

age, of massive opium production in the valley under the tight control of Syrian military intelligence. DEA estimates that the Bekaa Valley accounts for over \$1 billion a year in heroin profits. Further, investigations by a variety of anti-drug agencies in the United States, Western Europe, and Ibero-America indicate that al-Kassar, along with Rifaat al-Assad, have maintained longstanding business ties to the Medellín and Cali Cartels in Colombia. Reportedly, tapes and documents also exist of meetings between al-Kassar and Pablo Escobar Gaviria, the head of the Medellín Cartel.

Early this year, U.S. Customs and DEA investigators in Berne, Switzerland developed evidence linking a Syrian-Bulgarian drug money-laundering ring to a Los Angeles and New York-based ring known as "La Mina" which serviced the Medellín Cartel.

One of the questions which Traficant is apparently intent on answering, is whether the PanAm tragedy was the work of a corrupted and desperate team of CIA agents who sought to bury the evidence of their drug profiteering in the wreckage of PanAm 103. If that proves to be the case, then how far up the chain of command inside the CIA and the Bush administration does the coverup go?

Curious Israeli angle

Although the major American press—with the sole exception of the CBS interview with Representative Traficant—has buried the Lockerbie story altogether, some diligent regional investigative reporters have unearthed key pieces of the puzzle.

In mid-November, the Syracuse, New York *Post Standard* ran a series of articles which, among other things, identified the PanAm investigator as a former Israeli commando named Juval Aviv. Aviv today runs a private security firm in New York City called Interfor. According to the *Post Standard*, Aviv was a member of a secret Israeli hit team that stalked the Arab terrorists who slaughtered the Israeli team participating in the 1972 Munich Olympics. Apparently utilizing existing Israeli anti-terrorist networks in Western Europe, Aviv put together much of the material on the Frankfurt Airport smuggling ring and its links to Palestinian terrorist groups including Abu Nidal's Black September and Ahmed Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC).

With Congress in recess until the new year, the question of momentum becomes critical. So far, no one has taken up Traficant's call for a full congressional investigation into the Lockerbie disaster. President Bush just appointed a special panel to probe the crash. CIA director William Webster is reportedly scrambling to get on top of the case and is out to hermetically seal the agency against leaks until he personally sorts out the full extent of the mess. His career, and that of some other senior officials in the current and past administrations, may very well be on the line when Congress reopens its doors in January 1990.

Car-bomb in Beirut: Will Lebanon survive?

It may take weeks or months before the ultimate culprits behind the assassination of René Moawad and some 17 of his associates on Nov. 22, are found—if they ever are. And perhaps only two elements can be asserted with certainty. The timing of the car-bombing, coinciding with the 46th anniversary of Lebanon's Independence, was carefully chosen. The timing ensured that Moawad and his dignitaries would be part of the ceremonies, and above all, it struck at the symbol of Lebanese independence. Second, this violent death of a former parliamentarian, chosen only two weeks before by some of his colleagues to be the President of a truncated Lebanon, was contained within the logic of the Taif agreement.

Of course, most participants in the Taif agreement would deny this, arguing that it represented a chance for stability and putting an end to the last 12 months of heavy fighting around Beirut. In reality, the Taif process was an agreement among dupes, each bargaining the best for himself, at the expense not only of the others, but of Lebanon. Since it gave the appearance of stability, and set into motion an appearance of diplomatic negotiations which could, in some remote future, tackle the issue of the foreign occupation of Lebanon, most foreign powers were all too happy to support it and wash their hands of the country. And this was the success of the Taif agreement: It allowed all those who wanted to believe it, or at least to seem to believe it, to acquiesce to a piece of paper signed by all, according to which Syria, renowned for its fair and democratic elections, would allow a process of constitutional, political, and electoral reforms within Lebanon, and thereafter start negotiating its withdrawal!

Most powers choose to play the game by cynicism, others in the vain hope that concessions to the Syrians may gain them some respite to develop a "wait and see" policy. For those who refused to play the game, Goebbels-style propaganda was set into motion to discredit them. A heavy dose of such propaganda has been witnessed throughout all major international media since Moawad's death.

