

## **BULGARIAN FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE FILES ON INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM**

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The article is based on two new archival sources – the official and operational records of Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence services and the State Security Counterintelligence records. It comprises of three paragraphs, first of which reveals the normative and organizational base of State Security intelligence and counterintelligence activity. The second paragraph discusses the Warsaw Pact intelligence information exchange on international terrorist groups, while the last paragraph summarizes the information of the Bulgarian intelligence files on international terrorism. The comprehensive and critical comparative approach and a careful re-writing of those sensitive document collections throw new light on several disputable questions with adding authentic arguments to some previous views and hypotheses, while denouncing a few others. The Bulgarian Intelligence and Security services were assigned with principal tasks for operations in the “close neighborhood” – the Balkans, Eastern Mediterranean, and the Middle East. Most probably, the collected databases on *International Terrorism* continued to be in use for operational purposes in the next two decades of the transition era.

*Key words:* Bulgaria, International Terrorism, KGB, State Security, Intelligence, Counterintelligence

Among the relatively less developed *International Terrorism* studies are the issues of the “terrorist phenomenon” roots, evolution and “sponsorship” in the Cold War years. Logically, the research of these problems was focused on the antiterrorist counterintelligence operations, while the Foreign Intelligence

information received relatively less attention. Bearing in mind that the most valuable knowledge about the international terrorist and extremist groups came in Sofia through foreign channels, it becomes quite necessary the specific role of the Bulgarian Intelligence services to be outlined by browsing the available authentic evidences. The proposed article is based on two new archival sources in a process of declassification – the official and operational records of Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence services and the State Security Counterintelligence files on line “Terror”. Our research on revealing those archival collections resulted in publishing of a documentary volume *International Terrorism in the Bulgarian State Security Files* with 533 documents included. The results of that research were announced partly in some author’s publications (Baev, 2011; Baev, 2018).

The summarized review of the Soviet Bloc Intelligence information exchange could add also some new insights on the issue. The international terrorists’ presence on East European territory provoked the establishment of new „security dilemma”, never existed in the previous years. The declassified Bulgarian State Security files from the Cold War era discovered many still unknown evidences for increasing concerns and delayed efforts in the Eastern part of Europe to maintain coordination against the “terrorist threat” outside the bi-polar confrontation model. Thus, another specific issue, which will be revealed here, aims to reconstruct the history of the East European secret services cooperation as a specific example of respective security measures in “centralized police states”, never announced publicly. Not surprisingly, the newly available documentation proves that the interaction and collaboration between the Warsaw Pact Intelligence services had parallel manifestations of rivalry and distrust among the „brotherly” partners.

### **State Security Normative and Organizational Base**

The normative base on the organization of Bulgarian secret services' attitudes toward the "terrorist phenomenon" has changed during the last three Cold War decades. In the 1960s, the State Security officials used and understood the term "terrorism" as clandestine violent actions and "diversions" against the regime, the political and state leaders, Bulgarian official representations abroad and against the "state socialist property". The State Security officials usually considered as "terrorists" in those years some active functionaries of the "enemy political emigration" (COMDOS, "M", Fond VI-L, A.E. 860, Vol. 1, p. 2–15; A.E. 1037, Vol. I, p. 5–7). This attitude was a reflection of the ideological dogmatic propaganda from the Stalinist era. At the same time, the flare up of the political terrorism in Western Europe and the ethnic and religious terrorism in the Middle East were determined as typical characteristic of the "capitalist society", which did not represent immediate threat for the socialist countries. The earliest documents of Bulgarian secret services related to issues of international terrorism date back to the beginning of the rapid expansion of the international terrorism phenomenon in the Middle East (1968) and Western Europe (1969).

The first ever instructive document on the international terrorism was a Secret Circular Memoranda Nr. I-2616, sent on 11 November 1970 from Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior to the regional State Security departments in regard to the visible increase of aircraft hijackings in Europe (COMDOS, "M", Fond VI-L, A.E. 508, Vol. I, Part 4, p. 1–2). However, this was not an independent initiative of the Bulgarian authorities since it just followed a multilateral discussion on the issue of September 1970 in Warsaw, carried out by a KGB initiative. The East European security services agreed in Warsaw that each one national agency "have to plan concrete measures for the safety of the flights of the socialist airlines' aircrafts" and to undertake joint measures for prevention of civil aircraft hijacking (COMDOS, "M", Fond VI-L, A.E. 1381, Dossier "Pegasus", Vol. I, p. 13–16).

At the end of the 1970s the Warsaw Pact security services for the first time registered alarming cases of terrorist actions on their territory (the bomb attacks by Armenian nationalists inside the underground station and other objects in Moscow in 1977, intentional burns of hotels in Budapest in 1979). In the beginning of January 1980 Bulgarian Interior Minister, Dimitar Stoyanov signed Order Nr. I-2 for “uncover, prevention, and neutralization of the terrorist activity” on the national territory (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 1, Opis 11, A.E. 329, p. 1–21). For the first time a conclusion was made that the international terrorism “assumed alarming proportions” in Western Europe and could be a real menace for transfer of the “terrorist wave” on Bulgarian territory. The Ministerial Order I-2 decreed establishment of special units in the central and regional State Security departments for combating terrorism.

A more serious discussion on the “international terrorist phenomenon” was carried out in May 1983. The chief of Bulgarian Counterintelligence service (VGU-DS) Gen. Georgi Anachkov made a detailed overview about the “colorful multitude of terrorist groups and organizations of different ideology”. In Western Europe he listed the *Red Brigades* (BR), *Red Army Faction* (RAF), *ETA-Militer*, *First Line* (PL), *IRA-Provisional*, *Grey Wolves*, and *17<sup>th</sup> November* as the most active. In the Middle East groups were pointed out like *The Hand of the Black September*, *Arab Avant-garde*, *Muslims Brotherhood* and the Lebanon Muslim organization *Amal*. (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 2, Opis 4, A.E. 95, p. 21–22).

