

## Abu Nidal: another look at 'state-sponsored terrorism'

by Dean Andromidas

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### **Abu Nidal: A Gun for Hire**

by Patrick Seale

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Is the world's most notorious Arab terrorist in the employ of Israel's Mossad, one of the West's most effective secret intelligence services? This is the question British author and Middle East specialist Patrick Seale attempts to prove in his new book, *Abu Nidal: A Gun for Hire*. Although Seale's method of proof is to develop a strong case of circumstantial evidence, we at *EIR* have no problems accepting his essential point.

For nearly 20 years, *EIR* has worked to demonstrate that international terrorism is not a sociological phenomenon of frustrated petit bourgeois students, oppressed minorities or extremist parties spawned by a natural evolutionary process. Terrorism is, in fact, a form of irregular warfare conducted through state and private intelligence services in the service of powerful international political forces. Its operations overlap organized crime, particularly narcotics-trafficking networks. The collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the unification of East and West Germany have led to the exposure of the incredible extent of control and support of international terrorism by intelligence services sponsored by the former Soviet Union, especially the East German Stasi. The average German citizen has learned how Red Army Faction terrorist Susanna Albrecht, who participated in the murder of Dresdner Bank chief Jürgen Ponto in 1976, had been treated to a high-paying pension in the German Democratic Republic,

complete with new identity, modern apartment, and other luxuries, all at the expense of the Stasi. The reports only confirmed, in the most obvious way, what *EIR* consistently has asserted for 15 years.

These revelations have become so extensive as to become commonplace on the German political scene. But it was only half the story. What about the other state intelligence services, the U.S. CIA, the French DST, the British MI-5 and MI-6, not to mention unofficial capabilities? The 1989 assassination of Deutsche Bank Chairman Dr. Alfred Herrhausen, a leading German policymaker promoting a policy of extensive economic cooperation with the East raises the obvious question: *Cui bono?*

The process of exposing western services' irregular warfare capabilities has not yet approached the level it has with the new access to Warsaw Pact security services' files. The recent release of the film "JFK" and Jim Garrison's book *On the Trail of the Assassins*, upon which the film was in part based, are perhaps the most important developments in this process. Patrick Seale's book can be considered another contribution.

While some reviews of Seale's book have been strong in their praise, others have tried to dismiss him as being in the pay of the Palestine Liberation Organization. At a time when the United States and Great Britain, in the name of stopping "state terrorism," are threatening to bring the West into military confrontation against Libya, Seale's book becomes all the more important for American and European readers alike.

### **Mideast terrorism as irregular warfare**

Seale's methodology is to compile the necessary circumstantial evidence pointing to an answer of the basic question:

Who benefits? Seale is a former Middle East correspondent for the London *Observer* and writer of many books on the Middle East, including a biography of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad. After speaking personally with the author, this reviewer has the impression that Seale has more direct evidence than he reveals in his book. Perhaps he is holding this evidence close to his chest, either for security reasons or for fear its release might not seem credible to the average reader brought up to believe in “lone assassins” or a “sociologically” driven form of terrorism.

Much of Seale’s evidence comes from Abu Iyad, the former security chief of the Palestine Liberation Organization, whom the author had known for a number of years. Early in 1990, Iyad invited Seale to Tunis to brief him on a story that most journalists would consider the story of their career: The world’s most dangerous Palestinian terrorist was, in fact, in the pay of the Mossad. Over the next six months, Abu Iyad made available a series of informants, taped discussions, and background information which enabled Seale to develop his very compelling case.

On Jan. 16, 1991, hours before Operation Desert Storm commenced, Abu Iyad became the target of assassination by an Abu Nidal agent planted in his security detail. To Seale, the question of who benefits became chillingly obvious.

The basic argument that Abu Iyad presented to Seale was that the majority of Abu Nidal’s terrorist operations and assassinations served Israel’s interests in two respects:

- 1) They served to discredit the Palestine Liberation Organization’s avowed renunciation of international terrorism in its efforts to represent the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and foster a Middle East peace settlement.

- 2) Many of those who fell victim to Abu Nidal’s assassins were among the leadership of the moderate faction of the PLO. Many of these victims were seen as credible and responsible leaders who could garner support among western leaders for the Palestinian cause.

