

Iranians target international journalist according to letter

Contributed by W. Thomas Smith Jr.
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A letter received this week by the Beirut-based newspaper *Almoharrer Alarabi* — a copy of which we have obtained — details a death warrant issued by two Iranian generals to a junior Iranian military officer directing the junior officer to “eliminate” Hamid Ghoriafi, the London-based senior correspondent for the Kuwaiti newspaper, *Alseyassah* (*Al-Siyassa*). Ghoriafi also writes for *Almoharrer Alarabi*.

The junior officer — who purportedly has strong ties to both Hizballah and the Syrian regime of Bashar Assad — holds Iranian and European citizenship papers.

We are presently withholding the names and other information of those involved, and we have learned that the letter has been made available to Lebanese security forces.

According to an English translation of the letter, the warrant was issued because, “Ghoriafi has a good relationship with Israeli intelligence through Lebanon’s MP Marwan Hamadéh [a Lebanese Druze]. Hamadéh supplies Ghoriafi with information regarding the International tribunal, so Ghoriafi can sell it to *Alseyassah*.”

If true, this would not be the first time the Iranian-Syrian-Hizballah axis has threatened, attempted to kill, or killed journalists in Lebanon. In the wake of the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri in 2005, journalists Samir Kassir and Gebran Tueni were killed by car bombs. And TV anchorwoman May Chidiac was severely wounded in a similar terrorist attack.

According to one source close to Ghoriafi, “he was targeted in 1984 by a Syrian Intelligence unit operating in Cyprus” in a marginally reported assassination attempt in which his driver was killed. And of course, an assassination attempt — believed to be the work of Syria — was made against *Alseyassah*’s editor-in-chief Ahmad al-Jarallah on Dec. 11, 2003.

“The next day, three more letter-bombs, all sent from Lebanon, were intercepted by the Kuwaiti authorities,” according to the United Nations’ Reporters Without Borders Annual Report in 2004. “Their targets were journalists Nasser al-Utaybi (of *Alseyassah*) and Abdallah Muhammad al-Shaykh (*Al-Qabas*) and Kuwaiti Writers Association secretary-general Abdallah al-Khalaf (*Al-Watan*).”

Any attempt made against the life of Ghoriafi — a British citizen living in London, whom we quoted on Aug. 28 — would immediately result in “names being named” according to a Lebanese source. Another, an American counterterrorism analyst, says, “The letter has already been circulated and obtained by Lebanese justice officials, so any such attack will force action by the international criminal tribunal against the Iranians and Hizballah.”

Details forthcoming.