Three were the principal reasons and motives for the State Security concerns in that direction. In the first place, the opportunity for terrorist acts on Bulgarian territory, such as the murder of a diplomatic official from the Turkish consulate in Burgas by functionaries of an Armenian terrorist organization. On the second place, the claims in 1982–1985 for “Bulgarian connection” with international terrorist organizations. Last but not least, it was the increased “sensitivity” of the Bulgarian authorities due to the realization of several bomb attacks inside the country by pro-Turkish nationalists in the period 1983-1985.

With a Ministerial Order Nr. I-80 of 8 June 1983 several structural and personal changes were approved on “Line Terror” (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 1, Opis 11, A.E. 341, p. 182–209). They related both to the Intelligence and Counterintelligence departments. A special unit for combating terrorism was created inside the Fourth Department of Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence service (PGU-DS). A new 17<sup>th</sup> department for combating terrorism was created within the structures of the Counterintelligence service (VGU-DS). In addition, another unit “on domestic terrorism” was created inside the 7<sup>th</sup> department of the Sixth State Security directorate (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 1, Opis 12, A.E. 469, p. 16).

The structure of the new antiterrorist unit within the Foreign Intelligence Service consisted of six officers with following directions: 1. Reconnaissance for terrorist groups in France and INTERPOL antiterrorist activity; 2. Reconnaissance on the territory of the Iberian Peninsula, especially for Italian terrorist groups; 3. Reconnaissance in the Middle East region with two main goals: A. On the activity of *Muslim Brotherhood* and other Islamic organizations; B. Obtaining new operational information via the Arab secret services; 4. Reconnaissance in Turkey on Turkish and Armenian terrorist groups, in particular, *Grey Wolves* activity in Western Europe; 5. Reconnaissance in Western Germany with two main targets: A. West German terrorist groups; B. Bulgarian political emigration in Western Europe, suspected for organization of terrorist acts against official Bulgarian missions abroad (COMDOS, “R”, Fond “Operational Dossiers”. A.E. 9974, Dossier “Terrorists”, Vol. VI, p. 144–145).

It could be assumed that with this new Ministerial Order of June 1983 the “International Terrorist threat” became one of the priorities of the Bulgarian secret services. In September – October 1983 the foreign intelligence representations (*Rezidenturas*) abroad were instructed to undertake purposeful actions for acquiring more information about the “terrorist organizations” in the countries under surveillance as well as about the coordination and joint counterterrorist actions of the Western secret services.

Next normative documents were Ministerial Orders Nr. I-6 of 5 January 1984, and Nr. I-164 of 21 June 1985 for increasing of the informative activity on “Line Terror” and undertaken of new border control measures. Meanwhile, in November 1984 and October 1985 the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior convoked two expert conferences on “combating terrorism”. At the second discussion on 30 October 1985, the deputy chief of Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence Service, Gen. Vladimir Todorov informed about the “new trends in the development of International Terrorism activity”. For the first time ever, he indicated as a positive and instructive example the efforts of the US secret services for “coordination of the antiterrorist actions” with their partners in Western Europe (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 1, Opis 12, A.E. 639, p. 126–131).

In April 1986 a new MoI special Order on “The organization and conduct of the struggle of the security services for disclosure, prevention, and interception of the terrorist-diversion activity of the enemy” was prepared. After a broader discussion at the MoI Collegiums (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 1, Opis 12, A.E. 722, p. 2–97), finally it was approved on 5 June 1986. In accordance with this Ministerial Order Nr. I-90, the State Security Sixth Directorate realized an important structural change – its 7<sup>th</sup> Department was separated in an autonomous Task Force “T” for combating domestic terrorism. The Task Force “T” was something between a department and a directorate in the State Security hierarchy. It had its own fighting unit – a special battalion of 200 “Red Berets” troopers, specially trained for combating terrorist acts against the civilian targets.

Three months after the political changes in Bulgaria on 10 November 1989 with overthrowing of the Communist ruler Todor Zhivkov a radical reorganization of the security system started. Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence (PGU-DS) was renamed to National Intelligence Service (NRS) subordinated to the President; Bulgarian Counterintelligence Service (VGU-DS) renamed initially to “National service for protection of the Constitution”, received its new title “National Security Service” (NSS) in 1991; while with a State Decree of 5

January 1990 the Political Police (State Security Sixth Directorate) was entirely disbanded. Within the structure of the Counterintelligence service new Eight and Tenth departments were charged with the tasks for combating terrorism (COMDOS, “M”, Fond VI-L, A.E. 271, Vol. IV, p. 181–184). In April 1991 a new Central Service for Combating the Organized Crime was established with a priority task to organize operations against “threats of terrorist actions by international terrorist groups on Bulgarian territory”. Those government acts determined the initial stage of the Bulgarian Intelligence and Security system transformation, which continued in the next 25 years (Baev, 2016).

### **Warsaw Pact Intelligence Exchange on International Terrorism**

The revealed Bulgarian Intelligence and Security files indicate that in the initial period (1968–1980) the most important data about international terrorist organizations came from the bilateral information exchange with the Soviet KGB. The first KGB information about the activity of some leftist and rightist terrorist groups in Italy were received in Sofia in 1969-1970 (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 1, Opis 10, A.E. 544, 545. 727). Though the 1970s was a decade of intensive terrorist actions in Western Europe, there were relatively rare authentic references about the West European terrorist groups within the Bulgarian Intelligence files. The research inside the Bulgarian security archives did not display and direct contacts or support for representatives of the notorious anarchist terrorist organizations like Italian *Brigate Rosse* or West German *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF). The first more or less detailed information about the roots, structure, behavior and trends of the “Red Brigades” organization was received in Sofia from Moscow in 1980; however, it contained just a basic data without specific details “from inside” (COMDOS, “R”, Fond “Operational Dossiers”. A.E. 16168, Operational Dossier “Terrorism in Italy, Spain, and Portugal”, Vol. II, p. 71–80).