In support of his argument, Seale compiles a grid of Middle East terrorist and “counter”-terrorist operations from 1972 up to the death of Abu Iyad in January 1991. The grid underscores how terrorism is irregular warfare and not the arbitrary acts of crazed extremists.

First, dealing with the so-called “War of the Spooks”: Starting with the May 1972 hijacking of a Sabena airliner and the attack against the Munich Olympics the following June by Black September, a running battle was fought between Palestinian factions and the Mossad throughout the world. Here the Israeli intelligence services used the same terror tactics which they accused the Palestinians of using. Theirs were not simply anti-terror operations, such as Entebbe, but included assassination, letter bombs, car bombs, and the like, all with the direct authorization of the Israeli cabinet.

It is instructive to note that Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak, cur-

rently chief of staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, who personally planned the recent assassination of Hezbollah chief Sheikh Abbas Musawi, took part or planned many of these operations. According to a recent article in the London *Sunday Telegraph*, Barak led the Saveret Matkal commando unit which stormed the Sabena airliner hijacked by Black September mentioned above. In 1973, disguised as a woman, he led an Israeli hit squad that burst into a Beirut hotel room to assassinate three leading PLO members. Seale’s chronology also includes Barak’s alleged masterminding the assassination of the PLO’s military commander, Khalili al-Wadzir, also known as Abu Jihad, in his Tunis villa in 1988. General Barak is, by the way, considered qualified material to become the future prime minister of Israel.

The chronology, of course, details Abu Nidal’s operations, almost all of which targeted leading Palestinian moderates, who could have garnered sufficient support among leading European and other western political forces capable of pressuring Israel to give up the Occupied Territories in exchange for peace. The list is impressive, including the 1974 assassination of Mahmud Abba, a close colleague of Yasser Arafat; in 1978, Said Hammami, PLO representative in London and well-known peace activist; Ali Yassin, PLO representative in Kuwait; Izz al-Din Qalaq, PLO representative in Paris; In 1983 Dr. Issam Sartawi, who had told the French daily *Le Monde* in 1982 that Abu Nidal was an Israeli agent. Several others narrowly escaped Abu Nidal’s assassins.

Seale closely examines all these instances to develop a convincing case, albeit circumstantial.

### **Israel is not the only controller**

According to Seale, Abu Nidal’s organization, while structured along revolutionary Marxist lines, actually functions as an organized crime operation, complete with departments for extortion, gun-running, and murder for hire. As such, he has worked for various masters—Iraqi, Libyan, Syrian and Soviet bloc, the highest bidder. But has he worked for British intelligence, the French DST, or the American CIA? Seale examines how both Belgian and French intelligence not only turned a blind eye toward his using their territory for logistical support and safehousing, but even subsidized some of his operations, including scholarships for his cadres to study at French universities and even the purchase of automobiles. In exchange, Abu Nidal agreed not to conduct terrorist acts or assassinations on their territories. But where do such favors end and operational deployment by French and other western services begin? This aspect is not fully followed by Seale, although he presents certain interesting leads.

Seale makes such a reference in a second terror grid that starts in June 1982 with Abu Nidal’s attempted assassination in Britain of Israeli diplomat Shlomo Argov—which served as a pretext for Israel’s invasion of Lebanon—and goes up to November 1986 when a Beirut newspaper, *Al-Shira*, pub-

lished the first report of the covert U.S. arms-for-hostages trade with Iran. Running for several pages, it is a history of the period as seen through a multiplicity of Middle East terror operations. This chronology is another compelling demonstration that terrorism is nothing less than proxy war fought out on a global scale. Appearing to be initiated by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and related to the Middle East crisis, it is more broadly anchored in the power play by Bush and others to shift the strategic conflict away from the East versus West to North versus South. The former was possible as the Bush-Reagan administration moved to create a condominium with the Soviet Union under Andropov and later Gorbachov. In this respect, both the Middle East conflict and the Contra resupply operation served as useful means to create a North-South conflict.

