

= Abu Nidal =

Sabri Khalil al @-@ Banna (May 1937 ? 16 August 2002) , known as Abu Nidal , was the founder of Fatah ? The Revolutionary Council , a militant Palestinian splinter group more commonly known as the Abu Nidal Organization (ANO) . At the height of its power in the 1970s and 1980s , the ANO was widely regarded as the most ruthless of the Palestinian groups .

Abu Nidal (" father of struggle ") formed the ANO in October 1974 after a split from Yasser Arafat 's Fatah faction within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) . Acting as a freelance contractor , Abu Nidal is believed to have ordered attacks in 20 countries , killing over 300 and injuring over 650 . The group 's operations included the Rome and Vienna airport attacks on 27 December 1985 , when gunmen opened fire on passengers in simultaneous shootings at El Al ticket counters , killing 20 . Patrick Seale , Abu Nidal 's biographer , wrote of the shootings that their " random cruelty marked them as typical Abu Nidal operations . "

Abu Nidal died after a shooting in his Baghdad apartment in August 2002 . Palestinian sources believed he was killed on the orders of Saddam Hussein , while Iraqi officials insisted he had committed suicide during an interrogation . " He was the patriot turned psychopath , " David Hirst wrote in the Guardian on the news of his death . " He served only himself , only the warped personal drives that pushed him into hideous crime . He was the ultimate mercenary . "

= = Early life = =

= = = Family , early education = = =

Abu Nidal was born in May 1937 in Jaffa , on the Mediterranean coast of what was then the British Mandate of Palestine . His father , Hajj Khalil al @-@ Banna , owned 6 @,@ 000 acres (24 km2) of orange groves situated between Jaffa and Majdal , today Ashkelon in Israel . The family lived in luxury in a three @-@ storey stone house near the beach , later used as an Israeli military court . Muhammad Khalil al @-@ Banna , Abu Nidal 's brother , told Yossi Melman :

My father ... was the richest man in Palestine . He marketed about ten percent of all the citrus crops sent from Palestine to Europe ? especially to England and Germany . He owned a summer house in Marseilles , France , and another house in ?skenderun , then in Syria and afterwards Turkey , and a number of houses in Palestine itself . Most of the time we lived in Jaffa . Our house had about twenty rooms , and we children would go down to swim in the sea . We also had stables with Arabian horses , and one of our homes in Ashkelon even had a large swimming pool . I think we must have been the only family in Palestine with a private swimming pool .

Khalil al @-@ Banna 's wealth allowed him to take several wives . According to Abu Nidal in an interview with Der Spiegel , his father had 13 wives , 17 sons and eight daughters . Melman writes that Abu Nidal 's mother was the eighth wife ; she had been one of the family 's maids , a 16 @-@ year @-@ old Alawite girl . The family disapproved of the marriage , according to Patrick Seale , and as a result Abu Nidal , Khalil 's 12th child , was apparently looked down on by his older siblings , although in later life the relationships were repaired .

In 1944 or 1945 his father sent him to Collège des Frères , a French mission school in Jaffa , which he attended for one year . The father died in 1945 when Abu Nidal was seven years old , and the family turned his mother out of the house . His brothers took him out of the mission school and enrolled him instead in a prestigious , private Muslim school in Jerusalem , now known as Umariya Elementary School . He attended for about two years .

= = = 1948 Palestine War = = =

On 29 November 1947 , the United Nations resolved to partition Palestine into an Arab and Jewish state . Fighting broke out immediately , and the disruption of the citrus @-@ fruit business hit the family 's income . In Jaffa there were food shortages , truck bombs and an Irgun mortar

bombardment . Melman writes that the al @-@ Banna family had had good relations with the Jewish community , but it was war and the relationships did not help them . Abu Nidal 's brother told Melman :

My father was a close friend of Avraham Shapira , one of the founders of Hashomer , the Jewish self @-@ defense organization . He would visit [Shapira] in his home in Petah Tikva , or Shapira riding his horse would visit our home in Jaffa . I also remember how we visited Dr. Weizmann [later first president of Israel] in his home in Rehovot .

