

Mossad Exposed in Phony 'Palestinian Al-Qaeda' Caper

by Michele Steinberg and Hussein Askary

The United States government has been provided with concrete evidence that the Israeli Mossad and other Israeli intelligence services have been involved in a 13-month effort to "recruit" an Israeli-run, phony "al-Qaeda cell" among Palestinians, so that Israel could achieve a frontline position in the U.S. war against terrorism and get a green light for a worldwide "revenge without borders" policy. The question: Does the United States have the moral fiber to investigate?

Evidence of the Israeli dirty tricks burst onto the public scene on Dec. 6, when Col. Rashid Abu Shbak, head of the Palestinian Preventive Security Services in the Gaza Strip, held a press conference revealing the details of the alleged plot, as his agency had put the pieces together. The revelations undermine the "big lie" that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has used to justify new brutal attacks on Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip and other occupied areas. Sharon claimed on Dec. 4 that Israeli intelligence had "hard evidence" of al-Qaeda operations in the Gaza Strip. Now, the top Palestinian leadership has shown the United States and other nations how Israeli intelligence entities were creating that al-Qaeda link!

American leader Lyndon LaRouche, a Democratic Presidential pre-candidate in 2004, commented that these revelations, if confirmed, could be "of strategic importance" in stopping the American, British, and Israeli warhawks pushing for a Middle East war, beginning with an invasion of Iraq. A war would justify the Sharon government's plan to annihilate the very idea of a Palestinian state. LaRouche warned that if institutions of the American Presidency and the international community successfully block an American pre-emptive war on Iraq, the biggest danger would be that a "mega-terror" attack, blamed on Palestinians, or an "Iraqi-linked" al-Qaeda, would be *staged* by Israel's ruling Jabotinskyite fanatics, to put the war back on the agenda.

News about the Mossad-run attempt to create an al-Qaeda cell came when well-informed intelligence sources based in Washington had already told *EIR* that there are many doubts about the Mossad's hasty declaration that "al-Qaeda" had been responsible for the Nov. 28 attack on a hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, where three Israelis were killed, and the failed rocket attack on an Israeli chartered jet that was departing from Mombasa airport. There was no identification of the bombers within the first five days of the incident, the sources pointed out, yet Sharon's government ministers went on an immediate propaganda rampage announcing worldwide revenge (see article in this section). Authorities in Kenya also denied the al-Qaeda link. But the usefulness of blaming al-Qaeda, for the Israeli right, was palpable, when Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the Kenya attacks "a golden opportunity" to prove to the United States that Bush's war on terrorism, and Israel's war with the Palestinians is the same thing. Netanyahu's faction has violently rejected the Palestinian Authority's revelations, and so far, the American and European press have followed suit, despite the dramatic nature of these charges, and the documents that the Palestinians have provided to the international press.

Chronology of the Revelations

On Dec. 7, the British news service, Reuters, the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, and Qatar-based Al-Jazeera TV network, all reported that the Palestinian Authority had accused the Mossad of creating a phony al-Qaeda cell in the Gaza Strip. *Ha'aretz* reported, "the head of Palestinian Preventive Security" in the Gaza Strip, Col. Rashid Abu Shbak, said on Dec. 6, "that his forces had identified a number of Palestinian collaborators who had been ordered by Israeli security agencies to 'work in the Gaza Strip under the name of al-Qaeda.' He

said the investigation was ongoing and evidence would be presented soon.” Al-Jazeera TV added that the Palestinian authorities had arrested a group of Palestinian “collaborators with Israeli occupation” in Gaza, involved in the operation.

Reuters’ reporter Diala Saadeh, under the headline, “Palestinians: Israel Faked Gaza al-Qaeda Presence,” quoted a number of Palestinian Authority (P.A.) senior officials, including President Yasser Arafat, who told reporters at his West Bank Ramallah headquarters, that Sharon’s claims of al-Qaeda operations in Palestinian territories “is a big, big, big lie to cover [Sharon’s] attacks and his crimes against our people everywhere.” P.A. Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo detailed the case: “There are certain elements who were instructed by the Mossad to form a cell under the name of al-Qaeda in the Gaza Strip in order to justify the assault and the military campaigns of the Israeli occupation army against Gaza.”

Palestinian officials promised to provide detailed evidence, and did so on Dec. 8, in a press conference addressed by Colonel Shbak, and by Palestinian Minister for Planning and International Cooperation Nabil Shaath. Shbak told the international representatives that, “Over the past nine months, we’ve been investigating eight cases in which Israeli intelligence posing as al-Qaeda operatives recruited Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.” Colonel Shbak said that 3 men were under arrest, and 11 had been released. He explained that those released had voluntarily provided information going back to May 2002, about the contacts that had been made asking them to operate as an “al-Qaeda” group. The alleged al-Qaeda recruiters were traced to Israeli intelligence, said Colonel Shbak. He detailed incidents, some of which were described in official documents, of cell phone calls and e-mails, where Palestinians were asked to “join al-Qaeda.” Shbak said, “We investigated the origin of those calls, which used [wireless phone] roaming, and messages, and found out they all came from Israel,” reported the publication, IslamOnline. He said that the potential “recruits,” had been given money and weapons, “although most of these weapons did not even work.” He also noted that the money for these targeted Palestinians “was transferred from bank accounts in Jerusalem or Israel.”

Minister Shaath announced at the press conference that the P.A. had “handed ambassadors and consuls of the Arab and foreign countries, documents revealing the involvement of the Israeli intelligence in recruiting citizens from Gaza Strip in a fake organization carrying the name of Qaeda.” He said the ploy was intended “to create a new excuse to escalate the aggression on Gaza Strip.”

