

UN's Ban sees Syria behind Al Qaida uprising in Lebanon camps

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WASHINGTON — The United Nations has determined that Syria was the sponsor of an Al Qaida revolt in Lebanon in 2007.

UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon concluded that Syria sent weapons to Fatah Al Islam and Hizbullah in an effort to undermine the government of Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora. The secretary-general's report said Syria was probably the sponsor of the 106-day revolt by Fatah Al Islam in mid-2007.

"Direct contact between some of Fatah Al Islam's leaders and some senior Syrian intelligence officers, which were revealed in the interrogations, are consistent with the suspicion that Syrian intelligence has used Fatah Al Islam to serve its political and security objectives in Lebanon," Siniora was quoted as saying in the UN report.

Authored by Ban's special envoy, Terje Roed-Larsen, the report supported an assertion by Siniora that Syria masterminded the Fatah Al Islam war in the Palestinian refugee camp of Naher Al Bared. The UN said Syria has enabled the smuggling of weapons to Lebanon that has bolstered Hizbullah's military capability to that of its 2006 war with Israel.

Lebanon has seized some of the weapons sent by Syria to Hizbullah and Al Qaida-aligned groups. In June, the Lebanese Army captured a truckload of Grad rockets, mortars, and ammunition for automatic rifles and machine guns.

"While Fatah Al Islam has been curbed, other such groups remain active and may indeed be drawing lessons from the mistakes and failures of Fatah Al Islam," the UN report said. "Information that has been shared with me by other regional member states indicates that the threat from Al Qaida-inspired militias in Palestinian refugee camps remains undiminished."

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