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# **The Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Faction: A Terrorist Group Case Study**



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**An Intelligence Assessment**

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*GI 86-10020  
March 1986*

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# **The Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Faction: A Terrorist Group Case Study**




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**An Intelligence Assessment**

This paper was prepared by   
Office of Global Issues. It was coordinated with the  
Directorate of Operations. 

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be  
directed to the Chief, Terrorism/Narcotics Analysis  
Division, OGI, on 

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**The Lebanese Armed Revolutionary  
Faction: A Terrorist Group  
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**Key Judgments**

*Information available  
as of 28 February 1986  
was used in this report.*

The Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Faction (LARF) terrorist group posed a serious threat to US and Israeli diplomatic personnel in France from 1981 until 1984. The LARF probably was in the process of expanding its operations into Italy—and possibly into Spain—when the arrests of three of its key members by Italian and French police in late 1984 disrupted its European infrastructure. The remaining members of the group returned to their homes in Lebanon, where they reportedly are planning attacks against France and Italy in an effort to free their imprisoned comrades.

The LARF was one of the most mysterious terrorist groups operating in Europe until the investigations that followed the arrests of its members revealed a great deal about its origins, ideology, and composition. These investigations also provided a number of important insights into the LARF's methods of operation:

- The LARF—a small but dedicated band of radicals—established a lethal record through careful and thorough operational planning for its attacks against diplomats. The ruthless effectiveness of LARF attacks has demonstrated the need for enhanced security for diplomats operating in seemingly friendly environments.
- The LARF has brought home the fact that Lebanese Christians—like Lebanese Muslims and like Christian and Muslim Palestinians—hold the United States responsible for Israeli policies in Lebanon and are willing to resort to terrorism to demonstrate their vehement opposition to such policies.

The Italian and French counterterrorist successes with regard to the LARF have demonstrated that:

- Security services cannot afford to neglect tried-and-true practices—such as carefully controlling entry into their jurisdictions—as a means of detecting and apprehending terrorists.
- Law enforcement investigations of all aspects of cases involving suspected terrorists can not only lead to conviction and imprisonment of those terrorists but can also produce openings to seemingly impenetrable groups.
- International cooperation in the forms of information exchange and investigatory support is one of the most productive means of combating international terrorism.

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The LARF currently appears to be limited to operations in northern Lebanon; therefore, it probably does not pose an immediate threat to US or Israeli diplomats. The group may be in a transitional phase, however, after which it could form an alliance with one of the many Palestinian terrorist groups. A number of its hardcore activists remain at large, and, should it succeed in reorganizing and rebuilding, the group could reemerge as a serious threat. The LARF also could change its targeting focus and operate in other European nations or countries along the Mediterranean littoral. Although we now know a considerable amount about the group, we cannot yet foretell how or where the LARF may reemerge and again pose a lethal threat to US and other Western interests.



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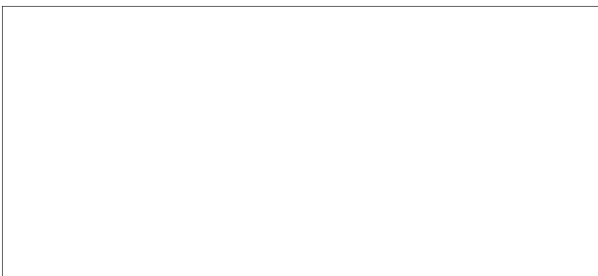
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**The Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Faction: A Terrorist Group Case Study** 


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The Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Faction (LARF) was one of the most elusive and lethal Middle Eastern terrorist groups to have operated in Western Europe. The group conducted at least six attacks on US and Israeli diplomats in France between November 1981 and March 1984, killing four persons (including two French police officers) and wounding four. The group also was implicated in the February 1984 assassination in Rome of Leamon Hunt, an American serving as Director General of the Sinai Multinational Force and Observers for the Camp David accords. 

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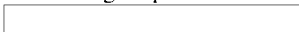
**Origins and Ideology**

The LARF is a Lebanese Marxist-Leninist movement whose *raison d'etre* is to attack "American imperialism" and "Zionism" by assassinating US and Israeli diplomats. In its communiques, the LARF holds the United States responsible for many of the problems in Lebanon and the Arab world. It accuses the United States of helping to promote Israel's interests at the expense of the Palestinians. LARF communiques have also attacked American and Israeli policies toward Lebanon. 

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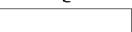
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 we conclude that the LARF was organized as an independent terrorist group in 1980, although some of its members had participated in terrorist operations with George Habbash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) before that time. The LARF appears to be one of several terrorist groups that emerged from the PFLP. 