In the beginning of the 1970s the increase of intelligence exchange on Arab terrorist activity could be seen as well. For instance, in 1972–1974 several KGB dispatches informed about *Muslim Brotherhood* radical Islamic network or Palestinian so called *Black September* terrorist group probable actions against the socialist countries (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 1, Opis 10, A.E. 1069, 1071, 1816, 2080, 2081; Baev, 2021, 218–220). According to a PGU-DS report from 7 May 1973, similar signals about possible *Black September* actions against East European aircrafts were received also from Czechoslovak and East German intelligence services (COMDOS, “M”, Fond VI-L, A.E. 1303, Operational Dossier “Palestinian terrorist organizations”, vol. I, p. 20–21). The increased presence of international terrorists on East European territory provoked a broader bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the Warsaw Pact secret services at the end of the 1970s. In 1978 – 1979 Bulgarian secret services received new operational information from Budapest, Prague, and East Berlin about the activity and location of some representatives of the terrorist groups of *Carlos* (Ilich Ramirez Sanchez), *Abu Nidal* (Sabri Khalil al-Banna) and *Abu Ayad* (Salah Mesbah Khalaf).

On initiative of the Czechoslovak secret services, a special multilateral meeting of Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Counterintelligence agencies on *International Terrorism* was carried out in April 1979 in Prague. According to East German STASI reports, among the discussed issues was the question for information exchange and coordination toward *Carlos* and *Abu Nidal* groups presence in Eastern Europe. The representative of 22<sup>nd</sup> STASI Main Department mentioned in brief the role and activity of several “extremist leftist” groups in Western Germany - *RAF*, *Bewegung 2 Juni*, *Revolutionaren Zellen* (BStU, MfS-HA XXII, Nr. 5567/1, S. 49–51, 101–104, 131–171); however, no any information was shared with the “brotherly” partners about STASI secret contacts with functionaries of those terrorist organizations. The earliest secret contacts of STASI officers with *RAF* terrorists began in 1978. A few years later,



Till Meyer and some other *B2J* members became recruited as STASI informers and were given a “safe place” in East Germany (Gieseke, 2005; Schmeidel, 2008). In January 1988 Col. Horst and Col. Voigth from 22<sup>nd</sup> Main Department adduced an “argument” in favor of infiltration within the terrorist groups or recruiting their functionaries - the control “from inside” was the only mean to prevent appropriately every attempt to use the terrorist organizations for organization of acts against the socialist countries (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 1, Opis 11-A, A.E. 604, p. 172–173).

Initiated by Bulgaria, on 18–20 November 1987 another special multilateral counterterrorist meeting was organized in Varna. In his basic report at the meeting (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 1, Opis 11a, A.E. 342), Gen. Grigor Shopov, First Deputy Minister of the Interior, responsible for State Security activity, underlined:

*During the last decade, escalation of terrorism went beyond state borders and it is difficult now to distinguish between international and internal terrorism. Contemporary circumstances give a real opportunity for terrorist activity to be born at one place, to continue at another, and to end at a third place... Struggle against terrorism is one of the most up-to-date political problems today. There are persistent attempts to re-direct terrorism against real socialism... For the first time of many years we encountered diversion acts, fires, destruction or damage of socialist property. There were also anonymous threats of terror and blowing up of trains, airplanes, airports, railway and bus stations, ports, etc.*

A new form of multilateral discussion and information exchange was proposed at the Warsaw Pact Foreign Ministers Committee meeting in Bucharest in October 1986, where an expert group for antiterrorist cooperation was established. First meeting of the expert group was held in Moscow in January 1987. In the next three years the Group met two times yearly, the last meeting was in October 1989 in East Berlin (BStU, MfS-HA XXII, Nr. 57/1, 77/8, 6109/3, 18540/1; Abt. X, Nr. 1306; Sekr. Neiber, Nr. 946, 950, 954, 958, 1018).

When in December 1988 the Czechoslovak representatives voiced against the discussion on International Terrorism to be held within the Warsaw Pact Foreign Ministers Committee framework, the Bulgarians categorically insisted for continuing the established multilateral cooperation for “prevention and fight against terrorist acts” (COMDOS, “M”, Fond VI-L, A.E. 1118, Operational Dossier “Meteor”, vol. I, p. 110).

### **Foreign Intelligence Files on International Terrorism**

The operational files of Bulgarian Intelligence services have registered systematic data and estimates on various terrorist organizations – from the notorious West European leftist and anarchist groups in Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, Spain to a large variety of ultra-left, right and nationalist groups in the neighboring NATO countries Turkey and Greece (*Grey Wolves, Dev Sol, EO 17, ELA*, etc.). Of special significance were the „Dossiers” on ethnic and religious terrorist organizations in the Middle East (*Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah, Abu Nidal group, PFLP*, etc.), Armenian and Kurdish terrorism (*ASALA, JCAG, PKK*), and, of course, the notorious *World Revolution* organization (*Carlos* group), which members several times crossed the Bulgarian border in the period 1979–1985.

The Bulgarian national and regional Counterintelligence services had created until 1990 altogether 153 operational files labeled “Terror”. When in 2009 we requested the access to the Counterintelligence operational dossiers from the Cold War era on “Line Terror”, in the next two years 71 files with 111 volumes in total were received from the archival records of the National Security State Agency (DANS). The first file on “Terror” (Record VI-L, A.E. 508) was started in 1967, five other – in the 1970s, while all the rest were completed with documents for the period January 1980 – October 1990.