Just before Jaffa was conquered by Israeli troops in April 1948 , the family fled to their house near Majdal , but the Jewish militias arrived there too , and they had to flee again . This time they went to the Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip , then under Egyptian control . Melman writes that the family spent nine months living in tents , dependent on UNRWA for an allowance of oil , rice and potatoes . The experience had a powerful effect on Abu Nidal .

= = = Move to Nablus and Saudi Arabia = = =

The al @-@ Banna family 's commercial experience , and the money they had managed to take with them , meant they could set themselves up in business again , Melman writes . Their orange groves , however , had gone , now part of the new state of Israel , which had declared its independence on 14 May 1948 . The family moved to Nablus in the West Bank , then under Jordanian control . Abu Nidal graduated from high school there in 1955 , and joined the Arab nationalist Ba 'ath party . He began a degree course in engineering at Cairo University , but left without a degree after two years .

In 1960 he made his way to Saudi Arabia , where he set himself up as a painter and electrician , and worked as a casual laborer for Aramco . He remained close to his mother ; his brother told Melman that Abu Nidal would return to Nablus from Saudi Arabia every year to visit her . It was during one of those visits in 1962 that he met his wife , whose family had also fled from Jaffa . The couple had a son and two daughters .

= = = Personality = = =

Abu Nidal was often in poor health , according to Seale , and tended to dress in zip @-@ up jackets and old trousers , drinking whisky every night in his later years . He became , writes Seale , a " master of disguises and subterfuge , trusting no one , lonely and self @-@ protective , [living] like a mole , hidden away from public view . " Acquaintances said that he was capable of hard work and had a good financial brain . Salah Khalaf (Abu lyad) , the deputy chief of Fatah who was assassinated by the ANO in 1991 , knew him well in the late 1960s when he took Abu Nidal under his wing . He told Seale :

He had been recommended to me as a man of energy and enthusiasm , but he seemed shy when we met . It was only on further acquaintance that I noticed other traits . He was extremely good company , with a sharp tongue and an inclination to dismiss most of humanity as spies and traitors . I rather liked that ! I discovered he was very ambitious , perhaps more than his abilities warranted , and also very excitable . He sometimes worked himself up into such a state that he lost all powers of reasoning .

Seale suggests that Abu Nidal 's childhood explained his personality , described as chaotic by Abu lyad and as psychopathic by Issam Sartawi , the late Palestinian heart surgeon . His siblings ' scorn , the loss of his father and his mother 's removal from the family home when he was seven , then the loss of his home and status in the conflict with Israel , created a mental world of plots and counterplots , reflected in his tyrannical leadership of the ANO . Members ' wives (it was an all @-@ male group) were not allowed to befriend each another , and Abu Nidal 's wife was expected to live in isolation without friends .

= = Political life = =

= = = Impex , Black September = = =

In Saudi Arabia Abu Nidal helped found a small group of young Palestinians who called themselves the Palestine Secret Organization . The activism cost him his job and home : Aramco fired him , and the Saudi government imprisoned then expelled him .

He returned to Nablus with his wife and family , and joined Yasser Arafat 's Fatah faction of the PLO . Working as an odd @-@ job man , he was committed to Palestinian politics but not particularly active , until Israel won the 1967 Six @-@ Day War , capturing the Golan Heights , the West Bank and the Gaza Strip . Melman writes that " the entrance of the Israel Defense Forces tanks into Nablus was a traumatic experience for him . The conquest aroused him to action . "

He moved to Amman , Jordan , setting up a trading company called Impex . Fatah asked him to choose a nom de guerre , and he chose Abu Nidal (" father of struggle ") after his son , Nidal . (It is customary in the Arab world for men to call themselves " father of " (Abu) , followed by their first son 's name .) He was described by those who knew him at the time as a well @-@ organized leader , not a guerrilla ; during fighting between the Palestinian fedayeen and King Hussein 's troops , he stayed in his office .

