

CRC Open Sources - Syrian government's investigation into the death of Hezbollah's Imad Mughniye

Contributed by W. Thomas Smith, Jr., Director, Counterterrorism Research Center
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Yesterday, the Counterterrorism Research Center received a letter from one of our sources regarding the Syrian government's investigation into the death of Hezbollah's Imad Mughniyeh. You'll recall Mughniyeh was assassinated in Damascus on February 12, 2008. Syria has since conducted an "investigation" into the assassination of the long-time terrorist mastermind, and that government's findings -- considered highly suspect in many Western intelligence circles -- are slated to be released on Sunday, April 6th.

The letter follows: New York

04/01/08 "The following is in response to the news released by the Al Markaziya news agency that the Syrian regime will broadcast (on April 6, 2008) the results of its internal probe into the killing in Damascus of international terrorist Imad Mughniyeh." Any investigation related to Hezbollah is always welcome, but any statement issued by those within -- or cooperating with -- the Syrian regime regarding the Mughniyeh affair must be considered by the international community only as a single piece of the puzzle. This piece -- from a Hezbollah-supporting fact-finding body -- will and should only lead to a much broader and far more thorough international investigation into this case. The information released from Damascus will of course be considered, but should only be considered in the context of whom and what Damascus has supported and continues to support. A far more thorough and accurate investigation is absolutely necessary to reach the truth and to understand the implications of Hezbollah's global reach. "We have learned that the regime of Syrian president Bashar Assad is perhaps going to try another of its "old Baathist tricks" with propagandized claims and fabrications in an attempt to draw attention from the ongoing investigations into the multiple assassinations in Lebanon to include the 2005 assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The killing of terrorists should be investigated only by the international tribunal if there is to be any hope of objectivity and truth.

"Mughniyeh was a key Hezbollah operative, working out of the Iranian-Syrian-Hezbollah war room, which has been responsible for multiple acts of international terrorism, assassination, kidnapping, and financial extortion. Far too many secrets perished with Mughniyeh, which could have led to important information about people who have simply vanished in the Middle East. Hence, many Lebanese and as well as non-Lebanese persons want to know not only who killed Mughniyeh, but also what did he do during his reign of terror. "The United Nations Tribunal must seize upon any information leading to an understanding of the size and scope of Mughniyeh's murderous past. No matter what information the Syrian regime releases -- and the regime has previously released information, which has been completely fabricated -- Pres. Assad should also be questioned about Mughniyeh and his freedom of movement inside Syrian territory.

"Additionally, international investigators must question Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah as well as the heads of Hezbollah's so-called External Security Department about Mughniyeh. Investigators must open Hezbollah's files in an international investigation, as it is well-understood in numerous international-intelligence quarters that the Iranian-Syrian-Hezbollah war room has been behind all assassinations that have targeted Lebanese leaders over the past three years at a minimum. And let's not forget, Mughniyeh was responsible for the U.S. Marine barracks bombing in 1983 -- killing 261 Americans (many sleeping in their bunks) -- and the torture and murder of an unarmed American sailor during the infamous TWA hijacking in 1985, among other acts of terror."

Simply put, the results of this investigation by the Syrian government should not only be considered unreliable, but -- if given even the slightest consideration of objectivity -- must be seen as only a fraction of the much larger story.

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