The systematic acquiring and selection of special operational dossiers on *International Terrorism* started in the beginning of the 1980s in pursuance of the

Ministerial orders Nr. I-2 of 3 January 1980 and I-80 of 8 June 1983. Some thematic files had been created by 17<sup>th</sup> antiterrorist VGU-DS department soon after its establishment in July 1983. For instance, on 7 October 1983 were opened several VI-L Operational Dossiers: A.E. 1067 (International Terrorism links with drugs and weaponry dealers), A.E. 1084 (*Zetor* – West European terrorist organizations), A.E. 1126 (*Anatolia* – Turkish leftist and rightist terrorist groups), A.E. 1207 (Protection of diplomatic representations and most important state buildings in Sofia), A.E. 1229 (*Renegades* – Arab terrorist groups), A.E. 1301 (*Ararat* – Armenian terrorist organizations), A.E. 1303 (*Homeless* – Palestinian terrorist groups), A.E. 1381 (*Pegasus* – Hijacking of aircrafts by international terrorists). The respective Intelligence and Counterintelligence departments were instructed by their leaderships to acquire reliable data about the structure and goals of those organizations, to control their eventual penetration and to eliminate any terrorist activity on Bulgarian territory (COMDOS, “M”, Fond VI-L, A.E. 1084, Executive Dossier “ZETOR”, p. 2). In the next few months some new thematic dossiers, like A.E. 1085 (*Omega* – Greek terrorist organizations), were started too

A specific case represented the Counterintelligence collection about the notorious “World Revolution” group of Ilich Ramirez Sanchez. On 6 October 1983 an operational dossier *Carlos* was created by 17<sup>th</sup> VGU-DS department; however, on 27 March 1984 a new Dossier with a code name *Lynxes* on “Carlos” group was created by the same antiterrorist department. Though the file was created in March 1984, the first report in it was from September 1979, when for the first time *Carlos* and several members of his terrorist group had been detected in Sofia. The reason for opening of the new operational dossier was the information about four visits of *Carlos* to Sofia with a Yemeni diplomatic passport in December 1983 and March 1984 on his way from/to Damascus, Tripoli, Budapest, and Aden. The last reported visit of *Carlos* to Bulgaria “as a guest of the Iraqi embassy in Sofia” was reported in November 1985. In 1986

following instructions from Sofia Bulgarian embassy in Damascus rejected issuing a new visa to *Carlos* for entering in Bulgaria. The operational dossier “Lynxes” was closed on 12 April 1989 due to “lack of new operational information”. The summarized data about *Carlos* and other members of his group were stored as well as *Reference Questionnaires* within the security information databases ISKRA, VEGA, SKRETCH, SOUD (COMDOS, “M”, Fond SOUD, A.E. 9213 (*Carlos the Jackal*)).

More summarized information about the *International Terrorism* and the presence of international terrorists on Bulgarian territory could be found within other Counterintelligence files, stored at VGU-DS official records. They contain top secret references and reports for Ministry of the Interior leadership or even for the Bulgarian political and state leadership (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 2, Opus 4, A.E. 94, 95, 118, 122, 124).

The operational files showed as well the existence of regular information exchange between the Intelligence and Counterintelligence departments. For instance, on 29 December 1983 the chief of VGU-DS Gen. Anachkov addressed a request to Gen. Kotsev, chief of PGU-DS for delivering to VGU 17<sup>th</sup> counterterrorist department of all actual information about the international terrorist groups, which was received in Sofia by the Intelligence networks abroad. On 10 October 1984 Gen. Anachkov sent another letter to Gen. Kotsev with nine lists of the names and eventual false names of specified international terrorists. The request was for identification if any one of those terrorists have been applied for a Bulgarian visa at any of the Bulgarian diplomatic missions abroad in order to detect and control their eventual stay on Bulgarian territory (COMDOS, “R”, Fond *Operational Cases*, A.E. 9974, vol. VII).

Sometimes, Counterintelligence operational files started as a result of new sensible Intelligence information. For instance, in June 1984 Bulgarian Intelligence station in Damascus acquired important secret instruction of Syrian Intelligence service from 1 February 1983 about organization and training of

paramilitary cells aimed to be infiltrated inside the unnoted Syrian embassies in Europe with the goal to undertake covert operations against “enemies of the Assad’ regime”. The received information provoked VGU-DS to open in 1985 new Operational Dossier *Scorpions* for surveillance of the representative of Syrian secret services inside the embassy in Sofia (with a code name “Owl”). When the Syrian Intelligence officer was moved in 1986 to the embassy in Athens, the surveillance continued toward his successor in Sofia with a code name “Vampire” (COMDOS, “M”, Fond III-An, A.E. 2972, Operational Dossier *Scorpions*).

Responding to our request, in January 2010 the Director of Bulgarian Intelligence Service (NRS) delivered another 25 intelligence operational dossiers (67 volumes in total), which were preserved at the Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence records. Those files contain many analytical memoranda, reports and cables from the Intelligence stations (*Rezidenturas*) abroad. The newly created operational files usually were created and coordinated by officers from special antiterrorist unit within PGU 4<sup>th</sup> Department; however, a part of the selected documentation came also from other departments or from the information exchange with the KGB and other East European secret services. The archival sources discovered the practice of specific regular directives and instructions from the „Center” to the „residents” abroad to obtain actual information especially on *International Terrorism* activity.

