

Europe joins U.S. terror crackdown, expels Libyans

by Omar al Montasser

Since the March 25 confrontation in the Gulf of Sidra between U.S. planes and Libyan vessels, more than 50 Libyan diplomats and related agents have been expelled from Europe. The bulk of the expulsions was decided after two emergency meetings of the European Community's foreign ministers in Paris on April 17 and in The Hague on April 21, days after the April 15 American raid against terror bases within Libya.

Coupled with the decision on April 21 to drastically reduce the Libyan diplomatic staff throughout Europe, have been measures to curtail the free movement of Libyan nationals on the continent. As a further example of European unity, it was also decided that any Libyan expelled from one country of the 12-nation European Community, should be considered as undesirable in the entire Community. On April 23, at a meeting of the European justice and interior ministers, or Trevi Group as this gathering is called, more practical measures of European police coordination were decided.

Far from an all-out war

These political measures are a far cry from an all-out war against Libyan-sponsored terrorism, which should include economic, political, and military sanctions. They even fell short of the demands made by the British government of Margaret Thatcher for a general break of diplomatic relations between all of the European countries and Libya.

The moves reflected two concerns; first, that even if it wants to stubbornly maintain an illusory "right to differ" with Washington's ways of dealing with terrorism, the Community has to agree to Washington's general drive; secondly, a more painful realization that this "right to differ," and even more violent distancing from American policies, didn't save Europe from Libyan- and Soviet-sponsored terror waves. But

for Greece under Papandreou, not a single European foreign minister dared to say on April 21 that he was not convinced of Libya's involvement in the recent terror wave.

By denouncing and expelling Libyan diplomats, the Europeans have become the targets of Libyan retaliation; but they have not yet given themselves the means to effectively counter such threats, although intelligence sources report that cooperation among European intelligence services and their American associates is more advanced than at the government level. Such cooperation has led to mass expulsion of Libyan diplomats.

Intelligence cooperation with France

Military cooperation between France and the United States falls under the joint direction of Socialist President François Mitterrand and Premier Jacques Chirac. Mitterrand, who, as President, considers military and foreign affairs his "private domain," opposed such cooperation; weakly Chirac agreed. Internal security is, however, another matter, and since early April, French counter-intelligence services have been able to prevent several serious terrorist attacks. At the beginning of April, a Libyan team planned the assassination of the American ambassador to France, another team planned a massacre at the U.S. consulate's queue of tourists waiting for their visas. At the same time, police in Lyon discovered that the French terror group Direct Action and one of its leaders, André Olivier, had signed a financial contract with Libya for the bombing of the U.S. consulate there.

On April 6, Ali Berragoun and Mohammed Kelbash were expelled. Under the cover of press attaché, Kelbash was a Libyan intelligence chief and ran a large network. Both were arrested carrying machine-guns and hand grenades in diplomatic pouches to be used against the U.S. consulate.

Two of their agents were also expelled: a former captain in the Algerian army, Fethi Cherif, who served as the explosive expert of the cell, together with one Roundi Ben Ali, who used a false Tunisian passport. Both are reported to belong to the "Force-17" Palestinian organization—a group which has slipped out of Arafat's control to work on behalf of Libya. They had been recruited in 1985 in Tunis by Libyan official Salem Agil. Reports also indicate that F-17 is being used to discredit Arafat as part of an ongoing political coup within the PLO.

On April 18, a much larger operation took place: Four more Libyans were expelled, including a former diplomat, Moawyah Souairi, ex-ambassador to Ghana. Souairi is reported to have worked in Paris out of the offices of the "Arab People's Congress" of Omar al Hamdi. The APC is one of the main channels of Libyan monies to Arab radical groups throughout the world, and is one of Libya's essential intelligence branches.

French police caught some 53 sympathizers of Direct Action on April 16, and kept 6 in jail, among them an Algerian national, Hamid Lallaoui, who belonged to the international branch of the movement. A second generation Algerian immigrant in France, Lallaoui belonged to the "autonomist" commandos which have close ties with Islamic radical groups associated with Ben Bella, and may represent a vital link between Direct Action and Middle Eastern terrorism.