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 LARF's development was influenced by

**Chronology of LARF Attacks**

1981

12 November

*A lone gunman attempted to kill US Charge Christian Chapman outside his residence in Paris. A group calling itself the Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Faction-Salah al-Masri group, proclaimed the attempted murder as "the first attack directed against Reagan and his imperialist colleagues, who are trying to destroy Lebanon."*

1982

18 January

*An assassin shot and killed US assistant defense attache Charles Ray on a Paris street. The LARF acknowledged responsibility in a letter warning that "every representative of the institutions of American aggression will become a target."*

3 April

*A female assailant murdered Yaacov Bar Simantov, second secretary of the Israeli Embassy, in the lobby of his Paris apartment house. The LARF asserted that it had executed Bar Simantov because "Israeli crimes against the Lebanese people will no longer go unpunished."*

21 August

*The LARF attempted to bomb the vehicle of US commercial counselor Roderick Grant in Paris. The bomb fell off Grant's car as he drove away but exploded as two members of a French bomb disposal unit were trying to disarm it, killing them both.*

17 September

*In Paris, the LARF bombed the vehicle belonging to Amos Manel, a member of the Israeli Defense Purchasing Mission. Manel and two other passengers were seriously injured.*

1984

15 February

*The LARF probably was involved in the murder in Rome of Leamon R. Hunt, Director General of the Sinai Multinational Force and Observers.*

26 March

*A gunman attempted to kill US Consul General Robert Homme in Strasbourg. The LARF claimed in a letter that Homme was an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency.*



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two related events that affected Arab Marxist-Leninist movements in the Middle East and Europe in the mid-1970s:

- The founding of the Armed Arab Struggle Organization by Michel Mukarbal and Ilyich Ramirez Sanchez (Carlos).
- The disintegration of Wadi Haddad's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-Special Operations Group (PFLP-SOG) into two factions, the PFLP-Special Command (SC) and the 15 May Organization. [redacted]

follow Mukarbal's example and set up a distinctly Lebanese terrorist organization. He formed the LARF to carry on the tradition established by the Armed Arab Struggle Organization, [redacted]

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The LARF and the PFLP-Special Command, another dissident faction of the Habbash organization, share a number of common elements. Both are Marxist-Leninist in their ideology, [redacted]

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[redacted] Mukarbal, a Lebanese Christian, had served in Paris as coordinator and paymaster for the PFLP's European operations. In addition to his involvement in PFLP activities, he apparently began organizing his own terrorist group—the Armed Arab Struggle Organization—and recruited members from among the Lebanese leftist community in Paris. Before the group was fully established, however, Mukarbal was arrested in Paris in June 1975. Threatened with deportation, Mukarbal agreed to help the police locate an individual with whom he had been observed in clandestine meetings—a man who turned out to be Carlos. Mukarbal led three unarmed police officers to a Paris apartment rented by a female friend of Carlos. Unknown to him or the police, Carlos was in the apartment. Following a short conversation with Mukarbal, Carlos pulled a weapon, killed him and two of the policemen, seriously wounded the third, then escaped. [redacted]

The LARF and the PFLP-SC probably cooperate on an informal basis where they share a common presence, but there also are significant differences between the two groups. The LARF members are native Lebanese whose main goal has been to assassinate US and Israeli diplomats on behalf of the Lebanese people and the transnational "Arab Revolution." In contrast, the PFLP-SC membership is mainly Palestinian, and, although they maintain a presence in Lebanon, they are dispersed throughout the Middle East, with only a small number in Europe. The PFLP-SC has concentrated its attacks on Jewish and moderate Arab targets. [redacted]

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**Organizational Structure**

[redacted]

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Carlos took control of the Armed Arab Struggle Organization and turned it into an international group made up of European and Middle Eastern terrorists. We do not know whether any of the Lebanese who had originally joined Mukarbal remained active in the Carlos group, [redacted]

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[redacted] In any event, George Ibrahim Abdallah—another Lebanese Christian—apparently wanted to

