
Investigative Leads

Moscow, Teheran in anti-U.S. offensive

by Thierry Lalevée

Behind the Sept. 20 kamikaze attack against the U.S. embassy in Beirut, claimed by the "Islamic Jihad" terrorist group, stand the very same forces which struck in April 1983 against the embassy, then in western Beirut, and which killed 400 French and American servicemen the following October, bombed the U.S. embassy in Kuwait on Dec. 9, and have been responsible for an endless list of bombings and cold-blooded assassinations in the Middle East or in Western Europe. The same explosive mixture—some 150 kg of TNT—as well as two Soviet-made Grad rockets, were used on Sept. 20 as in December 1983. The assassination attempt against a Kuwaiti journalist on Aug. 8 in Marbella, Spain, among other actions, underlines the fact that Al Jihad is not operating merely in the Middle East; according to the latest intelligence estimates, it has now established bases of operation in Western Europe and North America.

Despite the efforts of the Americans, the French, and the Israelis to destroy them, the Islamic Jihad commandos still maintain their main headquarters in the region surrounding the city of Baalbeck in Lebanon, where they operate under the protection of the Syrian regime of Hafez al Assad. Islamic Jihad is no loose grouping of brainwashed zombies, but an intelligence and terrorist operation which, through its leader Hussein Moussavi, coordinates closely with the intelligence services of Libya, Syria, and Iran, and ultimately with Soviet intelligence, under Politburo member and Islamic specialist Geidar Aliyev, and the East German Stasi (Staatsicherheitsdienst) of Gen. Markus Wolff.

It is under such sponsorship that Islamic Jihad is expected to launch further terrorist operations in the coming months in Beirut and elsewhere, either directly or in collaboration with the many related networks based in Europe, such as those of Rashid Bin Issa and Paris businessmen Sharif Malik. Reports coming from Beirut on Sept. 27 indicated that all Western embassies and institutions were again in a general state of alert, as are many intelligence services in Europe.

Iran's new terrorist czar

In early September, just before the Sept. 20 kamikaze attack, Iranian President Ali Khamenei made his first tour abroad, visiting Syria, Libya, and Algeria. On Sept. 6 he

arrived in Damascus, accompanied by Minister for the Revolutionary Guards Mohsen Rafik-Dust and Minister of Public Security Hojatessalam Mohammed Mohammadi Reyshahri, as well as numerous chiefs of the intelligence and military departments of Iran. By Sept. 9 when he arrived in Tripoli, his delegation had shrunk from 60 to 40, and then to only 25 when he arrived in Algiers on Sept. 11. The intelligence chiefs had dropped out of the entourage to stay either in Damascus or Tripoli.

It was during his stay in Damascus that Khamenei received all the leaders of Lebanon's Shi'ite community, as well as leaders of the Iranian contingents in Syria and Lebanon. That Hussein Moussavi was included in these meetings, sponsored by Hafez al Assad, was no secret. Included too was a representative of the main Lebanese Shi'ite organization, Al Amal. Lebanese minister Nabil Berri, the chairman of Al Amal, announced on Sept. 9, a day after Islamic Jihad's first serious threat against the United States, that he had 50 young kamikazes ready to die to free Lebanon from Israel's occupation.

Of special importance was the presence in the Iranian delegation of Hojatessalam Reyshahri, who had just been appointed Minister for Public Security on Aug. 15 and is the first such minister since 1979. A former general procuror of the Revolutionary Tribunals, with an endless list of death sentences to his name over the years, including that meted out to former Foreign Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, Reyshahri is the first minister to centralize under his own control all of Iran's internal and external intelligence services, as well as internal public security and censorship. Before his appointment as minister, he was already receiving in Iran some 400 East German security advisers, out of a 1,000-strong group which had arrived in northern Syria in July. The East Germans, along with the Soviets and Bulgarians, are helping Iran develop a better coordinated intelligence and security service. There is little doubt about Reyshahri's role as one of Iran's most important coordinators of international terrorism.

In Damascus, Reyshahri met with Assad as well as Syrian intelligence chief Gen. Ali Duba, then went with Khamenei to Tripoli. He never arrived in Algiers with the presidential entourage, but surfaced instead in Geneva on the evening of Sept. 14, where he stayed overnight at the Hotel President. During that night, Reyshahri reportedly held a conference with Colonel Qaddafi's cousin and special intelligence envoy Ahmed Qaddafi, and with a Syrian military representative close to Rifaat al Assad, the Syrian President's brother. Though little is known about the content of the meeting, a similar gathering of top Iranian, Libyan, and Syrian representatives has been held prior to every major terrorist onslaught, e.g., in April and October 1983. Reyshahri is also believed to have stopped over in Rome to meet with Hojatessalam Khosrowshahi, the Iranian ambassador to the Vatican, whose embassy is a coordination center for Iranian operations in Europe.