

TEHERAN SAYS U.S. SEARCHED HOME OF AN IRANIAN DIPLOMAT

The New York Times

September 23, 1984, Sunday, Late City Final Edition

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Section: Section 1; Part 1; Page 12, Column 3; Foreign Desk

Length: 293 words

Byline: AP

Dateline: NICOSIA, Cyprus, Sept. 21

Body

The Iranian press agency said today that United States security agents had searched the house of an Iranian diplomat in Washington soon after the car bombing of the United States Embassy in Beirut.

In a dispatch from Washington, the agency said that the diplomat, Ali Sabzalian, who is in charge of the Iranian interest section, was told later that he was being "closely watched."

Iranian press agency says US security agents accompanied by immigration officials searched house of Ali Sabzalian, Iranian diplomat in Washington, soon after car bombing of US Embassy in Beirut on Sept 20; INS spokesman denies knowledge of such an operation (S)

The connection between the bombing of the embassy in Beirut and the reported search of the Iranian diplomat's home in Washington was not clear. The shadowy Islamic Holy War organization has taken responsibility for the embassy bombing.

The Iranian press agency said:

"Security agents accompanied by officials from the United States immigration department searched the house of the diplomat, saying that guns and ammunition were in the house. The search proved futile but he was questioned at gunpoint."

(In Washington, Greg Leo, a spokesman for the Immigration and Naturalization Service, said he knew nothing about the search of the home of an Iranian diplomat. "It bears no resemblance to anything we do operationally," he said. "We perform our duties at ports of entry.")

The Iranian agency said the security agents had said that they were unaware of Mr. Sabzalian's diplomatic status and had asked for his identity papers. They refused to identify themselves, the agency said.

In a further incident on Friday, the agency said, the diplomat was leaving his residence in a car with an Algerian diplomatic plate when he noticed that several cars were chasing him.

"The diplomat was later stopped by a police car and was asked for his driving license," the press agency said. "The policeman warned him that he was being closely watched."

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

TEHERAN SAYS U.S. SEARCHED HOME OF AN IRANIAN DIPLOMAT

Subject: EMBASSIES & CONSULATES (92%); IMMIGRATION (90%); IMMIGRATION LAW (90%); BOMBINGS (90%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (78%); CITIZENSHIP (77%); MUSLIMS & ISLAM (73%); RELIGION (68%)

Company: UNITED STATES FOREIGN SERVICE; INSURANCE IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (83%); INSURANCE IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (83%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (56%)

Organization: IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (83%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (56%); UNITED STATES FOREIGN SERVICE; INSURANCE IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (83%); INSURANCE IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (83%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (56%)

Industry: EMERGENCY VEHICLES (78%); MOTOR VEHICLES (73%)

Geographic: BEIRUT, LEBANON (93%); TEHRAN, IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF (58%); UNITED STATES (96%); IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF (94%); LEBANON (92%)