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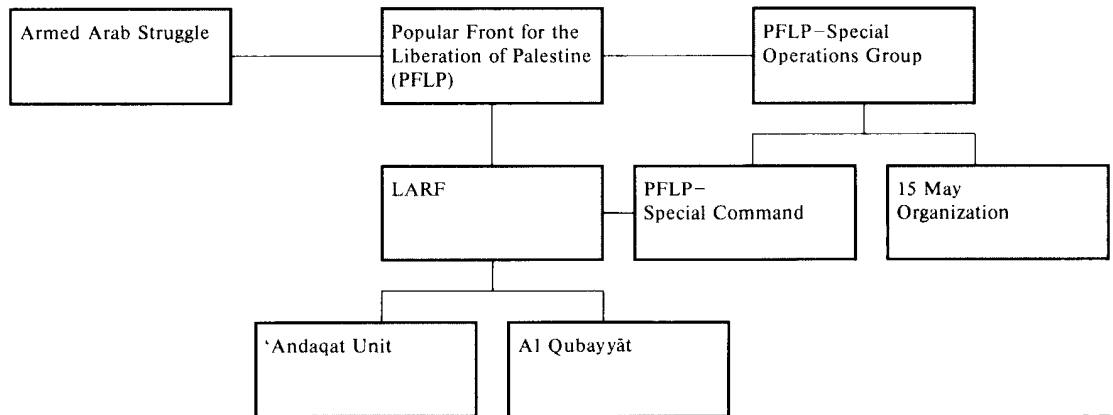
<sup>1</sup> Haddad's faction had ostensibly broken away from George Habbash's parent PFLP organization when it publicly renounced international terrorism as an instrument of policy. The PFLP is composed primarily of Palestinian and a few Lebanese Christians and was a major terrorist organization from its inception in 1967 until the mid-1970s. [redacted]

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**Figure 1**  
**Origins of the Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Faction (LARF)**

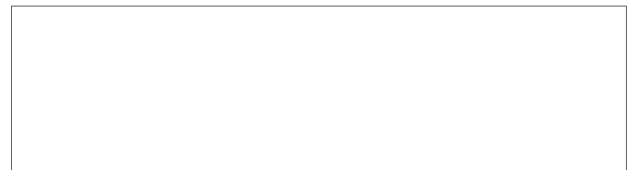
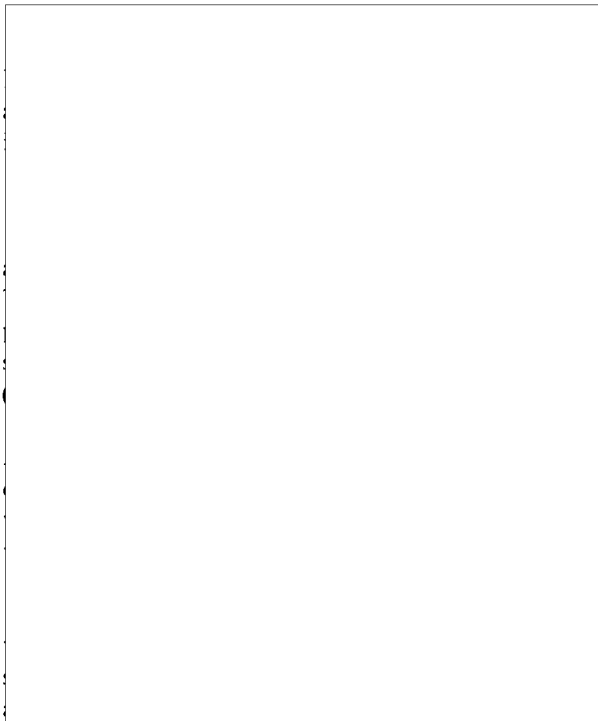


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One of the more unusual characteristics of the LARF is that many of its members come from the same family, or share the same surname. This extended family system strengthens the LARF and facilitates its operations in a number of significant ways. The members' loyalty to one another is unusually strong, which can be seen in their determination to win the release of their imprisoned comrades. Because the LARF members grew up together and know each other so well—

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the group is effectively compartmented and would be virtually impossible to penetrate. The families, both in Lebanon and in Europe, may partially fund the group's activities, and

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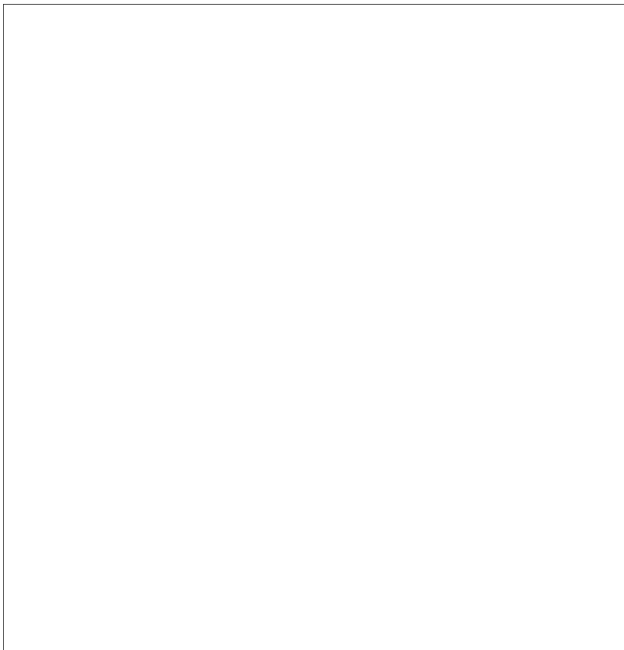


their homes probably serve as links in the supporting infrastructure. For example, relatives of Firyal Dahir living in Paris assisted her in returning to Lebanon, following the August 1984 arrest of Abdallah Mansuri in Italy. [redacted]

