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HEADLINE: CANADA LINK 'UNBELIEVABLE';
TORONTO POLICE CHASE DOWN NUMEROUS FBI LEADS ON AL-QAIDA SUSPECTS

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DATELINE: TORONTO

BODY:

Toronto police have been working overtime probing dozens of FBI-generated leads following the arrest of a Parkdale refugee claimant who is alleged to be a lieutenant of Osama bin Laden.

Officers said Nabil Al-Marabh left a huge trail of evidence in Toronto, and U.S. police are interested in his ties with the suicide pilots and their accomplices.

"There was a lot of activity taking place," one senior Toronto cop said yesterday.

"It is unbelievable."

U.S. police said Al-Marabh is among their top five suspects of 1,200 detained in the U.S.

Police said they've questioned dozens of bin Laden supporters in the Toronto area since Al-Marabh's arrest in Chicago for his alleged role in the U.S. attacks. A number of suspects have been placed under surveillance and their phones tapped.

An Al-Marabh associate, Hassan Almrei, 27, of Mississauga, has been detained as a threat to national security.

Police said they've checked and cross-referenced hundreds of pages of phone and financial records, searched dozens of licence plates and credit card purchases as part of their hunt for al-Qaida operatives here.

The Toronto investigation, which has taken officers from other duties, has prompted police Chief Julian Fantino to call for the creation of an anti-terrorism task force.

Even police association boss Craig Bromell said there should be a unit to hunt terrorists. "There are a lot of people to chase down," he said.

U.S. police said many of the suspected al-Qaida terrorists were nabbed through the use of a state-of-the-art computer software program called Promis.

SOFTWARE AIDED ARRESTS

The system interfaces with any database and can provide information on credit card, banking, pension, tax, criminal and immigration records.

Police can input an alleged terrorist name or credit card and the software will provide details

of the person's movements through purchases or phone records.

In other developments, the U.S. Federal Aviation Authority has given the green light to Air Canada to begin flying to Washington's Dulles airport on Monday with two armed Mounties on each flight.

Officers said the Mounties will remain on the Air Canada jet in Washington. The jet also has to be guarded at Toronto's Pearson airport.

Meanwhile, Peel police have arrested a Toronto man who allegedly assaulted an elderly man and an airline attendant on a Cathay Pacific flight from Hong Kong on Thursday.

Insp. John Byrne said a man started yelling "we will die" and began running towards the cockpit. He was grabbed by the flight crew.

Hai-Phong Ong, 22, of Bloor St. W., has been charged with mischief and two counts of assault.

GRAPHIC: 1. photo by REUTERS; WALKING IN THE FACE OF DEVASTATION; A group of New York City firefighters walk at Ground Zero yesterday in New York. A memorial service planned for Nov. 18 has been cancelled amid rising tensions between the city's administration and firefighters. The number of firefighters allowed to search for bodies at the site was originally cut from 102 to 25, but after protests, the city agreed to allow 50 firefighters on the site. The concession did little to ease tempers.; 2. photo of NABIL AL-MARABH

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