



## INTELLIGENCE ARTICLES

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### **SAUDIS TRY LIBYAN OPERATIVE FOR ASSASSINATION PLOT**

Four Libyan intelligence operatives are among 13 suspects to be tried in Saudi Arabia for plotting to kill Crown Prince Abdullah and make the assassination appear the work of an al-Qa'ida-inspired revolt.

The plot was broken up only days before it was to have been carried out in 2003, according to Saudi officials and documents detailing the investigation.

The defendants are eight Saudis and five Libyans, including the intelligence operatives. A religious judge in Riyadh is tentatively set to try them this month.

The Libyans were caught delivering more than \$1 million to Saudi dissidents hired to slay Abdullah, who has ruled the kingdom since 1996, after his half brother, King Fahd, was incapacitated by a stroke.

The Libyans repeatedly ran into trouble trying to smuggle the money into the kingdom. First, they transferred it to the wrong bank in Medina. Next they withdrew large amounts of cash from another branch in Mecca, attracting the attention of Saudi bank regulators. They then stuffed the cash into several bags and left them inside a room at the Hilton hotel in Mecca to be picked up by a Saudi courier. But when the courier saw the piles of cash, he panicked and fled without the money. By the time the Libyans found someone to get the money, Saudi security had become aware of the plot and arrested several suspects when a handover was attempted.

The Libyan agents had recruited the Saudis to launch grenades and other explosives into Abdullah's apartment in Mecca, documents show.

The assassination was to have taken place some three weeks after al-Qa'ida suicide bombers blew up a residential compound in Riyadh on 9 Nov. 2003, killing 17 and wounding 122. That attack was the apex of a campaign launched six months earlier by al-Qa'ida to drive Westerners out of the kingdom and weaken the Saudi government.

Knowledge of the plot became public last June when Abdurahman Alamoudi, a Muslim leader from Virginia, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court to illegal dealings with Libya and told prosecutors about the planned assassination.

The star defendant at the Saudi trial is expected to be Col. Mohammed Ismail whom the Saudis accuse of coordinating the plot. He was arrested in Egypt in November 2003, hours after quitting Saudi Arabia when the plot fell apart. Saudi officials said he had confessed to his role. The FBI and CIA have also interrogated him.

Ismail worked through a prominent Saudi dissident in London, Saad Faqih, to recruit radicals within Saudi Arabia to carry out the plot. In exchange, Faqih received \$1.3 million, the documents state.

While Saudi officials say Faqih has close ties to al-Qa'ida and supported terrorist attacks, British officials say they have no reason to arrest him and he remains in London. In December the United Nations added him to a list of financiers and supporters of terrorism, placing him under a travel ban and freezing his assets. DoT accuses Faqih of paying for a satellite phone that Usama bin Ladin is believed to have used to carry out the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya.

Saudi, U.S. and British officials say the origin of the plot to assassinate Abdullah lay in a public exchange of insults between Abdullah and Moammar Qadhafi at an Arab League summit in March 2003. Qadhafi accused Abdullah of making a pact with the devil by supporting U.S. military forces in the region. Abdullah, replied, "Your lies precede you and your grave is in front of you." (DKR)

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