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There are several other important members of the group. Salim Jibril al-Khuri, the principal member of the 'Andaqat contingent, has been involved in terrorist activities for several years. [redacted]

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[redacted] Others who have played key roles in the group's operations in Europe are Jacqueline Esber—the probable assassin of Israeli diplomat Yaacov Bar Simantov—Josephine Abdu, and Firyal Dahir. Esber and Khuri were identified as the terrorists who played primary roles in the kidnaping and later release of Gilles Peyrolles, a French diplomat based in Tripoli, Lebanon. Abdu and Dahir probably served as couriers and rented and maintained the group's safehouses in Europe. [redacted]

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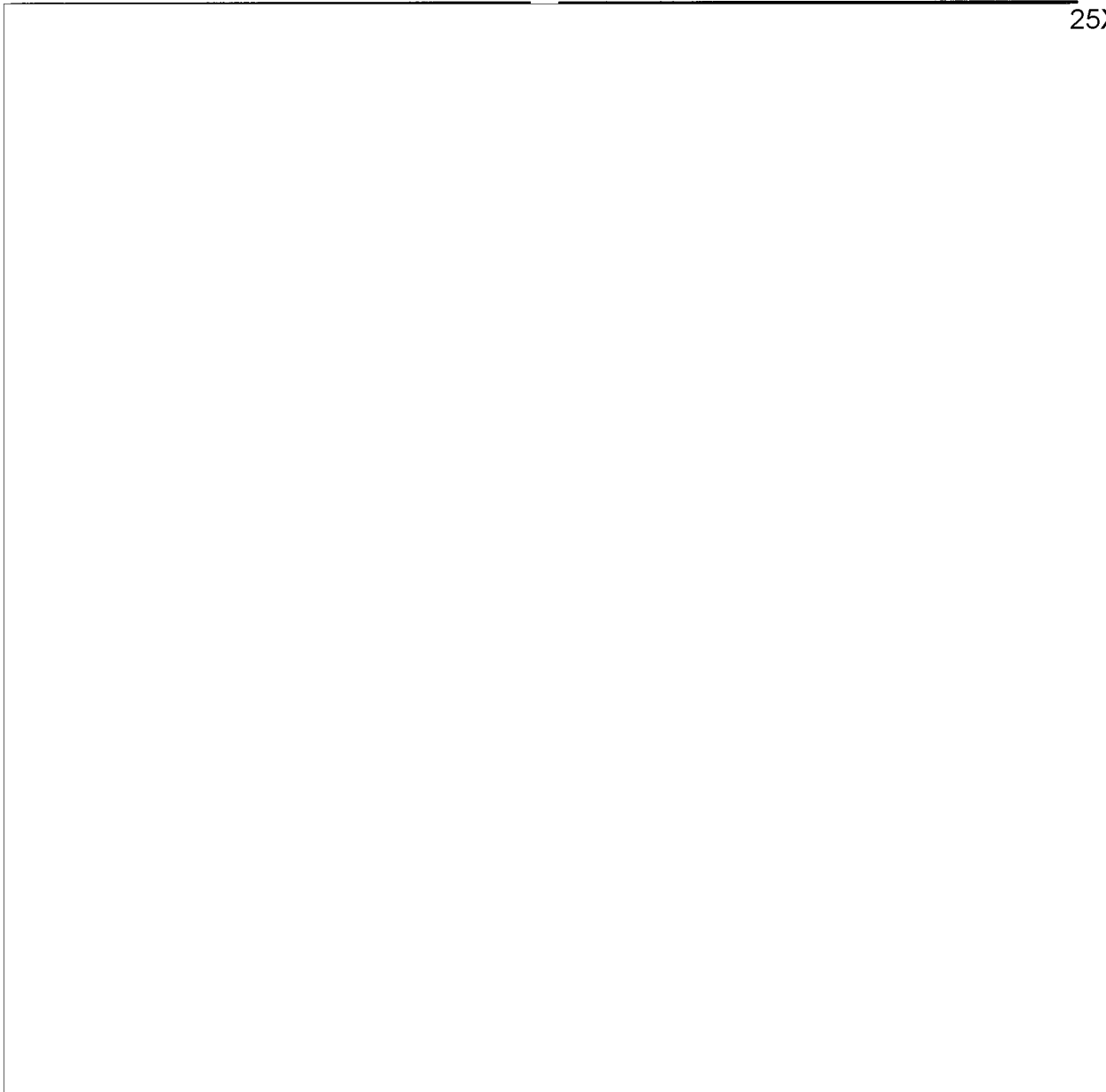
**Operational Methods**

