



June 19, 2013

A cache of Hezbollah weapons was recently discovered in Nigeria and a Hezbollah network was exposed. According to local security forces, the network operatives intended to attack Israeli and Western targets.



Some of the weapons uncovered in the northern Nigerian city of Kano (Channelstv.com website, May 2013).

Overview

1. **On May 28, 2013**, after a month-long investigation, **the Nigerian security services uncovered a cache of weapons in the city of Kano, in northern Nigeria**. It included **anti-tank weapons, RPGs and RPG launchers, submachine guns, handguns, and a large quantity of ammunition and explosives** (Bbc.co.uk website, May 30 2013). There is a large community of Lebanese businessmen in Kano.
2. According to the Nigerian security services **the weapons belonged to a Hezbollah network that operated in the country, and intended to launch terrorist attacks on Israeli and Western targets**. In addition, **three Lebanese nationals** residing in Nigeria were detained, and during interrogation admitted to having been trained by Hezbollah (Allafrica.com website, May 31, 2013). Pictures of the weapons indicated

that they had been poorly maintained and most of them were rusty. Some of them, like anti-tank missiles and mines, were suitable for guerilla warfare.

3. Despite the fact that an estimated 20,000 individuals of Lebanese origin live in Nigeria, this was the first time the Nigerian law enforcement authorities had uncovered **direct Hezbollah activities in the country**. On the two previous occasions when Shi'ite terrorist activity was uncovered, **it had been carried out by Iran**: The exposure of an Iranian arms shipment in October 2010 caused tension between Iran and Nigeria, and Nigeria lodged a formal complaint against Iran and in the Security Council. (Gambia severed its diplomatic relations with Iran as did Senegal, although Senegal later reinstated them.) In February 2013 an Iranian-handled terrorist network was exposed in Nigeria, headed by a Nigerian cleric who had trained in Iran (See Appendix.). For that reason Iran may now be keeping a low profile in its subversive and terrorist activity in Nigeria, and may be want to use proxy organizations such as Hezbollah.

Exposure of the Hezbollah Terrorist Network in Nigeria

4. At the end of May 2013 it was made public that the Nigerian security services had uncovered a large cache of weapons hidden in a private house in the city of Kano. According to the security services, the weapons belonged to a Hezbollah network. Exposing the network was made possible by an investigation held several months earlier by the security services in the Nigerian capital city of Abuja, which led to a number of detentions, beginning on May 6 with the detention in Abuja of a businessman (Allafrica.com website, May 31, 2013).

5. The house in which the weapons were hidden was located near police headquarters. The hiding place had been specifically constructed for the weapons, and was under the floor of a bedroom, covered with three layers of concrete. The weapons had been wrapped and placed in containers to protect them. The room also had an emergency exit (Allafrica.com website, June 10, 2013).



The house in Kano where the weapons were found (Channelstv.com website, May 2013)

6. The weapons included **103 packages of TNT**, 76 hand grenades, anti-tank weapons, 122mm ammunition, anti-tank mines, 21 RPGs, an RPG launcher, nine hand guns, a submachine gun and two magazines, 17 AK-47 assault rifles, 44 magazines for the rifles and ammunition (Bbc.co.uk website, May 30; AllAfrica.com website, May 31, 2013). Pictures of the weapons show that they were **not well taken care of and that most of them were rusty.**



Some of the weapons found in the cache (Channelstv.com website, May 2013)

7. Arrested in the affair were **three Lebanese citizens residing in Nigeria** who had dual Lebanese and Nigerian nationality. According to the Nigerian security services, **during interrogation they admitted they were handled and had been trained by Hezbollah**. They also led the local authorities to the weapons.

8. The Lebanese involved in the affair were (Al-Jazeera, May 31, 2013):

1) **Mustapha Fawaz**, detained on May 16, 2013. He is a Lebanese businessman living in Nigeria who runs an amusement park in Abuja and the popular Amigo supermarket in Kano. His interrogation led to the detention of the other suspects. Several days later the Nigerian security services closed his businesses.

2) **Abdullah Tahini**, later arrested at Kano airport with \$60,000 in undeclared cash, on his way to Beirut.¹

3) **Talal Roda**, a Nigerian and Lebanese citizen. He was arrested at the house where the weapons were found two days later.

9. A fourth individual involved was **Abd al-Hassan Tahir Fadlallah**, owner of the house where the weapons were found. He is Lebanese and was not in Nigeria when the weapons were discovered. According to the security services he would be detained upon return to Nigeria. The Lebanese consul in Kano said that the house where the weapons were found belonged to a resident of Sierra Leone named **Abd al-Hassan Tahir Fadlallah** who was currently detained. The consul said that the Fadlallah owned a plastics factory called Amfat Nigeria Limited, which had an import-export license. He also separated the case of the citizen of Sierra Leone from the other suspects in the case (Awoko.org website, May 2013).

10. Several days after they were detained the three Lebanese lodged a suit against the Nigerian security services, the attorney general and the minister of justice. They demanded reparations, claiming they had been illegally detained without trial. They also asked to stop the deportation proceedings against them. They asked the court to rule their detention and interrogation as illegal and unconstitutional (Allafrica.com website, June 10, 2013).

¹ Hezbollah customarily solicits donations from Lebanese businessmen in West Africa. The money found in Abdallah Tahini's possession may have been donations for Hezbollah.

Appendix

Iranian Subversion in Nigeria

1. This was the first time Hezbollah terrorist activity in Nigeria was exposed. **Iranian terrorist activity in Nigeria** was exposed at least twice in the past.

