

Syrian agents tracking Lebanese commanders

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NICOSIA — Lebanon's military and security commanders are being targeted by Syria. Security sources said agents of Syrian President Bashar Assad have been tracking and attacking key commanders loyal to Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora. The sources said the agents have been aided by tens of thousands of pro-Syrians in the military and security forces.

"Now the target is the security institutions in the country," [Ret.] Gen. Elias Hanna, a leading Lebanese security analyst, said.

On Jan. 25, a senior Lebanese officer was said to have been killed by Syrian operatives. Capt. Wissam Mahmoud Eid, director of technology at the Internal Security Forces, was killed by a bomb detonated along a highway in a Beirut suburb. At least four other people were killed and 40 were injured.

Lebanese sources said the bombing resembled nearly a dozen others employed against anti-Syrian Lebanese politicians and officers over the last year. They said about 70 kilograms of TNT were packed into a BMW that was detonated by remote control as Eid's vehicle passed.

Eid, 31, was believed to have been tracked by Syrian agents for at least two years. A target of at least two assassination attempts, he was responsible for investigating previous Syrian assassinations, including the death of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005.

"The message has been received," ISF director-general Ashraf Rifi said. "It is a terror message sent to us by targeting our martyr Eid, who was working on the technical aspects of all cases involving terrorist bombings in the country."

In December 2007, Gen. Francois Haj, chief of operations of the Lebanese Army, was killed in what was believed to have been a car bombing ordered by Syria. Haj was said to have been a leading candidate for chief of staff.

"This is not the first time the security forces are targeted in this way," Lebanese Interior Minister Hassan Saba'a said. "This will not affect our moral nor deter us from our mission."

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