The international community was jolted again on Dec. 10, when Colonel Shbak held another press conference and the Preventive Security Agency presented the Mossad’s potential recruiter himself to the international media. According to reports in the Arabic press in Dubai, London and Ramallah, the man appeared in disguise (for security reasons,) and was identified only as “Ibrahim,” but explained in great detail that

he was one of the “key recruiters” for the potential cell. He said the story started in October 2001, when, after he sent his photo and mobile phone number to a “contact page” in a Jerusalem magazine, he was contacted by a person calling himself “Youssef,” and nicknamed “Abu Othman.” After building up a personal relationship with “Ibrahim,” and telling him how much he resembled his own son, who had been killed, Youssef sent him \$2,000, and began encouraging the Gaza man—who appeared to be in his early 20s—to become a more observant and practicing Muslim.

In May 2002, five months after the initial contact, said Ibrahim, Youssef “told me frankly, ‘you are a good candidate to work for us in the company of Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda group.’ ” This Youssef also claimed to have already created an al-Qaeda cell inside Israel. Ibrahim said that he then approached the Palestinian security services and told them about the transactions with Youssef, and that the security services asked him to continue the communications, which they would monitor. He said that the specific instructions were that Ibrahim was to announce through a communiqué—directly from Gaza—that al-Qaeda claimed credit for a bombing attack, or attacks, that Youssef indicated his network was about to carry out in Israel. Ibrahim stressed that the man also said that he (the Mossad officer) “had the capability to carry out major bombing operations inside Israel, but that the al-Qaeda group in Gaza should claim responsibility for the attack and no other group.” In an interview with the London-based Arabic daily *Al-Hayat*, after the press conference, Ibrahim stated, that “the man told him that mega military operations will be conducted inside Israel, and that these operations would be announced through Ibrahim.” This would mean that as soon as he gets the signal after a major terrorist act against Israeli civilian targets, Ibrahim and his group would send a communiqué to the press or a videotape, similar to the ones sent by bin Laden to Al-Jazeera, claiming responsibility for the attack.

Ibrahim was also asked to gather specific information for Youssef about a number of persons in Gaza, some of them known to be members of Hamas. When asked why he wanted this information, Youssef said, “I want them to join al-Qaeda.” At that point, Palestinian security services cut off the “Ibrahim-Youssef” contact, because it was becoming too dangerous.

At the same press conference, Colonel Shbak said direct money payments “transferred from Israel,” had been received by five out of the eight Palestinians who have been giving information to the Preventive Security Agency about this operation. Shbak also explained that his agency traced and obtained a number of telephone numbers, registrations, and bank receipts for money transferred to some of those persons.

Now, said Shbak, the United States and a number of international intelligence and security organs had been supplied with documents and evidence refuting the Israeli allegations

about Palestinian connections to al-Qaeda. “These documents prove without any doubt that the ones who are behind this alleged al-Qaeda group are the various Israeli intelligence organizations,” Shbak added. He told *Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah* daily that the “Americans have not responded yet to the documents . . . as provided by the Palestinian Preventive Security agency.”

The 9/11 Cover Story

The question is whether the U.S. government and other governments will take up the evidence given to them. It is well established that several top Cabinet officials in the current Sharon caretaker government, including Sharon himself, have a long, jaded history of staging precisely these kinds of “countergang” operations, using Israeli covert operatives and Arabs tortured and brainwashed in Israeli jails and recruited as false-flag terrorists. Sharon, Mossad chief Moshe Dagan, and Gen. Effie Eitam are proponents of such dirty-war tactics. As *EIR* reported in several extensive articles on the Hamas organization, that terrorist capability was actually created by Ariel Sharon and the Israeli right wing, for the purpose of supplanting Yasser Arafat and the organizations of the Palestine Liberation Organization (see *EIR*, Dec. 6).

Even more to the point, the Osama bin Laden authorship of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks has been a cover story from the first moments the media began reporting it as fact. Interviewed on the morning of Sept. 11 as the attacks were unfolding, LaRouche made clear that the breadth and sophistication of these attacks showed that it was “an inside job,” involving U.S. military and intelligence operatives capable of defeating or neutralizing all existing and backup security systems. Bin Laden was named as the culprit, explains LaRouche, because his name provided entry into the policy of a Clash of Civilizations against Islam, which right-wing neo-conservatives in the Bush Administration have as their goal. LaRouche has also pointedly asked when Osama bin Laden stopped being an American agent—a reality that the “Islamic card” networks of Zbigniew Brzezinski and the Iran-Contra financiers of the Afghansi *mujahideen*, want to bury. It must also be asked, when did al-Qaeda stop working for British intelligence? *EIR* has documented that British foreign intelligence, MI6, worked closely with so-called Islamist terrorist groups safe-housed in Britain, to destabilize Arab and Muslim nations, in the geopolitical service of Her Majesty’s government, and an Anglo-American imperial faction.

As recently as November, this coverup of British/U.S. covert support for terrorism continued, with the case of David Shayler, a former MI5 agent who was sentenced to six months in jail for disclosing “government secret information.” Shayler told London *Guardian* reporter Martin Bright that MI6 hired one of Osama bin Laden’s closest collaborators—Anas al-Liby, who remains on the U.S. government’s Most Wanted List, with a reward of \$25 million for his capture—to assassinate Libya’s Col. Muammar al-Qaddafi in 1996.

Bright, who could not publish the article in the *Guardian*, but did so in the Pakistani daily, *The Dawn*, on Oct. 30, received a gag order from the British Attorney General, threatening him with prison, if he publishes any more information from Shayler.

With this background in mind, the public revelations about the Mossad attempts to set up al-Qaeda cells, could have strategic consequences for the discredited Sharon government—and even more broadly for the Clash of Civilizations zealots covering up the truth about Sept. 11. The Palestinian revelations could become the “straw that broke the camel’s back,” in this dirty war.