The lethality and high success rate of LARF attacks can be attributed to the group's careful and thorough operational planning—from the selection of a target to the escape route. A review [redacted]

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[redacted] provides the following picture of a LARF operation:

- The LARF usually selects as its target a US or Israeli diplomatic post in France. [redacted]

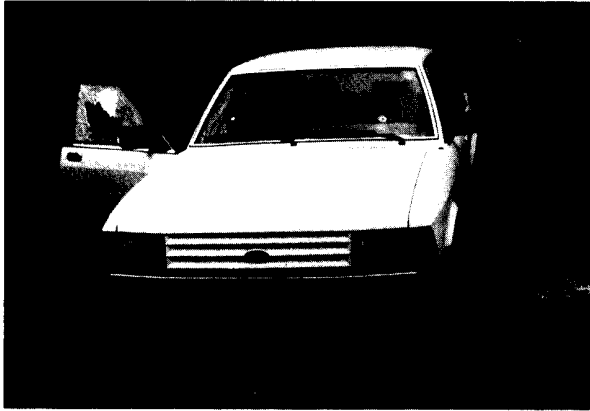
[redacted] the LARF prefers to stage its

attacks in France because it is easy to enter and has a large foreign population and a historical toleration of dissident groups. Also, the Lebanese leftist community in France provides natural camouflage for their activities.

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LARF attack on Robert Homme in Strasbourg, France, March 1984 [redacted]



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- The LARF then establishes a legitimate presence in the city. For example, a member of the group might enroll in a school and rent an apartment in the area. Other members of the group would then arrive from Lebanon and, using the apartment as an operational base, begin surveillance of personnel at the targeted diplomatic mission.
- Finally, it focuses upon a specific individual as its target and begins to monitor his daily routine and schedule. The group then works out the details of the attack—the day, time, place, and weapon to be used. All of the LARF attacks were carried out when the targets were outside their homes or offices, most often when the victim was en route to work.
- After the operation has been carried out, the participants immediately leave the area and return to the Lebanese community. They may leave France for Lebanon shortly thereafter. The LARF follows its attacks with communiqués condemning US imperialism in the Middle East, Zionism, and US military support for Israel. [redacted]

Moroccan passport. When George Abdallah was apprehended in France in October 1984 he had a valid Algerian passport in the name of “Abd-al-Qadir Saadi,” and a fraudulent Maltese passport in the name of “Mikael Kenari.” Josephine Abdu, another group member, who maintained the LARF safehouse in Italy, was arrested in December 1984 when she presented her authentic passport to airport officials in Rome. [redacted]

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**Connections to Other Terrorist Groups**

Similarities in ideologies, communique language, and target selection suggest that the LARF probably has connections to other terrorist groups in Lebanon, France, and Italy. Its primary links are to the PFLP-SC, the French Action Directe (AD), and the Italian Red Brigades. [redacted]

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The LARF and PFLP-SC probably have contacts in both Lebanon and Spain, but there is no evidence to suggest PFLP-SC involvement in LARF operations in Europe. George Abdallah, the suspected LARF leader, had telephone numbers of several known PFLP-SC members in his possession when he was arrested in France. [redacted]

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[redacted] the LARF maintained safehouses in France, Italy, Spain, and perhaps in Yugoslavia from 1981 until at least late 1984. In their travels between Lebanon and Europe, group members sometimes used passports in their true names. George Abdallah and “Abdallah al-Mansuri” traveled with false documents, however. Mansuri—the first member of the group to be arrested and whose true identity is unknown—carried a

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[Redacted]

Rome on the day of the murder although they departed for Madrid before the attack occurred. The [Redacted] Red Brigades communique 25X1

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[Redacted] the LARF also has connections to the French AD and the Italian Red Brigade terrorist organizations. [Redacted]

noted that the language was atypical of the group's rhetoric at that time and was written in "street" Italian rather than in an intellectual style. The writer showed more detailed knowledge of events in Lebanon than would be expected of an Italian terrorist. In addition, Hunt's chauffeur described the assassin as having Middle Eastern features. Ten months later, the chauffeur picked a Lebanese male out of a police lineup as Hunt's killer. [Redacted] 25X1

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[Redacted]

On 31 March 1982 three men machinegunned the Israeli Defense Purchasing Mission building in Paris, and persons using the LARF name claimed credit for the attack. This incident—an attack against property that gains publicity without causing casualties—was consistent with Action Directe's method of operations, but unlike any LARF attack. The weapon used was later recovered from an AD arms cache, and the communique ostensibly from the LARF was printed on presses previously used by the French terrorists.

