

Treasury Designates Director of Syrian Military Intelligence

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JS-3080

The U.S. Department of the Treasury today named Assef Shawkat a Specially Designated National (SDN) of Syria pursuant to Executive Order 13338, for directly furthering the Government of Syria's support for terrorism and interference in the sovereignty of Lebanon.

"As the Director of Syrian Military Intelligence, Shawkat has been a key architect of Syria's domination of Lebanon, as well as a fundamental contributor to Syria's long-standing policy to foment terrorism against Israel," said Stuart Levey, Treasury's Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence (TFI).

Today's designation freezes any assets Shawkat may have located under U.S. jurisdiction and prohibits U.S. persons from engaging in transactions with him.

Identifier Information

Assef Shawkat

Title: Director of Syrian Military Intelligence

DOB: 1950

POB: Tartus, Syria

Nationality: Syria

Address: Al-Akkad Street, Damascus, Syria

Major General Assef Shawkat is the Director of Syrian Military Intelligence (SMI), the strongest and most influential security service in Syria. Its broad internal and external responsibilities include working with terrorist organizations resident in Syria and overseeing the Syrian security presence in Lebanon.

In addition to the power he derives from his position, Shawkat also has access to the highest levels of the Syrian power structure by virtue of his marriage to Bushra al-Assad, the sister to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Shawkat is a close confidant of President Assad and an important member of his inner circle of advisors.

Through his position as Director of SMI, Shawkat has directed and significantly contributed to the Government of Syria's support for terrorism, including coordination with Specially Designated Global Terrorists Hizballah, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command ("PFLP-GC"), Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad ("PIJ").

Information indicates that in 2005, Shawkat met with Hizballah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah, PFLP-GC chief Ahmad Jibril, PIJ Secretary General Ramadan Shallah, in addition to Hamas and PIJ officials. Shallah, Jibril and Nasrallah are designated Specially Designated Terrorists pursuant to Executive Order 12947. Shawkat and the officials discussed coordination and cooperation between the terrorist groups. Shawkat and Jibril hoped to ease the freedom of movement for Palestinian terrorist groups, including PFLP-GC in Lebanon, so that the groups could move between Lebanon and Syria, as well as receive weapons and ammunition more easily.

During his tenure as Deputy Director of SMI, Shawkat managed a branch of SMI charged with overseeing liaison relations with major terrorist groups resident in Damascus, including PFLP-GC, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), HAMAS, and PIJ. As SMI Deputy, Shawkat helped direct operations against Israel, some of which were coordinated with Palestinian terrorist group leaders, including PFLP-GC leader Ahmad Jibril and PIJ leader Ramadan Shallah.

Information shows that in June 2003, Shawkat, through his position as deputy director of SMI, ordered members of PIJ, Hamas, and PFLP-GC to lower their profiles. The SMI dictated a number of changes that needed to be implemented by the three terrorist groups. The SMI demanded that each of the groups seek approval from Shawkat's liaison to hold meetings and gatherings inside their respective office spaces. The SMI also demanded that the groups lower their presence and public profile as much as possible. In return, the SMI declared that they would not expel any of the groups' members from Syrian soil or close offices, provided their demands were met.

Information available to the United States Government indicates that in 1997, Shawkat instructed PIJ Secretary General Ramadan Shallah to surveil strategic targets in a neighboring country to prepare for possible future attacks.

By virtue of his position as SMI Director, Shawkat directs and significantly contributes to the Government of Syria's military and security presence in Lebanon. SMI is the primary entity responsible for coordinating and implementing Syrian Arab Republic Government's (SARG) policies in Lebanon. Shawkat has contributed significantly to the SARG's security presence in Lebanon through his oversight of SMI activities within Lebanon and his direct control over Brigadier General Rustum Ghazali, who commanded SMI activities in Lebanon.

The United States Government designated Rustum Ghazali as a Specially Designated National pursuant to Executive Order 13338 for his role in the SARG's continued support for terrorism and his contribution to the SARG's security and military presence in Lebanon.

Background on Executive Order 13338

President George W. Bush signed E.O. 13338 on May 11, 2004 in response to the Syrian government's continued support of international terrorism, sustained occupation of Lebanon, pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and missile programs and undermining of U.S. and international efforts in Iraq. Syria's acts threaten the national security, foreign policy and economy of the United States.

The Order declared a national emergency with respect to Syria, and authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to block the property of certain persons and directing other U.S. Government agencies to impose a ban on exports to Syria.

The Treasury may designate individuals and entities found to be or to have been:

- Directing or otherwise significantly contributing to the Government of Syria's provision of safe haven to or other support for any person whose property or interests in property are blocked under United States law for terrorism-related reasons, including, but not limited to, Hamas, Hizballah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, and any persons designated pursuant to Executive Order 13224 of September 23, 2001;
- Directing or otherwise significantly contributing to the Government of Syria's military or security presence in Lebanon;
- Directing or otherwise significantly contributing to the Government of Syria's pursuit of the development and production of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons and medium- and long-range surface-to-surface missiles;
- Directing or otherwise significantly contributing to any steps taken by the Government of Syria to undermine United States and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq; or
- Owned or controlled by, or acting or purporting to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property or interests in property are blocked pursuant to this order.

Click the following link for further information on the June 30, 2005 designation of two individuals, pursuant to E.O. 13338: <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/js2617.htm>.

Click the following link for the full text of E.O. 13338: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/05/20040511-6.html>.