

United Against the Anti-Albanian Propaganda

By Xhavit Shala

The Albanian Center for National Security Studies has consistently worked to counter and expose the campaigns of disinformation undertaken by certain anti-Albanian circles that try to present Albanians in the Balkans as a base for Islamic terrorist organizations.

Following the London terrorist attacks of July 7th, certain Serb and Macedonian media exploded into a denigrating campaign against Muslims in the Balkans and against Albanians claiming that the attacks in London originated from the Balkans. The Macedonian "Makfax" news agency and the Serb "Fonet" agency were allegedly quoting the British newspaper "The Independent" in saying that: "Counterintelligence officers of western European countries have said that in Europe there are about 20 thousand Al Qaeda fighters, comprised mainly of fighters from the wars in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia, Albania, Macedonia and Kosova" and that "Muslims from the Balkans are responsible for the attacks in London".

The journalist from Skopje Avni Halimi and Genc Mehmeti sought a comment from the Albanian Center for National Security Studies that was to be included in the article that they were preparing to publish in Koha Ditore daily as a response to the fabrications carried by the Serb and Macedonian agencies. The article by Gani Mehmeti was published on July 12, 2005 and according to Avni Halimi, caused "quite a stir".

The article among other things said: "'Koha Ditore" has got in touch with the British paper which denies having ever written such a thing, and that it had never said that "the attacks in London were carried out by Muslims from the Balkans." In its articles "The Independent" says "that in all likelihood, after the investigations carried out by the British experts, it results that the terrorists responsible for the London attacks were homegrown."

Asked by Koha Ditore, the domestic news journalist for the Independent, Elisa Bray, said: "We have never made any comment on the subject of where the terrorist that carried the attacks in London were from". The intelligence agencies of western countries have been able to follow closely the activity of dozens of Europeans recruited by Al Qaeda, citizens from France, Germany and Great Britain, but no mention has ever been made of terrorists from the Balkans or more particularly "terrorists that have fought and trained in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. "It is almost certain that the terrorists responsible for the London attacks are British," Lord Stevens, chief commissioner of the Metropolitan Police said. Such an affirmation is in line with statement made by the British police that "the terrorist were well acquainted with the British life and values". The only two foreigners currently suspected by the British police of involvement in the attacks were Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, who has lived for more than ten years in London and has experience with explosive devices and Muhammad al Gerbuzi, from Morocco, who was responsible for last years attacks in Spain and was part of the "Madrid team".

Regarding the possibility of implication by any Albanian in the Al Qaeda cells that organized the attacks on the London metro system, the spokesperson of the Kosovo Police Service said that “KPS Service possessed no such information. “Information such as the one that says that the attackers were from our area can only be fabrications since they are not based on any source. With reference to Kosovo, until now we have not come across any individual that works on behalf of the Al Qaeda terrorist organization.”

On the other side, according to information published in the Israeli web side “Debka”, the explosive devices used in the attacks in London were provided by Belgrade. The editor of this Israeli site, who is thought to be close to the Mosad, Giora Shamis, says that he stands by the information released and adds that “Belgrade is a big market for the sales and purchasing of weapons and the Al Qaeda is a regular buyer there”¹.

Regarding the possibility of implication of Macedonian citizens in the AL Qaeda cells that carried out the terrorist attacks in London, the spokesperson of the Macedonian Ministry of Interior, Borçe Peshevski, said that he refused to comment “on the various article that make their appearance in newspapers”.

“With the purpose of getting a comment on the possibility of Al Qaeda cells operating in Albanian inhabited areas, the daily Koha Ditore contacted, Xhavit Shala, the founder and current director of the Albanian Center for National Security Studies according to whom the: “The story of 20 thousand Al Qaeda operatives among the Muslims in the Balkans generally, and among Albanian Muslims in particular, represented a new appearance of the old thesis of anti Albanian circles in the region. During 1998-2000 the Albanian Secret Service, in cooperation with the CIA, had identified and destroyed an operative cell of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, a shoot branch of Al Qaeda. All of its members were from Arab countries and none from Albania even though one of the duties of the members of the cell was to work on recruiting Albanian candidates into the cell. However, we can not positively rule out that Al Qaeda or other terrorist organizations have not recruited any Albanians into their ranks. It is the duty of our law enforcement agencies to identify and bring them to justice”

Tirana, July 2005

¹According to information posted in the Israeli Web Site, “Debka”, the explosive materials used in the terrorist attacks of last summer in London came from Belgrade. The site’s editor who is said to be closely linked with the Israeli Secret Service Mosad, Giora Shamis, says: “Belgrade is a big market for the sale and purchase of weapons and Al Qaeda is a regular buyer in it ”. “Koha Ditore”, June 12, 2005

