

Hariri Tribunal Worries, Elates Lebanese

Contributed by Newsmax
 Tuesday, 03 March 2009
 Last Updated Tuesday, 03 March 2009

BEIRUT - As the international Special Tribunal for Lebanon opens in the Hague this week to investigate the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri, Lebanese leaders feel they are walking on eggs.

Most are eager to learn the details of the plot whose author – the Syrian government – no one here doubts.

But they are also afraid of what Syrian leader Bashar Assad will do if too many secrets of his murder spree become public. And many are cynical that the full truth will ever emerge, because Syria and its agents inside the Lebanese security services have been destroying the evidence.

Since Hariri and 22 others were murdered when a car bomb ripped apart his official convoy on Feb. 14, 2005 – a St. Valentine's Day gift from Syria to the Lebanese people – Syrian agents are believed to have murdered another dozen members of Parliament, journalists, and Lebanese security officers involved in the investigation or otherwise considered too critical of Syria.

[...].

Parallel to the international Tribunal, the Lebanese government is conducting its own investigation into the Hariri assassination, and announced last week that it expected to hold hearings and reach a verdict before the scheduled June 7 legislative elections.

But Druse leader Walid Jumblatt, a member of the ruling March 14 coalition, has publicly expressed skepticism that the investigation will lead anywhere, and said he expected that the Syrian government would designate a “fall guy,” just as Libya did in the Pan Am 103 bombing case, who would be paid to cover-up the responsibility of top government officials.

Just two weeks before German investigative magistrate Detlev Mehlis issued his initial report on the murder in late October 2005, the Syrian government announced that Syrian interior minister Ghazi Kanaan had committed suicide in his office.

[...]

The joke in Beirut is that Kanaan committed suicide “with three bullets.”

© 2009 Newsmax. All rights reserved.

 Read the full story below:

Hariri Tribunal Worries, Elates Lebanese
 Monday, March 2, 2009 2:27 PM

By: Kenneth R. Timmerman Full Article

BEIRUT - As the international Special Tribunal for Lebanon opens in the Hague this week to investigate the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri, Lebanese leaders feel they are walking on eggs.

Most are eager to learn the details of the plot whose author – the Syrian government – no one here doubts.

But they are also afraid of what Syrian leader Bashar Assad will do if too many secrets of his murder spree become public. And many are cynical that the full truth will ever emerge, because Syria and its agents inside the Lebanese security services have been destroying the evidence.

Since Hariri and 22 others were murdered when a car bomb ripped apart his official convoy on Feb. 14, 2005 – a St. Valentine's Day gift from Syria to the Lebanese people – Syrian agents are believed to have murdered another dozen members of Parliament, journalists, and Lebanese security officers involved in the investigation or

otherwise considered too critical of Syria.

In December 2005, for example, Syrian agents are said to have murdered Gibran Tueni, a staunchly anti-Syrian member of parliament and newspaper publisher, in a car bomb attack just two days after he returned to Beirut from a lengthy overseas sojourn.

“The bomb was just waiting for him when he was visiting friends. They knew exactly where he was,” a former Lebanese intelligence officer told Newsmax in Beirut. “This is worse than open occupation by a foreign army. The Syrians have agents everywhere, at all moments, on every street.”

They also have agents inside the Lebanese security services.

Last year, Major Wissam Eido, a signals intelligence officer in the Internal Security Forces, was engaged in a secret quest to decrypt phone logs of suspects implicated in the Hariri assassination.

When the Syrians learned what he was doing from sources inside the unit where he worked, they sent a car-bomb that killed him during rush hour traffic at the Chevrolet traffic circle in Furn el-Chabak.

“Since Major Eido’s murder, no one in the intelligence services would even dare to investigate anything connected to the Hariri assassination,” the former intelligence officer told me.

“By killing him, the Syrians have paralyzed the security services. If the Syrians could eliminate a Major in the Lebanese ISF, think what they can do in Syria,” he added.