Impex acted as a front for Fatah , serving as a meeting place and conduit for funds . This became a hallmark of Abu Nidal 's career . Companies controlled by the ANO made him a rich man by engaging in legitimate business deals , while acting as cover for arms deals and mercenary activities .

Abu Iyad appointed Abu Nidal in 1968 as the Fatah representative in Khartoum , Sudan , then (at Abu Nidal 's insistence) to the same position in Baghdad in July 1970 , two months before Black September , when over 10 days of fighting King Hussein 's army drove the Palestinian fedayeen out of Jordan , with the loss of thousands of lives . Seale writes that Abu Nidal 's absence from Jordan during this period , when it was clear that King Hussein was about to act against the Palestinians , raised suspicion within the movement that Abu Nidal was interested only in saving himself .

= = = First operation = = =

Shortly after Black September , Abu Nidal began accusing the PLO of cowardice over his Voice of Palestine radio station in Iraq for having agreed to a ceasefire with Hussein . During Fatah 's Third Congress in Damascus in 1971 , Abu Nidal joined Palestinian activist and writer Naji Allush and Abu Daoud (leader of the Black September Organization responsible for the 1972 Munich Massacre) , calling for greater democracy within Fatah and revenge against King Hussein .

In February 1973 Abu Daoud was arrested in Jordan for an attempt on King Hussein 's life . This led to Abu Nidal 's first operation , using the name Al @-@ Iqab (" the Punishment ") ; on 5 September 1973 five gunmen entered the Saudi embassy in Paris , took 15 hostages and threatened to blow up the building if Abu Daoud was not released . The gunmen flew two days later to Kuwait on a Syrian Airways flight , still holding five hostages , then to Riyadh , threatening to throw the hostages out of the aircraft . They surrendered and released the hostages on 8 September . Abu Daoud was released from prison two weeks later ; Seale writes that the Kuwaiti government paid King Hussein \$ 12 million for his release .

On the day of the attack , 56 heads of state were meeting in Algiers for the 4th conference of the Non @-@ Aligned Movement . According to Seale , the Saudi Embassy operation had been commissioned by Iraq 's president , Ahmed Hasan al @-@ Bakr , as a distraction because he was jealous that Algeria was hosting the conference . Seale writes one of the hostage @-@ takers admitted that he had been told to fly the hostages around until the conference was over .

Abu Nidal had carried out the operation without the permission of Fatah . Abu Iyad (Arafat 's deputy) and Mahmoud Abbas (later President of the Palestinian Authority) , flew to Iraq to reason with Abu Nidal that hostage @-@ taking harmed the movement . Abu Iyad told Seale that an Iraqi official at the meeting said : " Why are you attacking Abu Nidal ? The operation was ours ! We asked him to mount it for us . " Abbas was furious and left the meeting with the other PLO delegates . From

that point on , Seale writes , the PLO regarded Abu Nidal as under the control of the Iraqi government .

= = = Expulsion from Fatah = = =

Two months later , in November 1973 (just after the Yom Kippur War in October) , the ANO hijacked KLM Flight 861 , this time using the name Arab Nationalist Youth Organization . Fatah had been discussing convening a peace conference in Geneva ; the hijacking was intended to warn them not to go ahead with it . In response , in March or July 1974 , Arafat expelled Abu Nidal from Fatah .