Bonn shoos Libyan 'diplomats'

Meanwhile, despite the protests of Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the West German government on April 10 expelled two leading Libyan diplomats in Bonn. Ahmad Omar Issa and Mahmud Ahmed Shibani belonged to the Libyan intelligence branch responsible for watching and assassinating opponents of Qaddafi. Both were reportedly in touch with East Berlin-based Libyan diplomat Elamin Abdullah Elamin, who has been seen as the brain behind the April 5 bombing of the "La Belle" discothèque. While in the Bonn embassy in the spring of 1985, Elamin was responsible for the murder of Qaddafi opponent Gabriel Denali. However, Bonn did not even expel him but merely pleaded for his departure. He left in July 1985 for East Berlin.

Since April 21, the toll has become heavier. On April 22, the British government announced it would expel 21 Libyan students. The bulk are pilot trainees at the Oxford air training school at Kidlington. Among them is Adel Massoud Saad who, on March 28, had told Radio Tripoli that he was ready to fly a kamikaze mission against the British-based U.S. military garrisons. All of those expelled have been members of Libya's revolutionary committees, represented in Britain by the "Libyan Action Committee" led by Bostan Qadiri. More expulsions are under way.

In West Germany itself, the same day Bonn announced it would reduce the Libyan diplomatic staff from 41 to 19. Similar numbers are expected to be expelled from other European countries.

These expulsions can be only the first steps. Libyan opposition leader and former prime minister, Abdel Hamid Bakoush, told the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* on April 22 that such decisions would be useless unless Libya's airline offices as well as commercial and financial institutions were hit, too. The point had been proven only a day earlier when the Italian police made a breakthrough in the investigation of the spring 1985 plot to assassinate the U.S. ambassador to Rome. On April 21, they had arrested Urabi Mohammed Fitouri, a former Libyan diplomat in Rome, who was the manager of the Libyan Arab Investment Company (LAIC) there. As a banker, Fitouri had personally paid Hamuda Daghdugh for the murder. The arrest brought to light the fact that the LAIC is the Libyan agency which holds 15% of Fiat's shares. Fitouri's associate in the plot was one Musbah Mahmood Werfalli, who is the Libyan cultural attaché in Malta. A search in Fitouri's flat on April 22 uncovered plans for terrorist operations in Italy and abroad.

However spectacular, these expulsions have only scratched the surface of the terror networks. More important discoveries were made through the arrest of Nazir Narwaf Mansur Hindawi, a Jordanian with a Syrian passport. Hindawi was arrested after sending his Irish girlfriend, Anne Murphy, on a London-Tel Aviv plane with a sophisticated explosive device inside her luggage. The bomb was timed to explode above London; Anne Murphy and 400 other passengers were to have died on April 17. Investigations showed that the bomb may have come from Czechoslovakia and, according to certain accounts, was prepared at the Syrian embassy in London.

Then came the discovery on April 19 that Hindawi's natural brother, Ahmed Narwaf Mansur Hasi, was implicated in the "Le Belle" bombing. The West Berlin police interrogation of him after the arrest of his brother, produced evidence of his role in planning the operation. Hasi, who is now known to have spent some time in Libya for training, came to West Berlin in 1975 from East Berlin. Investigations are also bringing to light an international network around Hindawi, operating in Paris, Tunis, Cairo, West Berlin, Rome, Montreal, and Kuwait.

Europe seems to be finally waking up to the danger of international terrorism. Many other police operations have proven the point in recent weeks. A significant operation on which we will have more to report soon, was the expulsion on April 18 of three Syrian diplomats in Rome and the arrests of some 15 Lebanese, Egyptians, and Italian nationals. A joint operation between the Italian government and the American Drug Enforcement Agency, this raid dismantled a lucrative heroin smuggling network linking Lebanon's Bekaa valley to Rome. The three Syrian diplomats carried the heroin by car across Greece and Yugoslavia, and are reported to have built a small refinery within the embassy itself. Coming less than three months after a similar bust in Madrid, this proves the point that drug smuggling is one of the essential means for Syria to finance international terrorist operations.