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A Family of Terrorists in Lebanon

Among the assorted terrorist groups and individual assassins carrying out Iran's undeclared war on the United States, one murderous family bears a disproportionate share of responsibility.

The Mussavi clan, based in Lebanon, deserves to be treated with the same barbaric inhumanity its members have shown toward the Americans they have killed. We can't do that, but we can put their depredations on record, against the day when they will finally be brought to justice.

One point about the Mussavi clan should be made clear at the start: Its motives for terrorizing Americans have less to do with Shiite Moslem fundamentalism than with plain, old-fashioned greed. The so-called Islamic revolution merely gives the Mussavis the protective coloration of religious fervor as they shoot and bomb their way to ever-greater power.

In fact, intelligence assessments of the Mussavis' rapid accumulation of wealth and influence suggest that they are closer to the Corleone family of "The Godfather" than to the dedicated followers of Mohammed.

Over the past three years, from their base in the Bekaa Valley of eastern Lebanon, the Mussavis have murdered and kidnaped Americans, leaving at least 264 dead as a result of their operations.

The Mussavis were responsible for the October 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks at Beirut airport in which 241 died. In December 1983 they were peripherally involved in a series of bombings in Kuwait, which resulted in the arrest and conviction of 17 conspirators.

Two of the 17 were Lebanese Shiites—both from the Mussavi clan, according to intelligence sources. A Mussavi terrorist gang, calling itself Hezbollah (Party of God), emerged at about that time and began a wave of kidnaping and hijacking with one principal goal: release of the 17 prisoners in Kuwait.

For example, the key demand for release of the hijacked TWA plane last June and a Kuwaiti airliner six months earlier was release of the 17 terrorists. The demands were not met and the hijackings ended, but three Americans were killed in the two incidents.

More significantly, last September the Hezbollah reportedly made a tentative offer of a prisoner swap: four American hostages for two of the 17 terrorists being held in Kuwait. The two were the Mussavi clansmen.

The ultimate aim of the Mussavi family seems to be the creation of an Islamic Republic of Lebanon, run by pro-Iranian Shiites, of which the Mussavis would be the most powerful. In a secret meeting with top Iranian officials, Hussein Mussavi (code-named Mirhashem) gave a rousing speech laying out his objectives:

"The reactionary forces of the region," he said, "either out of fear or for reasons of dependence on the superpowers, are arming themselves to the teeth, which is not to the advantage of the Islamic Republic of Iran. And there is no way that we can bring them to their knees unless we are able to inflict relentless blows on them from within. That is, to neutralize them at every step."