

Report: Fatah al-Islam linked to Bashar Assad's Brother in Law

Contributed by Administrator
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An alleged leader of the Fatah al-Islam terrorist network has testified to interrogators that the group is linked to the head of Syria's intelligence apparatus Maj. Gen. Asef Shawkat, the brother in law of President Bashar Assad.

Ahmed Merie, a Lebanese citizen arrested late in May at a Beirut hotel, also testified to military examining magistrate Rashid Mezher that four members of Fatah al-Islam gunned down legislator Pierre Gemayel on Nov. 21 in east Beirut's suburb of Jdaideh, according to the daily al-Moustaqbal.

Another pan Arab daily, al-Sharq al-Awsat, published a similar report.

The report said Merie testified to Mezher during interrogation that he was the "liaison officer" between Fatah al-Islam's leader Shaker Abssi and Shawkat.

Shawkat, according to Merie's alleged testimony, provided Fatah al-Islam with a "highly qualified explosives expert who trained members of the group on bomb making."

Shawkat also provided the group with "significant support," the nature of which was not reported.

Merie was also quoted as telling Mezher that he worked out the explosives expert's safe exit from the Nahr al-Bared camp in north Lebanon and back to Syria before the clashes broke out between Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese Army on May 20.

The newspaper report quoted unidentified judicial sources as saying Merie identified four members of the Fatah al-Islam network who carried out the Gemayel murder.

The sources, however, refused to disclose names of the suspects.

Nevertheless, the newspaper said the so-called Majd el-Dine Abboud, who also goes by the code name of Abu Yezen, was one of the suspects in the Gemayel murder. He was killed in confrontations with the Lebanese Army.

It couldn't be determined whether Abboud was a Syrian or Palestinian citizen, the report noted.

Merie and his brother, Mohammed, also testified in separate sessions that Fatah al-Islam had planned to carry out bomb and booby-trapped car attacks against several targets in Lebanon, including two Beirut hotels frequented by personnel of the United Nations Interim, Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in addition to some embassies and U.N. offices, the report added.

It said Merie testified to playing a role in smuggling Iraqi, Tunisian and Saudi "jihadists" to Lebanon via Syria.

Such Jihadists included Fatah al-Islam Financial backer, a Saudi named Abdul Rahman al-Yahya, who goes by the code name of Abu Talha.

Merie, according to the report, rented an apartment for Yahya in the northern town of Tripoli and "received from him lots of money used to finance members of the group and for the purchase of a highly sophisticated machine used to forge passports … which was confiscated later at one of the squad's apartments in Tripoli."

Merie, the report added, moved to the Akkar province after outbreak of clashes at Nahr al-Bared and stayed for a couple of days with a relative. He then moved to the eastern Bekaa valley before settling at the hotel in Beirut's district of Ashrafiyeh where he was busted by police and arrested.

"He maintained contact throughout that period with Abssi and his gang," the report concluded. (Naharnet)

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Video on the Inside of Fatah al Islam

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