The first thematic Foreign Intelligence file on *International Terrorism* was created in September 1982, provoked by the assassination of the administrative attaché at the Turkish consular office in Burgas Bora Suelkan on 9 September same year. The file contains urgent cables from PGU officers under cover in Ankara and Istanbul about the reaction and comments in Turkey, an estimate of the Turkish Intelligence and Security service MIT on the issue, and several reports from Bulgarian Counterintelligence service about the investigation of that terrorist act. According to the investigation, the assassination was organized

by the Armenian extremist group “Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide” (JCAG), which was discovered as a part of so called *Armenian Revolutionary Army*. One of the summarized references in the file announced that in the period 1975-1982 about twenty terrorist attacks of Armenian extremists were organized against senior Turkish diplomats in Vienna, Paris, Bern, Copenhagen, Rome, Lisbon, Los Angeles, Sydney, Ottawa and other cities (COMDOS, “R”, Fond *Operational Cases*, A.E. 15048, Operational Dossier “Terrorists-I”, vol. I).

Almost all of the Foreign Intelligence files on *International Terrorism* had been created in September – October 1984. There were clear reasons for the creation of the special dossier *Terrorists II* (A.E. 16138) – to discover eventual international links toward the organizers of two terrorist blows in Plovdiv and Varna on 30 August 1984, which caused civilian victims. The PGU-DS leadership sent immediately after the terrorist acts urgent cables to their representatives in Europe with a request to find out any presumable signs or connections with terrorist groups or radical political emigration organizations in Western Europe and the Middle East. Discussing different potential hypotheses, the Foreign Intelligence officers did not discover reliable evidences for “foreign connections” in that direction. Finally, in August 1987 Bulgarian Counterintelligence services (Task Force “T”) arrested three pro-Turkish nationalists and some of their supporters, who were responsible for several terrorist acts inside the country in 1983–1987 (Operational Case *Villains*).

Usually, the creation of the operational dossiers was by initiative of the antiterrorist unit inside 4<sup>th</sup> PGU-DS department; their opening was approved further by the chief of the 4<sup>th</sup> Department and Deputy Chief of Foreign Intelligence Service, Col. Rumen Toshkov (code name *Sokolov* in the secret correspondence) and by the Chief of the Foreign Intelligence, Lt.-Gen. Vasil Kotsev (code name *Kondov* in the secret correspondence). Some of the cables and reports, preserved in the files, were received also through other linear

Foreign Intelligence departments (1<sup>st</sup> Department – Turkey, 2<sup>nd</sup> Department – Greece and Cyprus, 3<sup>rd</sup> Department – Western countries and NATO, 9<sup>th</sup> Department – Arab countries, 11<sup>th</sup> Department – recruitment of foreign citizens in Bulgaria, 17<sup>th</sup> Department/ Line “A” – China, Albania, Romania and Yugoslavia). Some basic instructive documents and summarized information, prepared from/to Foreign Intelligence leadership, could be found as well at PGU official records (COMDOS, “R”, Fond 9, Opus 4, A.E. 275, 276).

### **Basic Foreign Intelligence Operational Files on International Terrorism**

<b>A.E.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Volumes</b>	<b>Pages</b>
16116	Terrorism in Asia	1	218
16117	Armenian terrorism	3	537
16138	Terrorists - II	1	214
16141	Terrorism in England and Northern Ireland	1	247
16142	Terrorism in the USA and Canada	2	661
16143	Terrorism in Latin America	1	105
16160	Arab, African, and Israeli terrorist groups	7	1589
16167	International extremist and terrorist organizations	2	153
16168	Terrorist groups in Italy, Spain, and Portugal	5	917
16169	Terrorist groups in the FRG	5	1035
16173	Terrorist groups in Scandinavia, Benelux, and Switzerland	4	1105

16231	Terrorism in Austria	2	377
16320-A	<i>Grey Wolves</i> Turkish terrorist group (Dossier “KURT”)	1	174
16421	<i>Muslim Brotherhood</i> (Dossier “Tramps”)	2	474
16434	Terrorism in France	8	1661
16455	Terrorism in Cyprus	1	48

Soon after the establishment of the basic thematic files on *International Terrorism*, on 22 November 1984 the 4<sup>th</sup> Foreign Intelligence Department issued summarized reference reports about *RAF/B2J*, *BR*, *IRA-Provisional*, *ETA-Militer*, *Grey Wolves*, *ASALA*, *Muslim Brotherhood*, and *Japanese Red Army*. On the next day another summarized analysis “New trends in the International Terrorism” had been prepared too (COMDOS, “R”, *Fond Operational Cases*, A.E. 16167, Vol. I, p. 1–66). Copies of those documents were distributed to 17<sup>th</sup> VGU Department, 7<sup>th</sup> Sixth Directorate Department, Military Counterintelligence service (Third Directorate), National Protection service (Fifth Directorate), Information-Analytical service (Seventh Directorate), and the regional State Security departments.

Foreign Intelligence operational file “TRAMPS” about *Muslim Brotherhood* networks in various Islamic countries (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Morocco, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iran, Mauritania, Mali, Indonesia) and their legal representations in Western Europe was created with some delay on 5 April 1985. However, the Counterintelligence services created their own operational files on *Muslim Brotherhood* in 1981–1982 (COMDOS, “M”, *Fond 22*, *Opis 1*, A.E. 65; *Fond VI-L*, A.E. 1258, *Operational Dossier Muslim Brotherhood*, Vol. I-II). In those files older references and reports from the 1970s can be found too. The