A major lie for example, since Taif took place, has been to repeat ad nauseam that all parties but Prime Minister Gen. Michel Aoun had accepted the terms of the agreement. Only Aoun stood in the way of peace, it was said. Yet, while Aoun did oppose the Taif agreement, from the standpoint that it represented an unacceptable violation of Lebanese sovereignty and dangerous concessions of Lebanese integrity, others opposed it too.

The opponents include most of Syria's closest allies, the very ones who should be expected to be on the side of Damascus. Walid Jumblatt, the chieftain of the Druze militia who works with Syria in the hope of escaping his father Kamal's fate—killed by the Syrians in the late 1970s—and Nabih Berri, the sectarian leader of the Shi'ite Amal militia, opposed Taif because their sectarian interests were not rewarded enough. Likewise the Hezbollah movement, which does not deny that its only aim is the transformation of Lebanon into a Khomeinist Islamic Republic of Lebanon. Pushed aside, even ignored and defeated by the political Taif agreement, any of these groups had an interest in derailing this process.

And indeed, but for a predictable denunciation from Syria and those who have vested interests in the defense of Syria, no one has dared accuse Michel Aoun of the murder. As a Western diplomat quoted in the Nov. 23 Paris daily *Libération*, underlined, "Aoun may be a Lebanese fundamentalist, but he is not a murderer."

Aoun also had no motivation for the act. Two weeks after a mockery of presidential elections, held directly on a Syrian military base, Aoun and his associates were firmly in control of East Beirut and the region extending to Junieh. Thanks to the events in the East bloc and especially in East Germany, Syria could not afford to resume the heavy artillery bombardment of last summer. At a time when the Berlin Wall is coming down, no one can condone the massacre of Christians in Lebanon. Likewise, a direct military offensive to retake East Beirut, street by street, house by house, would have been much too costly—ultimately unachievable. Time was playing in Aoun's favor. Within two months, with Aoun still holding firmly his position, the Moawad administration, based in West Beirut or in Northern Lebanon, would have reached the nadir of discredit.

For these very same reasons, some within Syria may have been tempted to sacrifice one of their assets in the hope that a worldwide outcry would point the finger at Aoun. Syria would then receive full support from a supposedly outraged world public opinion to get rid of Aoun and his associates at all costs. Whether this has been the case, will be seen in coming days and weeks.

Over the last 15 years, the Lebanese crisis has evolved through parameters which have not responded to Middle Eastern priorities, but primarily to the needs of the superpowers. The Lebanese crisis started in 1975 as a direct result of the 1970 Black September crisis in Jordan, played back and forth by then-National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, to thwart any peace efforts—notably the timid Rogers peace plan. It is worth recalling that Hafez al-Assad, then a mere Air Force chief of staff, staged a coup and took power in Syria. Indeed, throughout these years, local agents have acted. Yet, few have ever been able to do so independently.

Michel Aoun represents the first Lebanese national leader who has not only challenged the local powers, but the super-

powers too—and managed so far to remain alive. There is no doubt that he himself may be the next victim of this wider conspiracy. What is it about? For the last 15 years, Lebanon has been the staging ground for a social and political grinding process whereby all ideas of the nation-state, all nationalist movements were suppressed in favor of sectarian, religious, or ethnic movements, Druze against Christians, Christians against Muslims, Sunni versus Shi'ites, a process which has extended from Lebanon to the entire region. In launching the "national war of independence" against Syria, uniting Christians and Muslims alike, Aoun upset a game which few, if any, had dared question.

There will be more fighting in Lebanon in coming weeks, and it may even spill over into a broader regional conflict. No one can accurately predict for the time being. Yet, those Lebanese nationalists who had denounced the Taif agreement as bearing the seeds of disaster for Lebanon, now proven right by events, will need more support than ever.

Letter from General Aoun

To the Lebanese throughout the world

The following letter was sent by Lebanese Prime Minister Gen. Michel Aoun on Nov. 18 from Baabda.

Since I last wrote to you, the events in our country have taken a turn such that our Lebanon, our homeland, is in perhaps the most dangerous situation of our history.