In October 1974 Abu Nidal formed the ANO , calling it Fatah : The Revolutionary Council . In November that year a Fatah court sentenced him to death in absentia for the attempted assassination of Mahmoud Abbas . Seale writes that it is unlikely that Abu Nidal had intended to kill Abbas , and just as unlikely that Fatah wanted to kill Abu Nidal . He was invited to Beirut to discuss the death sentence , and was allowed to leave again , but it was clear that he had become persona non grata . As a result , the Iraqis gave him Fatah 's assets in Iraq , including a training camp , farm , newspaper , radio station , passports , overseas scholarships and \$ 15 million worth of Chinese weapons . He also received Iraq 's regular aid to the PLO : around \$ 150 @, @ 000 a month and a lump sum of \$ 3 ? 5 million .

= = ANO = =

= = = Nature of the organization = = =

In addition to Fatah : The Revolutionary Council , the ANO called itself the Palestinian National Liberation Movement , Black June (for actions against Syria) , Black September (for actions against Jordan) , the Revolutionary Arab Brigades , the Revolutionary Organization of Socialist Muslims , the Egyptian Revolution , Revolutionary Egypt , Al @-@ Asifa (" the Storm , " a name also used by Fatah) , Al @-@ Iqab (" the Punishment ") , and the Arab Nationalist Youth Organization .

The group had up to 500 members , chosen from young men in the Palestinian refugee camps and in Lebanon , who were promised good pay and help looking after their families . They would be sent to training camps in whichever country was hosting the ANO at the time (Syria , Iraq or Libya) , then organized into small cells . Once in , As`ad AbuKhalil and Michael Fischbach write , they were not allowed to leave again . The group assumed complete control over the membership . One member who spoke to Patrick Seale was told before being sent overseas : " If we say , ' Drink alcohol ' " , do so . If we say , ' Get married , ' find a woman and marry her . If we say , ' Don 't have children , ' you must obey . If we say , ' Go and kill King Hussein , ' you must be ready to sacrifice yourself ! "

Seale writes that recruits were asked to write out their life stories , including names and addresses of family and friends , then sign a paper saying they agreed to execution if discovered to have intelligence connections . If suspected , they would be asked to rewrite the whole story , without discrepancies . The ANO 's newspaper Filastin al @-@ Thawra regularly announced the execution of traitors. Seale himself writes that Abu Nidal was admitted his organization was deeply penetrated by Israeli agents . The theory that he himself was one such agent is deemed to be far @-@ fetched , but Israel may have had an interest in undermining Palestinian groups disposed to the idea of making compromises .

= = = Committee for Revolutionary Justice = = =

There were reports of purges throughout the 1970s and 1980s . Around 600 ANO members were killed in Lebanon and Libya , including 171 in one night in November 1987 , when they were lined up

, shot and thrown into a mass grave . Dozens were kidnapped in Syria and killed in the Badawi refugee camp . Most of the decisions to kill , Abu Daoud told Seale , were taken by Abu Nidal " in the middle of the night , after he [had] knocked back a whole bottle of whiskey . " The purges led to the defection from the ANO in 1989 of Atif Abu Bakr , head of the ANO 's political directorate , who returned to Fatah .

Members were routinely tortured by the " Committee for Revolutionary Justice " until they confessed to disloyalty . Seale writes that reports of torture included hanging a man naked , whipping him until he was unconscious , reviving him with cold water , then rubbing salt or chili powder into his wounds . A naked prisoner would be forced into a car tyre with his legs and backside in the air , then whipped , wounded , salted and revived with cold water . A member 's testicles might be fried in oil , or melted plastic dripped onto his skin . Between interrogations , prisoners would be tied up in tiny cells . If the cells were full , Seale writes , they might be buried with a pipe in their mouths for air and water ; if Abu Nidal wanted them dead , a bullet would be fired down the pipe instead .

= = = Intelligence Directorate = = =

The Intelligence Directorate was formed in 1985 to oversee special operations . It had four subcommittees : the Committee for Special Missions , the Foreign Intelligence Committee , the Counterespionage Committee and the Lebanon Committee . Led by Abd al @-@ Rahman Isa , the longest @-@ serving member of the ANO ? Seale writes that Isa was unshaven and shabby , but charming and persuasive ? the directorate maintained 30 ? 40 people overseas who looked after the ANO 's arms caches in various countries . It trained staff , arranged passports and visas , and reviewed security at airports and seaports . Members were not allowed to visit each other at home , and no one outside the directorate was supposed to know who was a member .

