



SURVEY OF SUDAN'S INVOLVEMENT IN TERRORISM

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ABSTRACT

This survey examines Iranian-Sudanese ties and their implications for Sudan's assistance to terror organizations and Islamic Fundamentalist groups.

* The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT).

MAIN POINTS

The Fundamentalist-Moslem ideology which guides the Sudanese regime, as well as Iranian assistance and training, have made Sudan a natural base for the activities of many terror organizations.

There are apparently hundreds of activists in Sudan from the Middle East and Africa, who receive military training in order to return to their countries, carry out attacks, and create anarchy with the intention of taking over their country's institutions and instituting an Islamic regime.

The Sudanese involvement in terror manifested itself, inter alia, by involving Iranian activists in the attempted terror attacks in crowded New York centers in the beginning of 1993. Within this framework, we must point out that:

*The head of the terror squad which planned the showcase attack in New York, Sidik Ibrahim Ali, as well as other members of the squad, were Sudanese.

*Several arrested terrorists confessed to their interrogators that they were trained at Sudanese terrorist camps by Iranian revolutionaries and Hizballah activists from Lebanon.

*It is also possible that the activists who were arrested were supposed to receive operational assistance from Sudanese diplomats at the U.N. Building in New York.

Sudan, as a country bordering Egypt, serves as a convenient base for training Egyptian terrorists and as an exit base for attacks in Egypt. Interrogation of

Egyptian terrorists returning from Afghanistan revealed that Khartoum is the main link in the planning stage of terror attacks against Egypt.

Sudan is an important factor in Iran's strategy and serves as a bridgehead for the penetration of Iranian Fundamentalism into Africa. Co-operation between Iran and the regime of Omar el Bashir in Sudan commenced several years ago.

The military-political involvement of Teheran in Sudan became deeply entrenched during 1992. This involvement was noticeable in the signing of military and economic agreements between the two countries and included, inter alia, military and economic assistance within the framework of rehabilitating the Sudanese armed forces.

During 1993, Iran transferred arms to Fundamentalist groups in Sudan via the General Secretary of the Iranian-Sudanese Friendship Association - Amin Benani. With Benani's blessing, the Sudanese army was armed and equipped with the sole purpose of strengthening it to deal with the rebels in Southern Sudan under the command of John Gering.

The assistance which Sudan gives to the various terror organizations, as well as its possible involvement in the attempted attacks in the U.S. in 1993, have caused the U.S. to include Sudan in the list of "countries supporting terrorism" and, as a result, to impose commercial and economic sanctions on it. This U.S. decision has encouraged a Sudanese effort to improve its international image and, at the same time, to bridge its impaired relations with Egypt and to deny all involvement in terror activity.

It is possible that the assistance given by Sudan to France in the extradition of Carlos, was intended to score points for the Sudanese in the West and to help them in removing their name from the list of “countries supporting terrorism”. A number of publications connect the release of two Iranians from a French prison at the beginning of 1994 to this affair. The two were jailed for murdering a member of the Iranian Opposition residing in Switzerland. It is claimed that their release ensured Iran’s tacit assistance in capturing Carlos in Sudan..

Background

Sudan borders Egypt and Libya to the north, Ethiopia to the east, Kenya, Uganda and Zaire to the south and the Central African Republic and Chad to the west. It has an area of approximately 2.5 million sq.kms. and a population of 25 million, two thirds of which are Moslems and the remainder are Christians and Animists who dwell mostly in the south.

Strategically, Sudan controls the shipping routes leading from the Red Sea to the Gulf of Eilat and the Suez Canal.

Sudan became an independent state in 1956 and considers itself part of the Arab world, whereas the Christian and Animistic minority population sees itself as belonging to the black African states bordering Sudan.

Even before Sudan attained its independence, there was very little contact between the various stratum of its population. The alienation between the inhabitants of the south and those in the north was due to differences in religion and economic-social

levels. Moreover, the geographical barrier (the enormous swamps between the south and the north), as well as the differences in dialect, exaggerated the estrangement.

When Sudan declared its independence, the southerners feared that they would suffer politically and economically by the Arab Moslem majority taking over the reins of government. (Against this background, the rebellion of the soldiers in the south against the government in Khartoum broke out in the summer of 1955. This bloody rebellion developed into a civil war which continued for 17 years.)

Only in 1972, when autonomy was granted to the south, was a peace agreement signed between Khartoum and representatives of the southern population.

During the second half of the 1970s, it seemed that all the dissension had been settled between the south and the north, but later on, signs of dissatisfaction began to appear (particularly on the part of the southerners towards Khartoum), against the background of their political-economical-socio standing in the country.

In the summer of 1977, when President Namiri tried to reconcile with the exiled Moslem Opposition by means of the Amnesty Law, the exiled Moslems from the extreme right were enabled to return home (headed by Zadek el-Mahdi).