Free Lebanon is put now to a test which comes down to a question of life or death. We must undertake, and succeed in, a general renaissance, almost a resurrection, faced with an onslaught by nations which seek their own interests at the expense of our very existence, our freedom, and all the values which make up our cultural heritage, a heritage which has roots deeper than any other in this region of the world.

The onslaught I denounce is that which was launched against us seven months ago, and has reached its high point during the struggle in the Souk El-Gharb: These battles are unprecedented, both in the ferocity of the men and the exceptional cruelty of the weapons put at their disposal. Our courage, our faith in right on our side, have brought our army and our people up to a level of heroism, which has enabled them to resist barbarity. Our resistance has taken on the silence of a world which has not bothered, or not dared, to take the slightest step in favour of our small country and what it stands for.

We can do nothing less than defend our Lebanon, which

must continue to be the free country of the rights of man and the Commandments of God, against a conspiracy formed by the barbary of some and the silence of others.

The plot against us has failed thanks to all we have thrown into the struggle against it, soldiers, martyrs, and saints. Appeals were made with a view to various forms of mediation, led by the mediators of the Arab triumvirate and backed by most of the international bodies and Arab and foreign countries. Desirous of bringing about Peace, messengers of the Law, praying that Justice would be guaranteed, we accepted that the Deputies leave for Taif.

First, the deputies agreed on the internal Lebanese issue, proving that there is no such thing as a Lebano-Lebanese discord. Though the Arab triumvirate had officially declared that the Syrian occupation was the only obstacle to the efforts to arrive at peace, the Arab High Committee finally bowed to Syrian will.

At Taif, the High Committee placed the Deputies before the following dilemma: Either they signed the document put before them, no matter what its content, or, they expose the country yet again to Syrian violence and deprecation. Caught between coercion and seduction, the deputies signed, to the advantage of the Occupant, a document which divests Lebanon of its national sovereignty and its democratic and parliamentary system.

Thus, by dint of Arab pressure and international compromise, the Occupant got what he could not conquer by fire and the sword at Souk El-Gharb.

In order that this divestiture not be entrenched constitutionally with the election of a President who will be putty in the hands of the Occupant, we had to use our constitutional powers and dissolve the Chamber of Deputies, thus cutting off any legislation which might lead to our country being swallowed up.

But the conspiracy I spoke of, went on to carry out its plan and its program. There took place a fictitious and anti-constitutional election of a President of the Republic at the military base of Kleiat, the background to which was the Occupant's bayonets and cannons.

Throughout the unoccupied parts of the country, the Lebanese people rose up in rejection and took to the streets in unprecedented numbers. The occupied regions await the moment they too can express their rejection of the Occupant's laws and of miserable compromises so far from the real reforms which would ensure justice and equality for all.

You, the people of Lebanon dispersed throughout the world, know that all free life in Lebanon is about to vanish. The Lebanon of liberty, of democracy, of peaceful coexistence, of fraternal cooperation, this exemplary Lebanon, is about to be broken up and dissolved, victim of a will to rule the entire region, victim of international silence which flows from mutual interest.

Today, more than ever before, Lebanon needs you. Answer our call. You must gather into one assembly all Leba-

nese living in all the nations of the world, leaving out none of the groups which represent our country, respecting our differences but holding together to achieve our common goals as a nation. You must gather together and unite, in an active unit, and do not allow centrifugal forces to eat away your efficiency. In all sectors, at all levels, use all your skills, all your options, to bring the world to grasp the reality, the deadliness of the plot against your country, your people, all the values which your cultural heritage bears within it and has given the world.

Without breaking the laws and regulations of the countries you may find yourselves in, you must lead public opinion in the capitals where international decisions are taken.

You must be the Ambassadors of Lebanon in the world, holding up the right of your people to live free, and the national right to liberation, sovereignty and independence. In that spirit, your government will deal with you.

Lebanese dispersed throughout the world, do not give the world any rest until that hour strikes when your country be freed from the Occupant's yoke. Be for your country what you have always been: a human and humanist mission beyond our borders.

*Lebanon is yours
Lebanon calls you
To Lebanon, be true.*

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