Isa was demoted in 1987 , because Abu Nidal believed he had become too close to other figures within the ANO . Always keen to punish members by humiliating them , Abu Nidal insisted he remain in the Intelligence Directorate , forcing him to work for his previous subordinates , who according to Seale were told to treat him with contempt .

= = = Committee for Special Missions = = =

The job of the Committee for Special Missions was to choose targets . It had started life as the Military Committee , headed by Naji Abu al @-@ Fawaris , who had led the attack on Heinz Nittel , head of the Israel @-@ Austria Friendship League , who was shot and killed in 1981 . In 1982 the committee changed its name to the Committee for Special Missions , headed by Dr. Ghassan al @-@ Ali , who had been born in the West Bank and educated in England , where he obtained a BA and MA in chemistry and married a British woman (later divorced) . A former ANO member told Seale that Ali favoured " the most extreme and reckless operations . "

= = Operations and relationships = =

= = = Shlomo Argov = = =

On 3 June 1982 , ANO operative Hussein Ghassan Said shot Shlomo Argov , the Israeli ambassador to Britain , once in the head as he left the Dorchester Hotel in London . Said was accompanied by Nawaf al @-@ Rosan , an Iraqi intelligence officer , and Marwan al @-@ Banna , Abu Nidal 's cousin . Argov survived , but spent three months in a coma and the rest of his life disabled , until his death in February 2003 . The PLO quickly denied responsibility for the attack .

Ariel Sharon , then Israel 's defence minister , responded three days later by invading Lebanon , where the PLO was based , a reaction that Seale argues Abu Nidal had intended . The Israeli government had been preparing to invade and Abu Nidal provided a pretext . Der Spiegel put it to him in October 1985 that the assassination of Argov , when he knew Israel wanted to attack the

PLO in Lebanon , made him appear to be working for the Israelis , in the view of Yasser Arafat . He replied :

What Arafat says about me doesn 't bother me . Not only he , but also a whole list of Arab and world politicians claim that I am an agent of the Zionists or the CIA . Others state that I am a mercenary of the French secret service and of the Soviet KGB . The latest rumor is that I am an agent of Khomeini . During a certain period they said we were spies for the Iraqi regime . Now they say that we are Syrian agents Many psychologists and sociologists in the Soviet bloc tried to investigate this man Abu Nidal . They wanted to find a weak point in his character . The result was zero .

= = = Rome and Vienna = = =

Abu Nidal 's most infamous operation was the 1985 attack on the Rome and Vienna airports . On 27 December , at 08 : 15 GMT , four gunmen opened fire on the El Al ticket counter at the Leonardo Da Vinci International Airport in Rome , killing 16 and wounding 99 . In Vienna International Airport a few minutes later , three men threw hand grenades at passengers waiting to check into a flight to Tel Aviv , killing four and wounding 39 . According to Seale , the gunmen had been told the people in civilian clothes at the check @-@ in counter were Israeli pilots returning from a training mission .

Austria and Italy had both been involved in trying to arrange peace talks . Sources close to Abu Nidal told Seale that Libyan intelligence had supplied the weapons . The damage to the PLO was enormous , according to Abu lyad , Arafat 's deputy . Most people in the West and even many Arabs could not distinguish between the ANO and Fatah , he said . " When such horrible things take place , ordinary people are left thinking that all Palestinians are criminals . "

= = = United States bombing of Libya = = =

On 15 April 1986 , the US launched bombing raids from British bases against Tripoli and Benghazi , killing around 100 , in retaliation for the bombing of a Berlin nightclub used by US service personnel . The dead were reported to include Hanna Gaddafi , the adoptive daughter of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi ; two of his other children were injured .

