

Middle East Report by Thierry Lalevée

New leads in fight against terrorism

Six assassins nabbed at Heathrow Airport have provided valuable intelligence on Syrian and other terror networks.

Joint Franco-British investigations led to the arrest at the end of September of a six-man team in London, deployed by the Abu Nidal terrorist group. The six were caught almost as soon as they landed at Heathrow Airport, and were interrogated for 10 days before being extradited to their countries of origin on Oct. 11. Reaching London through Spain—now a principal terrorist center, since activities in France and Italy have been curtailed—the team was planning to carry out either an attack on the American embassy in London or a kidnaping of a leading diplomat.

It turns out that the team belonged to a larger group of members of the Abu Nidal gang which had reached Europe the previous month. Up to 80 members have arrived from the Middle East, mostly through the streetcar connection linking East and West Berlin.

Abu Nidal in Damascus, and his number-two man, Mustapha Merad, based in Libya, are said to control up to 200 killers presently deployed in Western Europe, including "sleepers" who have been in Europe since at least the beginning of the 1980s. Forty percent of these "sleepers" belong to European terror groups like Direct Action (France) and the Red Army Faction (Federal Republic of Germany). Inge Wielt of the RAF, who is sought for the Oct. 10 murder of the director of the political department of the Bonn Foreign Ministry, is known to have developed close links to these networks during her three-year stay in France.

Two important lines for investigation have come out of these arrests. First, is the tracking of Middle Eastern refugees into Europe. The hit team interrogated in Britain included four Jordanians, one Tunisian, and one Swede. The Swedish national was in fact a Palestinian who had emigrated to Sweden at the beginning of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, obtaining political asylum and later Swedish citizenship. A closer look at the flow of Middle Eastern refugees from that time, may go a long way toward dismantling the terrorist networks. While many were genuine refugees, others were sent to Europe to establish new terror networks.

Crucial to that process has been the activities in Sweden of the remaining networks of American deserters of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many of these individuals now occupy leading positions which allow them to decide who is to be granted political asylum. It is such an inside track which has led to the establishment in Scandinavia of a large Middle Eastern terrorist underground, which has also been involved in drug trafficking.

A crucial twist to the affair was revealed in the London *Times* of Oct. 15, which reported that as soon as he landed in Stockholm, Abu Nidal's man was placed under interrogation by the Swedish police for his "potential connection to the murder of [Swedish Prime Minister] Olof Palme." This was certainly an embarrassment to some Swedish officials, who knew of the possible connection but did nothing; they were forced to move as soon as

the British nabbed the man. Yet nothing of this has yet been published in the Swedish press. Soon, we hope to be able to reveal more in this connection.

The second important line of investigation concerns the fact that the terror team was deployed into Europe following a Sept. 18-19 gathering in Nicosia, Cyprus. Attending were Lebanese-based terrorists sponsored by Syria, Libya, and Iran; Syrian intelligence luminaries such as Brig. Gen. Ghazi Kenaan and associates of Air Force Intelligence Gen. Mohammed al Khouli; and secondary figures from the Libyan and Iranian services.

Though Europe was one main subject of discussion at the Nicosia planning session, it was not the only one. Another focus was the annual summit of the Islamic Conference, scheduled to be held in November in Kuwait. The summit is to be attended by heads of state, possibly including Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak. Diplomatic sources expect a large terrorist deployment against the meeting.

This was already indicated by the repeated threats from the Islamic Jihad group, that unless 25 of its members, in jail in Kuwait since 1983, are released, the Jihad will retaliate. The Jihad has also warned that it would execute French and American hostages.

Just a few days before the Nicosia gathering, Iranian Minister of Security Hojatessalam Mohammed Reysharhi met with Raim Safavi of the "special forces" of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (Pasdarans), Hojatessalam Hakim Bakr of the Iraqi Islamic organizations, and representatives of the "liberation fronts" of Bahrain and the Gulf. It was reportedly decided to launch kamikaze operations against Bahrain, the Emirates, and other locations.