specific case of “TRAMPS” Dossier was that its creation was proposed by Col. Iliia Gaidarov, Deputy Chief of Foreign Intelligence, who headed and coordinated a special group of intelligence officers from several PGU-DS departments (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> departments). On 30 April 1984 the chief of Foreign Intelligence, Gen. Kotsev approved “Orientation – Tasks” and “Operational Plan” for intelligence work on “TRAMPS”. The main tasks were concentrated in the 9<sup>th</sup> (Arab countries) Department. On 11 May the two instructive operational documents were sent with ciphered cables by “KONDOV” (Gen. Kotsev) to the intelligence residents in Ankara and Istanbul (1<sup>st</sup> Department), Athens, Nicosia and Thessaloniki (2<sup>nd</sup> Department), Bonn, Paris, Rome, Vienna, Geneva, Stockholm, Oslo, Madrid, London, Brussels, The Hague, and Luxembourg (3<sup>rd</sup> Department), Damascus, Amman, Beirut, Tripoli, Algeria, Tunisia, Rabat, Tehran, Bagdad and Cairo (9<sup>th</sup> Department), New York and Washington (10<sup>th</sup> Department), Belgrade, Bucharest and Tokyo (17<sup>th</sup> Department). On 29 May 1985 a special discussion on *Muslim Brotherhood* with reports from PGU, VGU, and Sixth Directorate chiefs was convoked by Dimitar Stoyanov, Minister of the Interior and CC BCP Politburo member. The immediate reason for such alarming activity of the Bulgarian secret services was the received confidential information about eventual intentions for terrorist acts by *Muslim Brotherhood* adherents. Several Counterintelligence agents (“Ahmed”, “Omar”, “Harry”) informed about the existence and clandestine meetings of *Muslim Brotherhood* members among the Syrian, Sudanese and Palestinian students in Varna and Pleven; such followers were uncovered even among the Yemeni cadets, who received their military training and education at the Military School “Vasil Levski” in Veliko Tarnovo. According to further information from Sixth State Security Directorate, 68 members or followers of *Muslim Brotherhood* groups within the foreign students in Bulgaria were disclosed only in 1985 (COMDOS, “M”, Fond VI-L, A.E. 1258, Vol. I, p.

82–88; Record Group “R”, Fond *Operational Cases*, A.E. 16421, Vol. I, p. 87–94).

The instructions to the Intelligence residents subordinated to 9<sup>th</sup> Department contained request for acquiring urgent information in five main directions: a) *Muslim Brotherhood* leaders and functionaries, locality, structures, goals, bases, channels of arms delivery; b) activity in Bulgaria and against Bulgaria; c) opportunities for Foreign Intelligence to recruit agents inside circles close to some *Muslim Brotherhood* groups; d) specifying hidden members within state administration, Armed Forces and Secret services of some Arab countries; e) possible contacts of *Muslim Brotherhood* members with US and NATO secret services. On 25 July 1985 Col. Gaidarov (code name *Hrelkov* in the secret correspondence) addressed a critical message to the other Intelligence departments claiming that some of their officers in Western Europe underestimated the implementation of the assigned urgent tasks on Operational Case *TRAMPS* (COMDOS, “R”, Fond *Operational Cases*, A.E. 16421, Vol. I, p. 171–172). From 1986 the Operational Case *TRAMPS* besides *Muslim Brotherhood* included also Intelligence information and reports about another Islamic extremist group *Hezbollah*, located in Lebanon. In a report on 20 April 1987 from the head of 9<sup>th</sup> Department about the results of the reconnaissance on *TRAMPS* it was announced that in the period 1985–1987 496 terrorists from *Muslim Brotherhood* and *Hezbollah* have been disclosed and placed inside the security databases. According to the report, Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence used for the purposes of that task several Arab agents and informers: in Syria - “Hatib” (from *Al Fatah*), “Tarik” (from Ba’ath party ruling circles), “Said” (of Kurdish origin); in Lebanon – “Kadumi” (from *Hezbollah*) and “Zoran”; in Libya – “Djuma” and “Oran”; in Algeria – “Sidon”, in Egypt – nine informers, the most important of them “Aladdin”; in Tunisia – “Ali”. In general, 9<sup>th</sup> Department had 22 agents and informers on Operational Case *TRAMPS*, while

3<sup>rd</sup> Department (Western Europe) used seven of its informers in that direction (COMDOS, “R”, Fond *Operational Cases*, A.E. 16421, Vol. I, p. 171–172).

The analysis of the Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence and Counterintelligence reports and references about international terrorist organizations (where more than one hundred groups had been mentioned in total within the operational files) leads to at least two substantial conclusions. It was obvious that some of those materials were created as working drafts immediately after important terrorist acts or other linked events. Sometimes, the Intelligence information contained visible lapses or factual inaccuracies, and even wrong temporary hypotheses which did not correspond with the realities. For that reason, each use and quotation of those sources requires additional comparative analysis and critical overview.

The second basic conclusion relates to a disputable question about the quality and reliability of the intelligence sources of information and the eventual immediate operational contacts with representatives of the surveilled terrorist groups. The issue became more complex when, due to geopolitical and ideological considerations, the definitions of “terrorists” and “freedom fighters” became quite different and opposing in the East and the West. Exactly that was the situation about the contacts with Middle East and African groups, qualified in Eastern Europe as “national liberation antiimperialist organizations”, but included in the US State Department terrorist lists. Until the Six Day War in June 1967 Bulgaria did not maintain direct contacts with radical Palestinian organizations. Up to 1971 the *PLO* of Yasser Arafat also was considered as an extremist group due to its officially declared goal of liquidation of the State of Israel. However, after the visit of Arafat to Moscow in 1970, the contacts and confidential collaboration of Sofia with various Palestinian armed groups were established and quickly intensified in the second half of the 1970s. By one of its secret agents in Cairo (aka “Aladdin”) and a few other informers in Beirut and Damascus Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence service tried to acquire reliable

operational data about the different trends and goals of various Palestinian radical leaders, in particular on the “Maoist” influence in the region.