British journalist Alec Collett , who had been kidnapped in Beirut in March , was hanged after the airstrikes , reportedly by ANO operatives ; his remains were found in the Beqaa Valley in November 2009 . The bodies of two British teachers , Leigh Douglas and Philip Padfield , and an American , Peter Kilburn , were found in a village near Beirut on 17 April 1986 ; the Arab Fedayeen Cells , a name linked to Abu Nidal , claimed responsibility . British journalist John McCarthy was kidnapped the same day .

= = = Hindawi affair = = =

On 17 April 1986 ? the day the bodies of the teachers were found and McCarthy was kidnapped ? Ann Marie Murphy , a pregnant Irish chambermaid , was discovered in Heathrow airport with a Semtex bomb in the false bottom of one of her bags . She had been about to board an El Al flight from New York to Tel Aviv via London . The bag had been packed by her Jordanian fiancé Nizar Hindawi , who had said he would join her in Israel where they were to be married .

According to Melman , Abu Nidal had recommended Hindawi to Syrian intelligence . Seale writes that the bomb had been manufactured by Abu Nidal 's technical committee , who had delivered it to Syrian air force intelligence . It was sent to London in a diplomatic bag and given to Hindawi . According to Seale , it was widely believed that the attack was in response to Israel having forced down a jet , two months earlier , carrying Syrian officials to Damascus , which Israel had supposed was carrying senior Palestinians .

= = = Pan Am Flight 73 = = =

On 5 September 1986 , four ANO gunmen hijacked Pan Am Flight 73 at Karachi Airport on its way from Mumbai to New York , holding 389 passengers and crew for 16 hours in the plane on the tarmac before detonating grenades inside the cabin . Neerja Bhanot , the flight 's senior purser , was able to open an emergency door , and most passengers escaped ; 20 died , including Bhanot , and 120 were wounded . The London Times reported in March 2004 that Libya had been behind the hijacking .

= = = Relationship with Gaddafi = = =

Abu Nidal began to move his organization out of Syria to Libya in the summer of 1986 , arriving there in March 1987 . In June that year the Syrian government expelled him , in part because of the Hindawi affair and Pan Am Flight 73 hijacking .

He repeatedly took credit during this period for operations in which he had no involvement , including the 1984 Brighton hotel bombing , 1985 Bradford City stadium fire , and 1986 assassination of Zafir al @-@ Masri , the mayor of Nablus (killed by the PFLP , according to Seale) . He also implied that he had been behind the 1986 Space Shuttle Challenger disaster by publishing a congratulatory note in the ANO magazine , writes Seale .

Abu Nidal and Libya 's leader , Muammar Gaddafi , allegedly became great friends , each holding what Marie Colvin and Sonya Murad called a " dangerous combination of an inferiority complex mixed with the belief that he was a man of great destiny . " The relationship gave Abu Nidal a sponsor and Gaddafi a mercenary . Seale reports that Libya brought out the worst in Abu Nidal . He would not allow even the most senior ANO members to socialize with each other ; all meetings had to be reported to him . All passports had to be handed over . No one was allowed to travel without his permission . Ordinary members were not allowed to have telephones ; senior members were allowed to make local calls only . His members knew nothing about his daily life , including where he lived . If he wanted to entertain , Seale writes , he would take over the home of another member .

According to Abu Bakr , speaking to Al Hayatt in 2002 , Abu Nidal said he was behind the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 , which exploded over Lockerbie , Scotland , on 21 December 1988 ; a former head of security for Libyan Arab Airlines was later convicted . Abu Nidal reportedly said of Lockerbie , according to Seale : " We do have some involvement in this matter , but if anyone so much as mentions it , I will kill him with my own hands ! " Seale writes that the ANO appeared to have no connection to it ; one of Abu Nidal 's associates told him , " If an American soldier tripped in some corner of the globe , Abu Nidal would instantly claim it as his own work . "

