

Suspected hijacker discovered in container

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JOC ONLINE

Italian authorities revealed that they had arrested a suspected hijacker discovered in a container furnished with a bed, toilet and electronic gear at the southern Italian Port of Gioia Tauro.

The container holding Amid Farid Rizk, 43, said to live in Montreal, was bound for Canada, where it would have arrived in mid-November. According to the Montreal Gazette, Rizk was carrying a laptop computer, two cell phones, a camera and identity papers, as well as a certificate identifying him as an airplane mechanic. When discovered, he was reportedly well-dressed and rested, and recently shaved.

Also in his possession was a Canadian passport with a Montreal address, as well as airport maps and airport security passes for Canada, Thailand and Egypt, according to a story in the Gazette published Oct. 26. He was also reportedly carrying a round-trip airplane ticket from Montreal to Egypt via Rome.

According to the report, Italian newspapers said police believe Rizk is connected to Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda terrorist network, and that he was preparing for an airplane hijacking.

Canadian authorities are investigating. The Gazette quoted a lawyer for Rizk denying his client is involved in terrorism. He said Rizk is a Canadian citizen who feared he would be prevented from leaving Egypt, where he allegedly had family.

The arrest comes as the U.S. Congress is developing wide-ranging port security legislation following the terrorist attacks in September. Among the most difficult aspects of securing ports is the containers themselves, only a tiny minority of which are inspected by U.S. Customs.