From the mid-1970s until mid-1980s the Bulgarian political leadership and its secret services delivered significant financial and military aid to such kind of radical Palestinian groups, including medical care for their wounded fighters and political and military training in Bulgaria. Secret visits to Sofia paid some of the leaders and functionaries of radical groups, announced in the West as terrorists, like Nayef Hawatmech (DFLP), George Habash (PFLP), Wadie Haddad (PFLP – Foreign operations), Ahmed Jibril (PFLP-General Command), Halil al-Wazir or *Abu Jihad* (Al Fatah), Muhammad Zaidan Abbas or *Abu Abbas* (FLP). Some of them had confidential talks with representatives of the Communist leadership in Sofia, while others were contacted by State Security officials. Such kind of visits caused unofficial negative reaction from Washington. On 28 January 1987 US Ambassador in Sofia Melvyn Levitsky delivered a *Non-Paper* to Bulgarian Foreign Ministry, indicating that the cited Palestinian organizations have been declared as terrorist groups by the State Department. The issue was discussed further during the confidential talks on 4 February 1987 in Sofia between Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Petar Mladenov and US Deputy Secretary of State, John Whitehead. The Bulgarian Foreign Minister stated that his country was ready for cooperation on combating terrorism, but “would prefer the confidential treatment of the matter”. John Whitehead especially underlined the USA will “maintain regular contacts on International Terrorism without disclosing their own sources”. During the next visit of US Deputy Secretary of State to Sofia in October 1988, he was accompanied by Alvin Adams, deputy-coordinator on International Terrorism at the US State Department (COMDOS, “R”, Fond *Operational Cases*, A.E. 16142, Vol. V, p. 67–89; “M”, Fond VI-L, A.E. 1067, Vol. I, p. 38).

The perspective to establish operational contacts with representatives of some terrorist groups was discussed by the leaders of Bulgarian Foreign

Intelligence service several times during the last Cold War decade (1979–1989). For instance, in a Ministry of the Interior discussion about *International Terrorism* on 9 May 1983 the chief of PGU-DS, Lt.-Gen. Vasil Kotsev informed that a few foreign partners to Bulgarian foreign trade companies have maintained – according to operational sources – regular contacts with terrorist groups. The question which appeared to the intelligence officers, who worked undercover inside those foreign trade companies, was does it reasonable to establish personal contacts with the terrorists. After consultations with KGB, the received advice from Moscow was: “The Soviet comrades consider that it was not a good idea for us to set a task for infiltration our agents within the terrorist organizations. It is better to gain stronger positions from which to observe their activity.” (COMDOS, “R”, Fond *Operational Cases*, A.E. 9974, Vol. VI, p. 108–109). Three years later, in another discussion on 22 April 1986 of MoI senior officials about the *International Terrorism* Gen. Kotsev raised the issue again, claiming that “without infiltration into terrorist organizations we can’t lead a successful antiterrorist fight” (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 1, Opis 12, A.E. 722, p. 74–75).

A typical example for establishment of operational contacts with international terrorists was the secret meeting in Sofia of a Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence officer with leading representatives of *Abu Nidal* terrorist group in June 1985, aiming to receive actual reliable information about the activities and intentions of *Muslim Brotherhood*, *Grey Wolves*, *AMAL* and *Hezbollah*. According to the report of the results of the talks, the *Abu Nidal* representatives “firmly promised that will not carry out terrorist activity on Bulgarian territory” and “will inform about all accessible data about the activity of the *Muslim Brotherhood* and *Grey Wolves*” (COMDOS, “R”, Fond *Operational Cases*, A.E. 16421, Vol. I, p. 152). In November 1986 a Bulgarian secret services confidential informer reported about his personal talks with the *Hezbollah* leader Sheik Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah in Beirut. According to the report, Sheik

Fadlallah declared that his organization was not involved in the kidnaping of four Soviet diplomats in Beirut and would not organize any hostile actions against the USSR and the socialist countries (COMDOS, “R”, Fond *Operational Cases*, A.E. 16421, Vol. II, p. 46–47). However, in March 1988 a Foreign Intelligence source in Beirut (aka “Walid”) informed about preparation of a *Hezbollah* action against Soviet diplomats (COMDOS, “R”, Fond *Operational Cases*, A.E. 16160, Vol. V, p. 143).

A similar story was the established contacts with several Arab Intelligence services in order to acquire new information about the activity of international terrorist groups, based in the Middle East area. In June 1984, for instance, the chief of Yemeni Intelligence Service, Gen. Fakhir informed Bulgarian Intelligence representative in Aden about a planned terrorist act by the leader of FLP Abu Abbas against the leader of FNLP-General Command Ahmed Jibril during his scheduled visit to Bulgaria (COMDOS, “R”, Fond *Operational Cases*, A.E. 9974, Vol. VII, p. 60). In December 1984 the chief of Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence Lt.-Gen. Vasil Kotsev met in Damascus with the heads of Syrian Intelligence Services Gen. Fuad Absi and Gen. Hamadi in order to reach agreement about information exchange on Arab and Islamic terrorist activity. The chiefs of Syrian secret services agreed as well to “advise” those extremist groups under their influence to avoid any terrorist activity on Bulgarian territory (COMDOS, “R”, Fond *Operational Cases*, A.E. 16160, Vol. I, p. 83).

The range of the operational and analytical information work of Bulgarian secret services on *International Terrorism* could be viewed in general by the available Intelligence databases. For instance, when in 1984 the 22<sup>nd</sup> STASI Department sent a list to Sofia with 340 suspects for *Grey Wolves* membership, the immediate check in the Bulgarian border control information system VEGA showed that 73 of them were identified as transit travelers through Bulgarian territory (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 1, Opis. 11-A, A.E. 120, p. 78–85). In 1986 inside another electronic information system SKRECH a new operational card

volume “T” with names and acquired data of international terrorists was created, which was divided in 24 thematic/geographic categories. In April 1987 the amount of the card volume “T” was of 3274 persons, while in 1988 it was reduced to 2830 persons from 36 countries. It was confirmed as well that 179 terrorists (129 of them *Grey Wolves* members) had crossed the Bulgarian border, mostly on their way from Turkey and Middle East to Western Europe (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 2, Opus 4, A.E. 118, p. 2-3; A.E. 122, p. 28–32).

