

Brother of Qatari emir accused of plotting double murder

Author:

Tue, 2019-08-13 11:27

Sheikh Khaled Al-Thani, the brother of Qatari emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, ordered a member of his security staff to murder two people, according to a lawsuit filed by two former employees.

It was submitted to a Florida court on July 23 by Matthew Pittard, a security professional, and Matthew Allende, who was hired to be a round-the-clock medic for Sheikh Khaled, a racing-car driver.

Pittard claims that he was threatened at gunpoint in September 2017 after refusing to carry out Sheikh Khaled's orders to murder an unnamed man and woman the sheikh said were threats to his social reputation. The incident is said to have happened in Los Angeles, California.

The following year, according to the lawsuit, Sheikh Khaled imprisoned an American in his palace in Qatar. The unnamed captive was arrested on Sheikh Khaled's orders and held at for a time at Onaiza Police Station in Doha, as well as at his residence, it is claimed.

When he discovered that Pittard had helped the captive escape, the sheikh told him "he would kill him, bury his body in the desert, and kill Pittard's family," it is alleged. Pittard said Sheikh Khaled threatened him with a Glock 26 automatic pistol and ordered him to reveal the whereabouts of the American or "pay the price." He was later fired.

According to the court documents, Allende was also threatened with a gun, and forced to work long hours with little time off. He eventually climbed a 2-meter security fence and jumped from the top of a 6-meter wall to escape Sheik Khaled's Qatari compound after he was refused permission to leave for a previously arranged day off.

"There is no circumstance in any country where asking someone to execute two people on someone's behalf is appropriate," said lawyer Rebecca Lynn Castaneda, who is representing Pittard and Allende. "It's not OK. It's not acceptable. It's illegal. It's pretty egregious. Pittard and Allende said there were several situations in which they were put by the defendant that were totally inappropriate."

She said her clients are seeking \$33 million in damages because Sheikh Khaled's actions prevented them from pursuing their careers, including interference in a security, law-enforcement and arms-brokerage contract Pittard had negotiated with the Police Training Institute in Doha. Sheikh Khaled is being sued personally, and his two companies, GEO Strategic Defense Solutions and KH Holdings are also named in the lawsuit.

Sheikh Khaled "created an environment of fear and intimidation. Defendant's behavior has gone beyond a term of employment and intentionally extended into Pittard's business and personal and professional lives," the lawsuit claims.

Castaneda said the judge had issued a summons ordering Sheikh Khaled to appear in court. She said she expected the legal process to continue for many months and the case is "a long way from trial."



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oil tanker will be released

Author:

Reuters

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Tue, 2019-08-13 07:43

DUBAI: The British territory of Gibraltar will not yet release an Iranian oil tanker seized by Royal Marines in the Mediterranean despite an Iranian report that it could do so on Tuesday, an official Gibraltar source said.

The commandeering of the Grace 1 on July 4 exacerbated frictions between Tehran and the West and led to retaliatory moves in Gulf waterways used to ship oil.

Britain accused the vessel of violating European sanctions by taking oil to Syria, a charge Tehran denies.

The deputy head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization, Jalil Eslami, said on Tuesday that Britain was thinking of freeing the Grace 1 following an exchange of documents.

"The vessel was seized based on false allegations," Eslami said in comments reported by state news agency IRNA. "We hope the release will take place soon."

Iran's semi-official Fars news agency, quoting unidentified Gibraltar authorities, said the tanker would be freed by Tuesday evening.

However, a senior source in the government of British overseas territory denied that would happen on Tuesday.

Although Grace 1 was seized by British forces, Britain said on Tuesday that investigations into the tanker Grace were a matter for Gibraltar. The territory has denied Iran's claim that the action was taken on the orders of Tehran's longtime foe Washington.

"As this is an ongoing investigation, we are unable to comment further," a British Foreign Office spokesman said.

Tehran has denied the vessel was doing anything improper and in retaliation Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps troops seized the British-flagged Stena Impero tanker in the Strait of Hormuz on July 19 for alleged marine violations.

The Gulf tanker crisis has added to worsening hostilities since Washington pulled out of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with six powers, under which Tehran agreed to curb its nuclear work in return for lifting most international sanctions on Tehran.

The Iranian capture of the Stena Impero drew condemnation from Britain and other European parties to the nuclear deal that have been trying to salvage it by shielding Iran's economy from reimposed and toughened US sanctions.

Unlike the seized Iranian tanker, which was carrying a cargo of up to 2.1 million barrels of oil, the Stena Impero was on its way to the Gulf and empty at the time it was seized by Iranian forces.

Millions of barrels of oil pass daily through the various bottlenecks from Middle East oil producers to markets across the globe.