Detention of an Iranian Terrorist Network in Lagos

2. On **February 20, 2013**, the Nigerian Department of State Security (DSS) announced it had **uncovered a terrorist network operating under Iranian direction**. According to the DSS, the network planned to attack American and Israeli/Jewish targets in Lagos (the country's commercial capital and largest city). The three operatives were directed by a Nigerian Shi'ite cleric who had trained in Iran and was familiar with manufacturing explosives (Punching.com website, February 21, 2013).²

3. According to the DSS, **the cell leader was recruited while studying in Iran** and also underwent military training. In April 2012 his Iranian handlers called him to Dubai for briefing. The mission they gave him was **to set up a terrorist network** in southwestern Nigeria, especially around Lagos. To that end he recruited the three other suspects (Punching.com website, February 21, 2013).

4. **The Iranians instructed him to collect information about the public places and hotels frequented by Americans and Israelis**. He said he had personally photographed the Habad House, an Israeli cultural center in Lagos, on the orders of his handlers (Punching.com website, February 21, 2013).³ He also collected information about **USAID offices in Lagos** (New2.onlinenigeria.com website, February 21, 2013).

² For further information see the February 26, 2013 bulletin "[Iran as an exporter of terrorism and subversion: Nigerian security services reported the arrest of a terrorist squad that had been trained in Iran and was planning an attack on U.S. and Israeli/Jewish targets in Lagos, Nigeria.](#)"

³ Other Habad centers have been targets for Iranian terrorist attacks abroad.



The main suspect, Shi'ite cleric Abdullah Mustapha Berende (Longwarjournal.org website, February 20, 2013)

Iranian Arms Shipment to Nigeria Exposed (October 2010)

5. A more serious affair, one which influenced Iran's relations with Nigeria and other African countries, occurred in October 2010. The Nigerian security forces uncovered a **shipment of weapons sent from Iran to the port of Lagos**. On October 26, 2010, the Nigeria security forces announced during an examination of the cargo of the *M/V Everest*, that 13 containers with several tons of weapons had been found. The ship belonged to an Iranian company called Behineh Trading⁴ and was operated by a French company called CMA-CGM and flew the Marshall Islands flag.

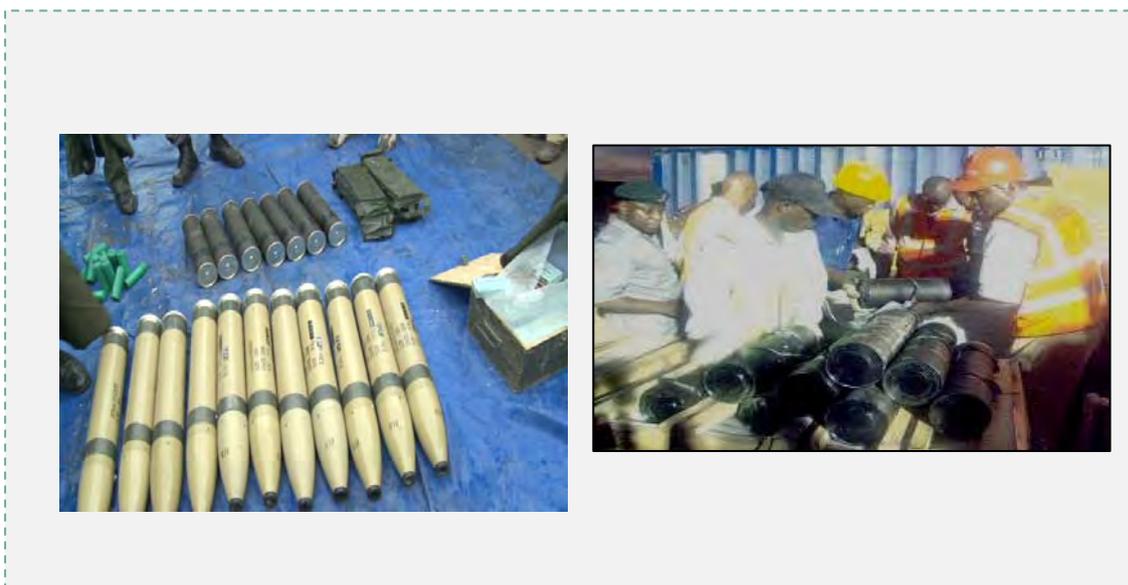
6. The affair began in April-May 2010, when the Iranians sent out a shipment of weapons. Two operatives of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards were chosen to represent themselves as businessmen. The ship loaded a cargo of 13 containers at the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, listed as containing building materials (primarily fiberglass and stone slabs). The ship made a stop at the Indian port of Mumbai and then arrived at the port of Lagos between the beginning and middle of July 2010. According to Nigerian customs agents and court documents, the shipment remained sealed in the port for several months (German.iranbriefing.net, August 4, 2011).

7. The shipment was declared as building materials (fiberglass and stone, behind which the weapons were hidden). The **final destination was the Gambian port of**

⁴ On March 27, 2012, the U.S. Department of Treasury reported that Benineh Trading, which owned the ship had been designated as a terrorist entity.

Banjul, and the shipment was addressed to a company with ties to the Gambian president. Among the weapons were 107mm rockets, 120mm mortar shells and light arms.⁵

8. The Nigerian security services' investigation led to the two Iranian "businessmen," who sought asylum in the Iranian embassy in Abuja when the affair was exposed. The Gambian media later reported that they were Ali Akbar Tabatabaei and Azim Aghajani, **two senior Qods Force operatives**. Along with them a network of local Qods Force supporters was exposed and their operatives were detained.



Left: Nigerian security forces discover the weapons on board. Right: The weapons found aboard the ship (Defense News).

⁵ For further information see the March 15, 2011 bulletin "[In recent months Iran made two attempts to ship weapons by sea, one to a terrorist organization \(Hezbollah in Lebanon in August 2010\) and the other to a West African country \(Gambia in July 2010\).](#)"