[Redacted] 25X1

**Communist Support** 25X1

[Redacted] because George Abdallah and many of his LARF colleagues were members of the Lebanese Communist Party, the Soviet Union or other Communist nations support the terrorist group. There are some indications that LARF members could have ties to Communist nations, including the Soviet Union, but the nature and extent of these links are unclear. [Redacted] 25X1

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[Redacted]

Several incidents suggest connections between the LARF and Communist Bloc nations. [Redacted] 25X1

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[Redacted]

recently, the LARF and the Red Brigades may have collaborated in the 15 February 1984 murder in Rome of Leamon R. Hunt, Director General of the Sinai Multinational Force and Observers. The Hunt assassination is the only terrorist operation outside of France in which the LARF has been implicated. LARF members probably provided support for the operation, but the extent of their active participation if any is unknown. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[Redacted] the group was maintaining a safehouse in the Rome area at the time of the attack, and some members of the group are known to have been in

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted] It appears that several LARF members have traveled in Eastern Europe. The group has used Czechoslovak-made weapons and explosives in its operations, but such equipment is readily available in the Middle East.

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted] Despite the suspicious circumstances involving the LARF and Communist personnel and nations, we cannot ascertain whether LARF members received training in the Soviet Union or Eastern Bloc countries, or if the Soviets or East Europeans have provided the group with weapons or financing. We lack information on the sources of the LARF's finances, but there are no indications that it receives support from any government. We also have no evidence that the group engages in criminal activities to raise funds. The LARF may be receiving some financial and materiel support from the families of its members, and possibly from PFLP or PFLP-SC sources. [Redacted]

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**Counterterrorist Successes**

Law enforcement agencies in Western Europe made little progress in their efforts to resolve cases involving the LARF until summer 1984. On 6 August, during a routine customs inspection aboard the Orient Express at Trieste, Italian police arrested a young Arab male entering Italy from Yugoslavia. He had a false Moroccan passport in the name of "Abdallah Mohammad al-Mansuri," train tickets to Paris and Rome, and almost 8 kilograms of Semtex-H explosive. Although his true identity has not been established [Redacted]

[Redacted] subsequent police investigations confirmed that he was a member of the LARF. His arrest was the first success against the group. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted] French police, noting that Mansuri had tickets to Paris, thought he might have been serving as a courier for several Lebanese living in France who were suspected of terrorist activities. [Redacted] the French in late October located "Saadi" in Lyon and arrested

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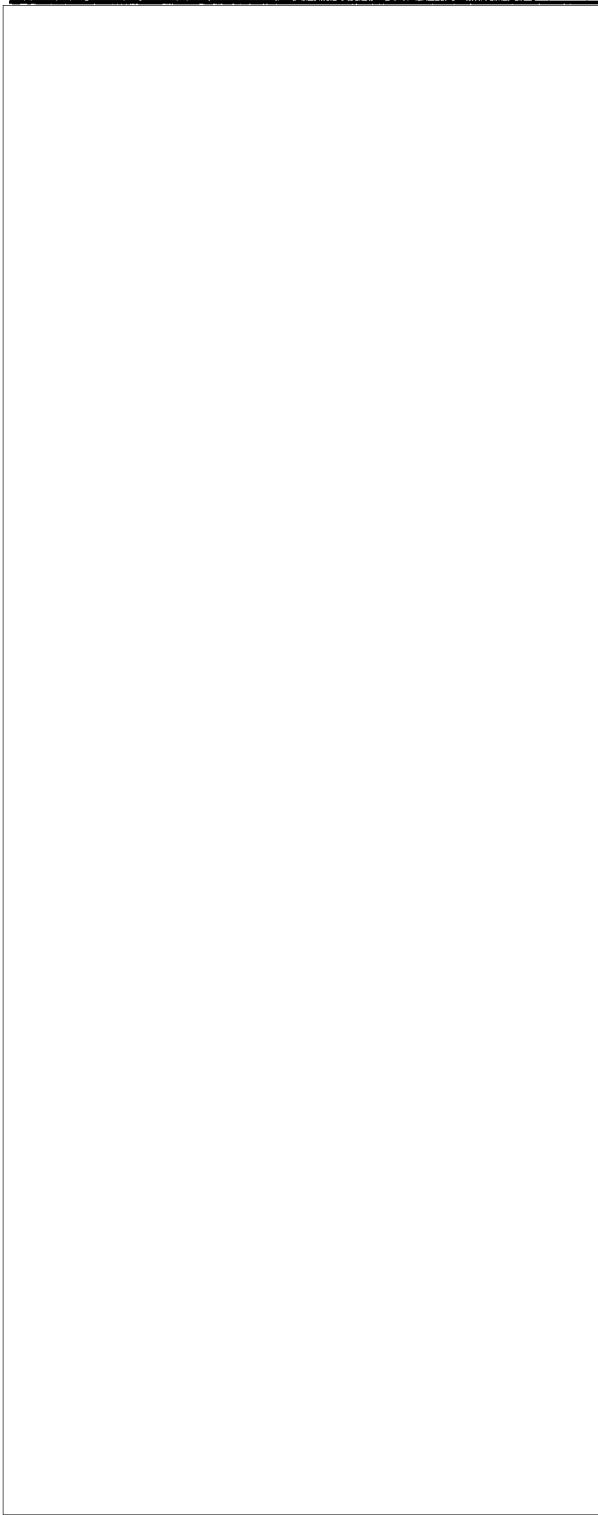
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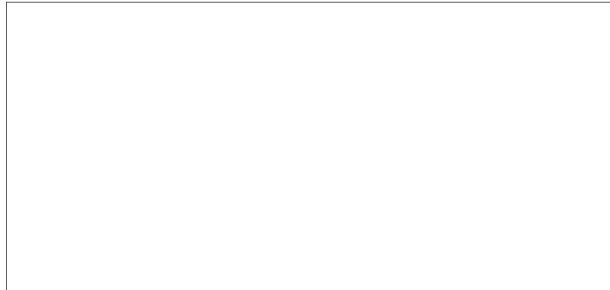
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him as he was trying to recover money the group had paid to rent an apartment there. "Saadi" was initially charged with carrying forged passports and association with criminals. [redacted]