*EIR* has amply detailed the history of this development over the years as it has unfolded. Suffice it to say that the policy deployed terrorism to achieve those ends under basically two covers. The first was to use the excuse of fighting "state-sponsored terrorism," a phrase that came into common usage during the Reagan administration, to bully recalcitrant or independent states into conformity with the Anglo-American-Soviet condominium. Seale correctly points out that since the states accused of sponsoring terrorism were Syria, Iran, and Libya, Middle East policy was limited to a series "counterterrorist" operations rather than to seeking a peace settlement for the benefit of the region as a whole. The second cover, not fully examined by Seale, was "Iran-Contra" and guns-for-hostages operation of Oliver North and other western agencies. These operations served as the means for direct access to key terrorist capabilities.

Apparently choosing to limit the scope of his book, Seale uses his extensive chronology only to demonstrate that many of Abu Nidal's 1982-86 operations were done simply on a contract basis, a gun for hire in the service of the highest bidder, be it Libya or Israel.

### **The other half of the story**

With the Lockerbie affair being turned into another new world order crusade against state terrorism, Seale's self-limitation is insufficient. A review of *EIR*'s own files and recent revelations in the British media mark a trail from Abu Nidal directly to Oliver North and the National Security Council.

The collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) last summer led to revelations that Abu Nidal maintained over 40 bank accounts at a local BCCI branch in London. According to reports published last summer in the London *Sunday Times*, Abu Nidal often went to the branch office personally, under the nose of British intelligence operatives. One of his accounts was held under the unusual name of a Panamanian-registered company—SAS Trading and Investment. Millions of dollars ran through these accounts for such projects as the purchase of weapons that were manufactured by the Royal Ordnance Factory in

Nottingham, England.

Reporting on the collapse of the Barlow Clowes corporate empire in Britain, two enterprising journalists of the *Sunday Telegraph* got onto the trail of one David C. Mitchell, a Geneva-based accountant and British national, who, they say, is a financial Mr. Fixit. A former director of the Industrial Development Corp. of Rhodesia, Mitchell served as a financial go-between for a 1983 arms deal between Samir Najmeddin, commercial manager of Abu Nidal's SAS Trading and a group of arms dealers led by one Solomon Schwartz. The deal was for over \$7 million, of which nearly \$1 million was in the process of being transferred at the time it was busted. It included a large consignment of automatic weapons and ammunition. The money went through various accounts at BCCI and the Swiss Banking Corp., with the arms being shipped to Poland, where Abu Nidal was being safehoused by Polish intelligence. The operation was busted by the U.S. Customs Service and Schwartz was ultimately given a 10-year sentence, although he claimed that he did not know the shipment was destined for Abu Nidal. According to the *Sunday Telegraph*, Abu Nidal's connection was verified by a memorandum of the U.S. Department of Justice and an affidavit from a senior State Department official.

However, Schwartz is more than just a corrupt gun runner. According to *EIR*'s March 1988 special report, "The Kalmanowitch Report: Moscow's Moles in the Reagan-Bush Administration," Shabtai Kalmanowitch, an Israeli national operating business fronts in Africa, including the bantustan Bophuthatswana, was arrested in Israel at the end of 1987 on charges of being a Soviet agent. Solomon Schwartz operated out of the offices of Kalmanowitch and Rabbi Ronald Greenwald's Bophuthatswana International—or B International—which they identified as a joint Mossad-CIA proprietary. The notorious Soviet-Syrian terrorist and drug smuggler Mansur al-Kassar also was linked with Kalmanowitch. While *EIR* had documented that Schwartz worked on several projects with Oliver North, in 1988, we were not aware that the North-Schwartz arms deals included Abu Nidal's SAS Trading, which he claimed in U.S. court was sanctioned by the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency.

It has been well documented by various sources that Oliver North had extensive dealings with both East German and Polish authorities under the cover of purchasing weapons for his Contra resupply operations. Schwartz and others were arrested by U.S. Customs in 1984, and even the prosecution had to admit in court that the Schwartz ring had extensive contacts with American intelligence agencies. Oliver North tried to dismiss his deal with Schwartz—involving 500 Connecticut-made Ruger rifles, 100,000 rounds of ammunition, and other equipment—as attempt to sell the weapons to the Polish government in exchange for a Soviet-built T-72 tank for the U.S. government to study.

An implausible denial for the sale of weapons to the world's most notorious terrorist, Abu Nidal.