



Syrian Opposition Kills Top Defense Officials in Bomb Attack

A July 18 bombing in the Syrian capital of Damascus dealt the most powerful blow to the regime of Bashar al-Assad since the Western-backed armed uprising against his rule began more than a year ago. Syria's Defense Minister, the dictator's brother-in-law, and the chief of "crisis management" were killed in the attack, and other top officials were injured. Two separate groups — the establishment-backed opposition "Free Syrian Army" (FSA) and an Islamist terror group dubbed the "Lord of the Martyrs Brigade" — both claimed responsibility for the attack.



The deadly bombing came amid recent reports of raging battles between "revolutionary" forces and the Assad regime throughout the heart of Damascus, which had largely been spared from the brutal fighting occurring in other parts of Syria. Among the dead were defense chief Dawoud Rajhah — one of the few Christians in government throughout the entire Middle East — and Gen. Asef Shawkat, deputy defense boss and the husband of "President" Assad's only sister. Former Defense Minister Gen. Hassan Turkmani, a top military official, also reportedly died later from injuries sustained in the attack.

News reports indicated that Syria's intelligence boss Hisham Bekhtyar had suffered serious wounds but survived the attack and was in "stable" condition. Some unconfirmed reports also indicated that Interior Minister Mohammad Ibrahim al-Shaar had been wounded or even killed in the blast. But "security sources" [cited](#) by Reuters said that Assad himself was not present at the high-level meeting in the "national security" headquarters that came under attack.

After the bombing, the regime quickly regrouped and vowed to quash the foreign-backed fighters. "This cowardly terrorist act will not deter our men in the armed forces from continuing their sacred mission of pursuing the remnants of these armed terrorist criminal gangs," [said](#) newly installed Defense Minister Fahad Jassim al-Frej, who served as the military's chief of staff until assuming his new post in the wake of the bombing. "They will cut off the arm that extends to harm the security of the nation and the people."

Also in the Syrian government's crosshairs are the foreign powers that are financing, arming, and supplying the rebel forces — mostly Western governments and oppressive Sunni Arab dictatorships. "They committed a crime and they will pay for it," [said](#) regime "Information Minister" Omran al-Zughbi after the attack on state-run television. "They are responsible for every drop of blood and they will be accountable. I stress to them that this is the decisive battle in all of Syria."

In a statement, the Syrian army echoed those remarks, saying the terrorist attack had emboldened the nation in its effort to halt the bloody Western-backed revolution. "The attack makes Syria, its armed forces, people and leadership, more determined to stand up to terror groups," the military statement



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on July 18, 2012

[said](#).

According to multiple media accounts, the audacious and deadly attack was carried out by a suicide bomber who had been a trusted bodyguard charged with protecting the Assad regime's top players before beginning to collaborate with the opposition. However, different sources have offered wildly differing accounts of what happened. The Islamic terrorist group that claimed responsibility for the attack said it had actually managed to place bombs inside the building.

"Our men managed to plant improvised explosives in the building for the meeting," a supposed spokesman for the "Lord of the Martyrs Brigade" Islamist terror group was [quoted as saying](#) in news reports. "We had been planning this for over a month."

Meanwhile, the so-called "Free Syrian Army" (FSA) [claimed](#) that it had been responsible for the attack. Different purported "opposition activists" linked to the FSA offered conflicting accounts of what happened, with some saying C-4 explosives had been planted and detonated remotely. Others claimed a suicide bomber wearing bombs had carried out the attack. Earlier this week, the foreign-backed armed coalition announced an operation it touted as "Damascus Volcano" and "Syria Earthquake" — part of its ongoing effort to seize the capital.

The [Bilderberg- and Council on Foreign Relations-linked "Syrian National Council"](#) (SNC) — a foreign-based umbrella group for the opposition that includes the extremist Muslim Brotherhood and has deep ties to the Western elite — gloated publicly after the killings. "The developments today are one part of the battle of the Syrian people and their revolution," [claimed](#) SNC spokesman George Sabra in an interview with pan-Arab TV. "Two days ago we told our people Damascus will witness the final, decisive battle. It seems some observers didn't take us seriously."

The United Nations Security Council was supposed to vote Wednesday on a new resolution dealing with Syria. However, in the wake of the bombing, officials decided to postpone it for at least one day as the dust settles. Citing the bloodbath in Libya, the governments of Russia and China have so far opposed any measures that could purport to authorize an international war on Syria. But Western governments have not given up yet.

Government officials around the world have claimed to support "peace" in Syria, with some demanding that Assad step down as a pre-condition and others calling on rebels to lay down their arms first. An internationally brokered cease-fire agreement has been violated by both sides. And according to estimates, as many as 15,000 people may have been killed in the conflict so far — certainly with more to come.

Photo of Damascus after July 18 bombing by opposition forces: AP Images

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