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France Expelling 2 Libyans, Citing Terrorist Links

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PARIS, April 5 — France has ordered two Libyan diplomats to leave the country and expelled four other Arabs in connection with efforts to prevent terrorist attacks on American installations in Europe, an Interior Ministry spokesman said today.

The spokesman declined to identify the diplomats but said they had been in contact with individuals believed to be planning attacks against American personnel and installations in France and elsewhere in Europe.

Officials said the expulsions, which began on Wednesday, followed an investigation by France's counterespionage service. The action reflects Prime Minister Jacques Chirac's pre-election pledge to take a tougher line against terrorism, officials and diplomats said.

Accord With Terrorists Denied

The announcement of the expulsions also followed a report in The Los Angeles Times that France and Italy permitted terrorist groups free passage in the 1970's in exchange for assurances that no incidents would be staged in the two countries. French Foreign Ministry officials today categorically denied the report, but foreign experts on terrorism confirmed that France, as well as other European nations, had at one point made such arrangements. The understandings were abandoned after terrorist incidents were staged in France and Italy by splinter terrorist groups, the experts said.

A spokesman for the Libyan People's Bureau in Paris, which has embassy status, said he had "absolutely no information" that any of its personnel had been asked to leave France.

French sources identified the four Arabs who were expelled on or about Wednesday as two Lebanese, an Algerian, identified as Fethi Cherif, and a Tunisian, Rouini Hedi Ben Ali. It could not be determined whether the Libyan diplomats had been in contact with any of the four expelled Arabs or whether the expulsions involved separate or related threats.

Embassy Security Is Increased

Security at American embassies and consulates in France and elsewhere in Europe has been reinforced since the United States Sixth Fleet clashed with Libya in the disputed Gulf of Sidra late last month. After the clash Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, the Libyan leader, threatened to strike at American interests in Europe.

Since Mr. Chirac's conservative Government took power after parliamentary elections on March 16, France has sought to limit France's vulnerability to terrorist blackmail by reducing its presence in Lebanon, and it has also increased efforts to combat terrorist cells operating in France.

This week France withdrew a 45-member observer force that had been monitoring violations of a cease-fire accord among Lebanese factions for two years.

On March 28 the French police arrested André Olivier, who officials assert is one of the key figures in the French terrorist group Direct Action.

Pressure on Previous Government

The previous Government, led by President François Mitterrand's Socialist Party, was under intense political pressure because of its inability to secure the release of four Frenchmen, one of whom is believed to have been killed, and a four-member French television crew held by Shiite Moslem groups in Lebanon.

Mr. Mitterrand was also embarrassed by assertions from unidentified American officials in Washington three days before the election that France had failed to detain and prosecute a Lebanese Shiite, Imad Mughniyah, when he entered France late last year. Mr. Mughniyah is suspected by American authorities of having masterminded the hijacking of a Trans World Airlines jetliner to Lebanon last year.

Since the elections Mr. Mitterrand seems to have adopted a tougher stand partly to head off a clash with Mr. Chirac. This week the President reversed his longstanding opposition to closer coordination of intelligence exchanges with allied governments and agreed to discuss an American anti-terrorism initiative at the meeting of the seven leading industrial democracies in Tokyo next month.