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Palestinian bomber had traditional disguise - Sources

(2003-08-20 10:35) (Agencies)

Returning from one of Judaism's most sacred shrines, passengers on a doomed Jerusalem bus probably didn't stand a prayer of spotting the Palestinian suicide bomber among them.

Police sources said that on the basis of survivors' accounts, the Islamic militant wore the traditional black garb of ultra-Orthodox Jews to blend in with the passengers he ultimately killed in a powerful blast on Tuesday.

One police source noted that the bomber blew himself up after moving to the center of the vehicle, an indication he raised no suspicion as the bus ran its route from Judaism's Western Wall.

"Our initial assessment is that he disguised himself as an ultra-Orthodox Jew," the source said.

The disguise was a tried and true tactic in a nearly three-year-old Palestinian uprising for statehood. Bombers have used such ruses to deadly effect in the past, including dressing like secular Jewish teenagers with slicked-back hair.

The bomber identified himself in a farewell video released by the fundamentalist Islamic group Hamas as Raed Abdel-Hamid Mask, aged 29.

In the tape, Mask, who described himself as a teacher and sheikh, held an assault rifle in one hand and the Muslim holy book, the Koran, in the other.

But the black beard which the chubby, fair-skinned and bespectacled Palestinian wore as he faced the camera would have made his transformation into just another face that much easier on a bus heading toward a religious Jewish neighborhood.

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