#### **International Terrorists, enlisted in SKRECH security information systems**

<i>Dossiers</i>	<i>International terrorist organizations</i>	1987	1988
ARARAT	Armenian terrorist organizations ( <i>ASALA, JCAG, NRA</i> )	47	37
ADIDAS	French extremist leftist group <i>Action Directe</i>	14	5
<i>ANATOLIA</i>	Turkish extremist leftist groups ( <i>Dev Genc, Dev Sol</i> )	27	31
HOMELESS	Palestinian terrorist groups ( <i>Abu Nadal, PFLP-GC, Black September</i> )	107	135
BASQUES	Recognized members of <i>ETA</i>	8	8
BOYKO	Belgian extremist leftist group <i>CCC</i>	4	
WOLVES	Nationalist extremist rightist group <i>Grey Wolves</i>	541	400
DUSHMANS	Afghan anti-Soviet islamic groups in Europe	64	63
JEDDAH	Recognized Saudi Arabian Intelligence agents in Europe	25	25
EXTREMIST S	Terrorist groups in the wider Middle East (Iran, Iraq)	349	75
FROGGY	Italian terrorist organizations ( <i>Brigate Rosse, etc.</i> )	111	28
INTER	Terrorists, investigated by INTERPOL	145	135
CONDOR	Traficants of drugs and weaponry with proved linkage to terrorist groups	73	67
NEONS	Neofaschist organizations in Western Europe	440	414
WASPS	French extremist rightist organization for annexion of Algeria	37	37
PRIMA	Italian extremist leftist group <i>Prima Linea</i>	64	63
RENEGADES	Arab terrorist groups	452	244
RAFAEL	Recognized members of West German terrorist group <i>RAF</i>	453	387
ROBERT	Recognized members of Italian terrorist group <i>Brigate Rosse</i>	140	140

KNIGHT	West German extremist leftist organization <i>Revolutionaren Zellen</i>	6	6
LINXS	<i>World Revolution</i> terrorist organization ( <i>Carlos</i> group)	126	94
SAMURAI	Terrorist organization <i>Japanese Red Army</i>	-	297
TYRANT	Irish nationalist terrorist organization <i>IRA-Provisional</i>	12	11
HAWKS	Terrorist organizations in the USA, Canada, and Puerto Rico	29	28

In May 1991, when Soviet Bloc security information system SOUD (established in 1978) was suspended, about 17 000 “extremely dangerous” suspects for “terrorist activity” continued to exist inside the information system and files of Bulgarian security services. The proposal of the leadership of the newly transformed National Security Service was to preserve and use that database in its “parameters of terrorism, organized crime, drugs traffic and smuggling” (COMDOS, “M”, Fond 8 (SOUD), Opis 13-A, A.E. 50, p. 82–85).

## Conclusion

The Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence operational and instructive files about *International Terrorism* in the last two Cold War decades, when that “new social phenomenon” became an immediate threat challenging the everyday life in Europe, contributed in some way for presenting a more versatile story on that issue. The comprehensive and critical comparative approach and a careful re-writing of those sensitive document collections “between the lines” would throw new light on several disputable questions with adding authentic arguments to some previous views and hypotheses, while denouncing a few others.

Browsing for the first time as researchers through more than 30 000 pages of newly declassified archival documents, we carefully revealed the specific forms, trends and attitudes of Bulgarian secret services toward the variety of international terrorist groups. Among the issues that require a thorough and critical analysis is the reliability of the acquired Intelligence and Security



information. It concerns not only the importance of the sources, the applied analytical methodology or the evaluation of the received confidential data, but also the state of top level thinking and decision making inside the Soviet bloc, especially when the dogmatic ideological imaginations of the Communist leaders wrongly presumed the opportunity of use the *International Terrorism* „phenomenon” as a tool for “demoralization and disintegration” of the Western capitalist system. Obviously, the practice of the Warsaw Pact security coordination proved the thesis of “distribution of roles” between the national secret services; however, there were also reliable evidences for some kind of rivalry and distrust among those “partner” organizations.

The Bulgarian Intelligence and Security services were assigned with principal tasks for operations in the “close neighborhood” – the Balkans, Eastern Mediterranean, and the Middle East. It was not accidental, therefore, that the most important Intelligence data, acquired by Bulgarian Intelligence officers and their informers abroad, came from Greece, Turkey, and several Arab countries. The intelligence information, obtained from the West, was based usually on open sources or rarely by acquiring official antiterrorist documents. The immediate “encounter” with international terrorists came in 1978–1979, when the initial presence of *Abu Nidal*, *Abu Ayad*, and *Carlos* groups was detected on Bulgarian territory. That was one of the main reasons for establishing in 1980–1983 special antiterrorist units inside PGU-DS (Foreign Intelligence), VGU-DS (Counterintelligence), and Sixth State Security Directorate (Political Police). In the mid-1980s the *International Terrorism* Foreign Intelligence reconnaissance and Counterintelligence surveillance became one of the priority tasks of the Bulgarian secret services.

It is impossible to evaluate so far the existence of any interruption or sequence within the antiterrorist activity in the transition years after the change of the political system in Bulgaria and the end of the Cold War era in Europe, since the archival security documentation is currently available up only to July

1991. Most probably, the collected databases on *International Terrorism* continued to be in use for operational purposes in the next two decades. However, it was clear that many of the Intelligence sources were lost or abandoned in those years, while the participation in new peace support operations within the wider Middle East area (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya) and the new unprecedented Islamic terrorist wave required the imperative aim to obtain new security sources.

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