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[Israel delays removal of Philippine worker](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-08-12 22:37

JERUSALEM: The deportation of a Filipino migrant worker and her Israeli-born teenage son was delayed at the 11th hour to await a final decision on their fate.

Rosemarie Perez was arrested by immigration officials along with her 13-year-old son Rohan last Tuesday for remaining in the country illegally.

They were taken to Ben-Gurion airport near Tel Aviv on Sunday night but later taken off the plane, said Beth Franco of the United Children of Israel (UCI) association.

The lawyer for the family, Carmel Bensur, has requested an urgent hearing on their status in a bid to have them remain in Israel, she told AFP.

On Sunday, a court had rejected Perez's plea to stay, immigration authority spokeswoman Sabine Haddad told AFP.

"She has been here illegally for 10 years," Haddad said.

UCI argues that it is cruel to send Rohan – and other children of migrants – to a country they have never seen and where they do not speak the language.

Last week, migrants, their children and Israelis staged a protest in Tel Aviv against the policy of deporting Israeli-born children of migrants.

Many of the 28,000 – largely Christian – Filipinos in Israel arrived to work as caregivers and home help, but according to UCI, some 600 families could now face expulsion over a loss of residency status.

Visas were conditioned on the requirement that they do not start a family in the country apart from certain exceptions, the association says.

The issue has particular resonance in Israel, where there are long-term fears about maintaining a Jewish majority in the country founded as a national homeland for Jews in the wake of the Holocaust.



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Ship evacuates Philippine workers, others from Libya
Philippine workers recount Algeria hostage drama

Libya airport reopens after brief rupture in cease-fire

Author:

Mon, 2019-08-12 22:25

TRIPOLI: Flights have resumed from the Libyan capital's sole functioning airport as calm returned on Monday to the outskirts of Tripoli after a temporary truce was violated the previous day.

"Reopening airspace at Mitiga International Airport after maintenance and cleaning ... so that airlines can renew their flights," the facility's

management said late on Sunday on Facebook.

The Tripoli-based government and forces loyal to eastern commander Khalifa Haftar had agreed to a truce for the three-day holiday of Eid Al-Adha that began on Sunday.

Haftar launched an offensive to take Libya's capital in early April, but encountered stiff resistance, resulting in months of stalemate in southern Tripoli's outskirts.

Flights from Mitiga airport were suspended for several hours on Sunday after rocket fire hit the airport, a few meters from the runway where planes were parked.

Located east of Tripoli, Mitiga is a former military air base that has been used by civilian traffic since Tripoli International Airport suffered severe damage during fighting in 2014.

Mitiga is in a zone under the control of forces loyal to the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) and has often been targeted.

Haftar's Libyan National Army and the GNA had on Saturday agreed to a UN-sponsored humanitarian truce for Al-Adha, although the GNA listed conditions, including a cessation of troop movements.

The GNA blamed Haftar's forces for the attack on the airport, in which no casualties or serious damage were reported, and for a separate alleged attack in the Soug Al-Jomaa district of Tripoli.

Over the past four months, 1,093 people have been killed in the fighting and 5,752 wounded, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), while more than 120,000 people have been displaced.

Libya has been mired in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed Muammar Qaddafi in 2011.



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80 migrants rescued off Libya coast Displaced by fighting, Libyans fear ending up 'on the street'

Iraq rejects Israeli role in Gulf flotilla

Author:

Mon, 2019-08-12 22:11

BAGHDAD: Iraq rejects any Israeli participation in a naval force to protect shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, at the heart of tensions with Iran, Foreign Minister Mohammed Ali Al-Hakim said on Monday.

Tensions have escalated in past months, with drones downed and tankers mysteriously attacked in Gulf and nearby waters.

Washington and its Arab allies in the Gulf region have accused the Islamic

republic of carrying out the tanker attacks. The US has since sought to assemble an international coalition it says is to guarantee freedom of navigation in the Gulf.

Israel has made no official announcement on the operation, although Israeli media have reported a possible role for the Jewish state. Iraq "rejects any participation of forces of the Zionist entity in any military force to secure passage of ships in the Arabian Gulf," Hakim said on Twitter. "Together, the Gulf states can secure the passage of ships," he said.

He added that "Iraq will work to lower tensions in our region through calm negotiations," while "the presence of Western forces in the region would raise tensions."

Tehran and Washington have been at loggerheads since President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from a nuclear accord between Iran and world powers in May 2018, reimposing biting sanctions.

If the coalition is formed, each country would provide a military escort for its commercial ships through the Gulf with the support of the US military, which would carry out aerial surveillance and command operations.

The UK has said it will take part, but other European countries have so far kept out, fearing it might harm efforts to reach a negotiated settlement with Iran.

Iran's Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Thursday any Israeli involvement could have "disastrous consequences" for the region and the formation of a US-led flotilla in the Gulf would increase insecurity.



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