

Imam Muhammad Jabbar of Masjid Darul Quran in Bay Shore says mosque hired private guards.



NEWSDAY PHOTO / J. CONRAD WILLIAMS JR.

# A Safe place to worship

LI religious institutions balance security, openness in wake of violence

BY MARINA VILLENEUVE

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Religious institutions on Long Island are taking a second look at their security protocols after a white supremacist gunman's rampage left seven dead at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin this month.

Leaders say they are trying to keep their congregations safe without jeopardizing the openness and spirituality of their celebrations.

"We are taught: Do not scare people, do not instill fear in people," said T.J. Bindra, of Brookville, president of the Sikh Organization of New York.

At several synagogues with large congregations, officials said they will continue their practice of spending thousands of dollars on private guards while working closely with police during the heavily attended High

Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur next month. A Bay Shore mosque, for the first time, has hired private guards for Ramadan, while Sikh groups say they have boosted security.

#### Facilities vulnerable

Because most religious facilities are easily identifiable, lack restricted entry and can accommodate many people, they are particularly vulnerable to attack, according to a 2012 New York State Intelligence Center report.

"There should be a broad discussion of how to make sure religious spaces are safe and people of faith are free to worship, not just under the law but through protection from violence," said Cyrus McGoldrick, spokesman for the New York chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

New York has had its share of crimes against religious groups.



PHOTO BY JESSICA ROTKIEWICZ

Mohinder Singh Taneja, left, T.J. Bindra and Virender Sikka discuss group's security concerns.



PHOTO BY HOWARD SCHINAPP

David Newman, left, offers crisis-planning guidance to Rabbi David Senter of the Manetto Hill Jewish Center in Plainview.

In May, a Queens man was indicted on a charge of allegedly firebombing six locations in Queens, including a Hindu temple and a mosque, last New Year's Day. The man reportedly told police that he hates Muslims and Arabs.

Susan Gold, executive director of Temple Chaverim in Plainview, estimates her synagogue, serving 540 families, spends \$30,000 annually on upgrades and maintenance of security systems.

"We're mindful about what's going on in the world, but not hysterical," she said. "It's a fine line we walk."

Since 2009, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Long Island has provided synagogues with free security guidance. "Though Jews have lived for many years openly and safely in the U.S., we know all it takes is one person

who wants to cause havoc," said David Newman, council executive director.

Gold says her temple relies on Nassau County police to patrol the exterior while private guards sweep the building and check entrants' identification.

Most security efforts are "not open or visible to the public," Newman said.

#### Private security hired

Muhammad Jabbar of Bay Shore, imam of Masjid Darul Quran, said his Bay Shore mosque beefed up previously "loose" security after the Wisconsin shooting. The mosque hired private guards — estimated to cost \$6,000 — for the remainder of the fasting month of Ramadan, which ends today.

This year, 42 New York Jewish organizations received \$3,419,184 from a \$10 million

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Federal Emergency Management Agency program for emergency preparedness. The 8-year-old federal program assists nonprofits deemed to be at high risk of terrorist attacks.

Nicole Stickel, a Department of Homeland Security spokeswoman, said the FEMA program received 824 applications, 251 of which met the standards and advanced to a federal review panel.

Jewish institutions nationwide received the vast majority of grants awarded in 2012. The review panel did not receive any applications for Muslim or Sikh institutions from state administrative agencies.

Despite heightened security concerns, leaders say they do not want to give in to fear.

On Aug. 9, about 300 people attended an interfaith vigil in the Nassau County Legislative Chamber to honor the six Sikh worshippers shot to death Aug. 5 in Oak Creek, Wis., Bindra said.

He said the vigil symbolized the need for more awareness and appreciation of other religions and cultures.

"We feel very sad that in this day and age there's still so much ignorance about different religions," he said. "The more we appreciate and understand, the more we won't see a turban, yarmulke or hijab" as a cause for division.

## 12 join Air Force at Lady Liberty

BY IGOR KOSSOV  
Special to Newsday

A dozen new Air Force reservists took their oath of service in the shadow of Lady Liberty yesterday — a prelude to kicking off Air Force Week in New York City.

As sunlight broke through the morning's rain clouds and lit up the Statue of Liberty, the recruits from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania gathered at the statue's base.

"I'm happy to be here. It's one of those moments where you feel there's a change," said Jean Desrosiers, 21 and from Elmont, who plans to serve the reserves as a medical technician. He wants to someday do the same in a civilian laboratory or hospital.

Hailey Sampson, 17, of Brooklyn, also plans on taking a medical track and becoming a dental hygienist.

"I've always been interested in airplanes but this is also a good way to build my character," she said.

The Air Force also pays for its recruits to attend school to get a degree in their chosen career field, said Col. Michael Underkofler, commander of the 514th Air Mobility Wing.

After receiving their training, reservists spend most of their time working or attending school but must spend at least 39 days on base per year, working for the Air Force.

The new recruits will bolster the ranks of the 514th Air Mobility Wing at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey, which draws recruits from the East Coast and the tri-state area in particular.

The unit, known as the Freedom Wing, often inducts recruits at patriotic sites like the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia and the Statue of Liberty. Both icons are featured on the wing's coin.

The wing, made up of 2,700 members, is responsible for military transport, which includes assisting with deployment and with delivering aid to areas stricken by natural disasters. The 514th has a diverse ethnic background, reflected in its commander.

"About 18 percent of our airmen are naturalized American citizens like myself," said Underkofler, who was born in Turkey. "What I think is great is . . . my parents brought me to this country and the first place I landed is McGuire Air Force Base. Forty-eight years later, I am one of the commanders there."

Air Force Week, a tradition similar to Fleet Week over Memorial Day Weekend, will include air shows, demolitions displays, exhibits of Air Force technology and operations, as well as hundreds of airmen walking the streets of the city.



Among the dozen Air Force reservists who took oath yesterday is 21-year-old Elmont man Jean Desrosiers, second from right.