinez said.

Elsewhere in the country, a rash of violence, threats and vandalism were reported.

Up to six shots were fired at an Islamic center in Irving, a Dallas suburb. No one was hurt. The door of a mosque in San Francisco was splattered with blood. Islamic centers in different cities were spray painted with threats. An Islamic bookstore in Alexandria, Va., a Washington suburb, had two bricks thrown through a window, with angry messages tied to them.

Muslim and Arab-American leaders, meanwhile denounced the terrorist attacks, welcomed the federal response to the targeting of their communities and promoted the charitable efforts of Muslims.

"We're feeling very good that people are taking this so seriously," James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, said following a meeting with Justice Department and FBI officials about the discrimination.

In Lynnwood, Nasser said mosque leaders were trying to find a nurse who could take blood donations from worshippers gathered for services today.

"We are all in the same boat," he said. "We are Americans, too.

Well-wishers arriving at the mosque echoed that.

"We think we need some unity right now, and we're their neighbors," said Cindy Burch, the activity coordinator of a nearby housing complex.

The card and chrysanthemums she delivered joined a growing pile of flowers and cards in the mosque's hallway.

Nasser said the mosque voice mail was filled with more than 100 messages of support from people Thursday.

Others have come offering money to help pay for repairs to the damaged sign.

He said an unblemished sign would be erected outside the north Lynnwood mosque within a week.

"We're going to fix it," he said.