[redacted] Through circulating his arrest photo among Lebanese leftists in Paris, "Saadi" was identified as George Ibrahim Abdallah, named by the Israelis in 1982 as the leader of the LARF.

[redacted] 25X1 25X1



Investigation of the material in Abdallah's possession led to the discovery of a joint Swiss bank account in the names of "Muhammad al Hilali" and Jacqueline Esber. Examination of the record of financial transactions conducted through the account led French police to a Paris apartment that had been rented by Esber. In April 1985 a police search of the apartment uncovered a major arms cache, including the pistol that ballistics tests subsequently proved was the weapon used to kill two of the LARF's victims. George Abdallah's fingerprints were discovered on several items in the apartment. The police also recovered a number of personal documents belonging to individuals associated with the LARF. On the basis of this new evidence, the French courts indicted Abdallah for complicity in the Bar Simantov murder, but he has yet to be brought to trial. [redacted]

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While the authorities were investigating Mansuri and Abdallah, Italian police apprehended a third member of the group. Josephine Abdu was arrested in December while she was transiting the Rome airport en route to Madrid from Damascus. [redacted]

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[redacted] The Italians charged Abdu with membership in a terrorist organization and linked her previous

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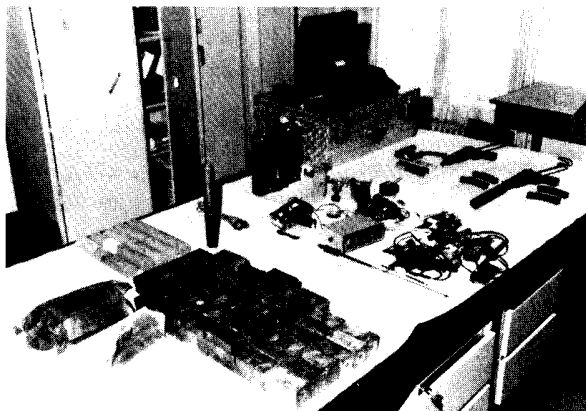
presence in Italy to the assassination of Leamon Hunt. She also was charged with being an accomplice of Mansuri. [redacted]

In response to the arrests of three of its key members, the LARF issued a series of warnings in early 1985, threatening France and Italy with "bloody reprisals" if they did not release these "armed strugglers." On 25 March LARF members led by Salim Khuri kidnaped Gilles Peyrolles, director of the French Cultural Center in Tripoli. The group then issued a communique declaring it had "arrested" the diplomat and "would not be responsible for his safety" unless France released "Saadi," the name they continued to use for Abdallah. The French Government apparently was prepared to exchange Abdallah for Peyrolles, but the discovery of the LARF arms cache so heavily incriminated Abdallah that the court refused to release him. The LARF, however, [redacted] freed Peyrolles unharmed. The group has not made any further efforts to carry out its threats against France or Italy. [redacted]

The Italian Government brought Mansuri and Abdu to trial in May 1985 and both were convicted. Mansuri was sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment for attempting to smuggle explosives into Italy and membership in an armed group. Abdu, in addition to receiving a 15-year sentence for being an accomplice of Mansuri, may be tried in Rome in connection with the murder of Leamon Hunt. In October 1985 an appeals court in Rome reversed their convictions for membership in an armed group on grounds of insufficient evidence, but sustained their convictions for smuggling explosives into Italy. [redacted]