= = = Banking with BCCI = = =

In the late 1980s British intelligence learned that the ANO held accounts with the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) in London . BCCI was closed in July 1991 by banking regulators in six countries after evidence emerged of widespread fraud . Abu Nidal himself was said to have visited London using the name Shakar Farhan ; a BCCI branch manager , who passed information about the ANO accounts to MI5 , reportedly drove him around several stores in London without realizing who he was . Abu Nidal was using a company called SAS International Trading and Investments in Warsaw as cover for arms deals . The company 's transactions included the purchase of riot guns , ostensibly for Syria , then when the British refused an export licence to Syria , for an African state ; in fact half the shipment went to the police in East Germany and half to Abu Nidal .

= = = Assassination of Abu Iyad = = =

On 14 January 1991 in Tunis , the night before U.S. forces moved into Kuwait , the ANO assassinated Abu Iyad , head of PLO intelligence , along with Abu al @-@ Hol , Fatah 's chief of security , and Fakhri al @-@ Umari , another Fatah aide ; all three men were shot in Abu Iyad 's home . The killer , Hamza Abu Zaid , confessed that an ANO operative had hired him . When he

shot Abu Iyad , he reportedly shouted , " Let Atif Abu Bakr help you now ! " , a reference to the senior ANO member who had left the group in 1989 , and whom Abu Nidal believed had been planted within the ANO by Abu Iyad as a spy . Abu Iyad had known that Abu Nidal nursed a hatred of him , in part because he had kept Abu Nidal out of the PLO . But the real reason for the hatred , Abu Iyad told Seale , was that he had protected Abu Nidal in his early years within the movement . Given his personality , Abu Nidal could not acknowledge that debt . Seale writes that the murder " must therefore be seen as a final settlement of old scores . "

= = Death = =

After Libyan intelligence operatives were charged with the Lockerbie bombing , Gaddafi tried to distance himself from terrorism . Abu Nidal was expelled from Libya in 1999 , and in 2002 he returned to Iraq ; the Iraqi government later said he had entered the country using a fake Yemeni passport and false name .

On 19 August 2002 , the Palestinian newspaper al @-@ Ayyam reported that Abu Nidal had died three days earlier of multiple gunshot wounds at his home in Baghdad , a house the newspaper said was owned by the Mukhabarat , the Iraqi secret service . Two days later Iraq 's chief of intelligence , Taher Jalil Habbush , handed out photographs of Abu Nidal 's body to journalists , along with a medical report that said he had died after a bullet entered his mouth and exited through his skull . Habbush said Iraqi officials had arrived at Abu Nidal 's home to arrest him on suspicion of conspiring with foreign governments . After saying he needed a change of clothes , he went into his bedroom and shot himself in the mouth , according to Habbush . He died eight hours later in hospital .

Jane 's reported in 2002 that Iraqi intelligence had found classified documents in his home about a U.S. attack on Iraq . When they raided the house , fighting broke out between Abu Nidal 's men and Iraqi intelligence . In the midst of this , Abu Nidal rushed into his bedroom and was killed ; Palestinian sources told Jane 's that he had been shot several times . Jane 's suggested Saddam Hussein had him killed because he feared Abu Nidal would act against him in the event of an American invasion .

In 2008 Robert Fisk obtained a report written in September 2002 , for Saddam Hussein 's " presidency intelligence office , " by Iraq 's " Special Intelligence Unit M4 . " The report said that the Iraqis had been interrogating Abu Nidal in his home as a suspected spy for Kuwait and Egypt , and indirectly for the United States . It said he had been asked by the Kuwaitis to find links between Iraq and Al @-@ Qaeda . Just before being moved to a more secure location , Abu Nidal asked to be allowed to change his clothing , went into his bedroom and shot himself , the report said . He was buried on 29 August 2002 in al @-@ Karakh 's Islamic cemetery in Baghdad , in a grave marked M7 .