Another sign of Syrian activity is the periodic disappearance of potential witnesses.

Take the cell phone vendor in the northern city of Tripoli who supplied SIM cards to the surveillance teams used by the assassins. Shortly after investigators discovered his identity, he died mysteriously in a car crash in the mountains.

When the media revealed that the driver of the vehicle used in the car-bombing came from a Christian village in Syria, security officials purged the officer who had recruited him. “The threads of the investigation have been cut,” a source involved in the investigation told me.

“The criminals are still at the scene of the crime, making sure all the evidence disappears,” he added.

Saad Hariri, son of the slain prime minister and leader of the March 14 coalition, has never hidden his own beliefs as to who was behind his father’s murder.

“I have no doubt that the Syrian regime is after all of us: they killed my father, Gibran Tueni, Pierre Gemayel, Walid Eido, and Antoine Ghanem,” he told FoxNews in September 2007 [Ghanem was another TKT member of parliament.] “They will kill as many members of parliament of the majority who represent the Cedars Revolution as possible. This is their way. They have never stopped. They will never stop,” he said.

Special prosecutor Daniel Bellemarre was in Beirut this past week to ask the Lebanese government to transfer into international custody four Lebanese generals who were arrested in connection with the assassination plot.

The generals commanded the full range of Lebanon’s intelligence services. They were:

General Jamil Sayid, the head of general security, the organization that handles internal security, airport security, and counter-intelligence;

General Raymond Azar, the head of military intelligence;

General Ali al-Hajj, head of the Internal Security Forces, a domestic anti-terror squad akin to a federal police, and;

General Mustapha Hamdan, the head of presidential security, the Lebanese equivalent of the Secret Service.

Shortly before he was taken into custody, Gen. Sayid made a public plea to then president Emile Lahoud to defend his generals or go down with them.

Lahoud feigned ignorance, and left office last year. But Lahoud was known as a “micro-manager” of the intelligence services, the former intelligence officer told me. “None of them could have done anything without him. He should have been arrested.”

The Lebanese government has designated four judges to sit alongside the jurists of the international Tribunal.

The Lebanese judges are so fearful for their lives that even their names were kept secret until after they left the country last week. An attempt by this reporter to meet one of them in Beirut through a trusted contact failed, because the judge feared for his life.

Parallel to the international Tribunal, the Lebanese government is conducting its own investigation into the Hariri assassination, and announced last week that it expected to hold hearings and reach a verdict before the scheduled June 7 legislative elections.

But Druse leader Walid Jumblatt, a member of the ruling March 14 coalition, has publicly expressed skepticism that the investigation will lead anywhere, and said he expected that the Syrian government would designate a "fall guy," just as Libya did in the Pan Am 103 bombing case, who would be paid to cover-up the responsibility of top government officials.

Just two weeks before German investigative magistrate Detlev Mehlis issued his initial report on the murder in late October 2005, the Syrian government announced that Syrian interior minister Ghazi Kanaan had committed suicide in his office.

Gen. Kanaan, who for many years ran Lebanon like a Roman Proconsul, told a Lebanese radio station just hours before his death was announced: "I believe this is the last statement that I can make."

He confirmed speaking to U.N. investigators but denied press reports that he told them about corrupt Syrian officials, the Lebanese radio station reported.

Gibran Tueni, the prominent anti-Syrian legislator and press magnate who himself was subsequently murdered, immediately cast doubt on the report.

"It is not known for sure if he committed suicide, or was made to commit suicide," Tueni told Al-Arabiya television from Paris. "In Syria, there are some people who want to hide the facts, and don't want everything about the Syrian period in Lebanon to be known."

The joke in Beirut is that Kanaan committed suicide "with three bullets";

© 2009 Newsmax. All rights reserved.

http://www.newsmax.com/timmerman/lebanon_tribunal/2009/03/02/187373.html