**Impact**

The arrest and imprisonment of these three important LARF members, in our view, reduce the immediate threat the group poses to US and Israeli diplomats in Europe. We judge that information obtained during the investigations has probably enabled police to disrupt the infrastructure the group depended on in France and Italy. The names of most of the known members are now on terrorist watch lists in Italy, France, and ports of entry into Europe, making it difficult for the LARF to resume operations in France or Italy in the near term. [redacted]



LARF arms cache found in Paris in 1985. [redacted]

We judge that the imprisonment of the LARF's founder, George Abdallah, represents a major blow to the organization because evidence suggests he was responsible for much of the original planning and execution of LARF operations. At present, we do not have information on whether a new leadership has begun to emerge, although there are potential candidates. Salim Khuri remains at large and could succeed Abdallah. We do not know the status of Ibrahim Lakis, reportedly the second-ranking individual in the group. The fact that the group has carried out only one operation since Abdallah's arrest—and that in Lebanon—suggests that it is in disarray, at least in Europe. [redacted]

We judge that the LARF members who operated in France and Italy have returned to their homes [redacted] and their activities are now limited to northern Lebanon—an area under Syrian control. We have no information on how the Syrians perceive the LARF, but to the extent Damascus can control the group it probably would not permit the LARF to conduct attacks on US, French, or Italian diplomats in Lebanon because such operations would be contrary to Syrian interests. If Syria views the LARF as a disruptive element and an impediment to its plans for establishing order in Lebanon, it probably would place severe restraints on the group. The LARF might offer its services to the Syrians, but Damascus has many other surrogates ready and willing to carry out its orders and probably would not use the LARF for operations on its behalf. [redacted]

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**Prospects**

We do not expect the LARF to resume operations in France or Italy soon because the identities and photographs of its key members are available to European security services. To be effective, it probably would have to use members of the group who are not known to the European services, or perhaps work with other groups. Increased security precautions aimed at countering terrorism currently in effect throughout Europe will make it difficult for the group to rebuild its French and Italian networks. We suspect that the LARF would have problems obtaining assistance from West European terrorist groups. Their primary contacts in Action Directe, Mohand Hamami and Frederick Oriach, cannot easily help them; Hamami is in exile in Algeria, and Oriach is imprisoned in France. Alleged connections between the LARF and the Red Brigades have never been confirmed, and the Red Brigades are having their own problems because of internal feuding and Italian counterterrorist successes. [redacted]

In our judgment, the hardcore LARF members are committed to their cause and will try to renew their operations against US and Israeli diplomats at the earliest opportunity. They may also attack French and Italian targets in the Middle East or elsewhere in reprisal for detention of LARF members, but we would not expect such attacks to occur in France or Italy. [redacted]

Probably the most expeditious method for the LARF to regenerate itself would be to enter into a marriage of convenience with some of the other Marxist-Leninist groups in Lebanon. The most likely candidates for such an operational alliance would be factions of the PFLP because of past ties between individuals in the groups. We would expect the LARF to seek to expand its cooperation with the PFLP-Special Command in Lebanon, and perhaps in Spain. If successful, this could enable the LARF to use the PFLP-SC's Spanish network as a way to resume operations in Europe without having to rebuild its own support structure there. LARF members could enter Spain and, using PFLP-SC safehouses and weapons, attack US or Israeli diplomats there or in Portugal. As part of such an operational relationship, the LARF might be required to carry out attacks that directly

support the Palestinian cause. This would be a new wrinkle in the pattern of LARF targeting. Even if the group begins working more closely with Palestinians, however, we would expect US and Israeli diplomats to remain its primary targets. [redacted]

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Two other options are open to the LARF. Its members could carry out attacks nearer its present Lebanese bases, along the Mediterranean littoral, or in the Middle East. The most likely targets, in our view, would be French or Italian diplomats, with the attacks intended to win freedom for their imprisoned comrades. It is also possible that individual members of the LARF could try to enter Europe surreptitiously and renew their assaults on US and Israeli diplomats. The group might try to operate in Greece or West Germany, for example. [redacted]

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We do not expect the LARF to return to action in the near term. The group probably will undergo a period of reorganization and perhaps recruit and train younger members of their families. The LARF's future depends on a variety of factors, some of which are beyond its ability to control. The Italian and French counterterrorist successes hurt the group badly, and its failure to free Abdallah probably further reduced its morale. But the LARF members are veterans of European terrorist operations and probably will continue to seek a way to take part in the current upsurge of Middle Eastern terrorism there. [redacted]

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