

After Israel's Commando Raid, Lebanon Conducts a Spy Hunt

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BEIRUT, April 15—French restaurant owner, three men found in a fishing boat off the Lebanese coast and a Belgian traveler are part of the mixed bag of suspects Lebanese and Palestinian authorities have turned up in their hunt for secret agents who helped to set up Tuesday's Israeli attack on Palestinians in central Beirut.

First signs are that the spy hunt, which is continuing, has produced little information about the Israeli mission. Most of the 20 or so persons rounded up in the past five days have been released after questioning.

Foreign residents of Beirut say they face new and deep suspicion, and there are calls from the Arabic press and some politicians for a drastic tightening of security over Beirut, the Middle East's most open city.

The stunning efficiency of the raid has also reinforced Arab frustration over the strength of Israel's espionage network, which is credited with having assassinated at least half dozen Arab militants here and in Europe since Israel declared "war on terrorism" following the killing of Israeli Olympic athletes during an Arab guerrilla raid in Munich last September.

The Israelis have been perhaps even more effective than clandestine Arab groups like Black September in keeping secret the details of who plans and carries out their covert foreign operations.

Press Speculation

There has been much speculation in the press here that Gen. Aharon Yariv, the former head of Israeli military intelligence who retired from the army after the Munich killings to become special security adviser to Prime Minister Golda Meir, is head of the campaign to hit Arab operatives.

But there is no confirmation that Yariv, a well-known public figure, has taken on such a role.

Israel's Mossad Bureau, a functional equivalent to the Central Intelligence Agency, is assigned to carry out espionage.

The Palestinian charge that Israeli agents also carried out Saturday's raid on the American-owned refinery at Zahran, near the port of Sidon, also underscored the Arab perception of the efficiency of the Israeli secret forces.

Besides clearing themselves, the Palestinians were evidently attempting to reawaken memories of the Lavon affair of 1954, when Israeli agents fire-bombed American and British cultural centers in Cairo in an

attempt to worsen Egypt's relations with the West.

Israeli Denial

Israel denied Saturday that it was behind the attack on the refinery and the action remained a mystery.

A claim of credit by the little-known Lebanese Revolutionary Guard was repudiated in letter from the Lebanese Socialist Revolutionary Movement.

According to some news agencies, the Revolutionary Guard also claimed credit for some bank holdups in Lebanon last year. But the Socialist Revolutionary Movement said that it had dissolved the Revolutionary Guards, its armed branch, in 1969.

Lebanese government sources said that the last of eight persons arrested for interrogation over the elaborate advance preparations for Tuesday's Israeli commando attack was released today.

Those questioned by the Lebanese included a Lebanese Jew who owns a restaurant, a British woman, two French men and a French woman, and three fishermen picked up off the Lebanese coast.

The Palestinians are reportedly still holding a French restaurateur who lives near the apartment buildings where three Palestinian leaders were shot to death. Small arms and a walkie-talkie were reportedly found in the apartment of the Frenchman.

Unpaid Bills

The Beirut press has given

detailed accounts of the movements of six men who posed as tourists to pave the way for the attack. Some of the reports have featured complaints from the owners of the seaside hotels where the men stayed that they left without paying their bills.

The suspicion that foreigners are attracting in a city that makes its living from tourism and commercial services was echoed in the arrest of four young Europeans who were living in a cave in the hills above Beirut.

Reported to police by area residents who feared they might be Israeli agents, the three men and a woman were cleared of that charge, but then arrested for possessing hashish.

Recent press surveys have estimated that at least 30 percent of Lebanon's 2.2 million population is composed of foreigners. The majority of them are Arabs, but there are about 15,000 Americans in Beirut and nearly 60,000 Europeans.

Tourist visas are issued at the airport, and foreigners have been able to establish residence with a minimum of red tape.

Privately, some Lebanese authorities are arguing that the ease with which the Israelis mounted their attack points up the difficulty Lebanon has in exercising control over the movement of individual Arab groups that might use Lebanon as base for foreign operations.