

Increasing Numbers of European Mercenaries in Syria



Damascus, December 4 (RHC)-- The number of European residents who have entered into Syria as mercenaries to fight against the government in Damascus has risen over the past six months, according to a recent report.

A report published by the Associated Press says that new networks recruit the western Europe-based mercenaries and arrange their travel and lodging in Syria. The 11 western European countries with the largest contingents in Syria are estimated to have around 1,200 to 1,700 mercenaries among the foreign-backed forces fighting against the Syrian government, the report said.

"That compares to estimates of 600-800 from those countries in late spring," the study said, adding that the rise happened particularly in France, Germany, Belgium and Sweden. Sources say that France has between 300 and 400 European militants in Syria while Germany has counted over 220. Belgium puts its number at 150 to 200.

Magnus Ranstorp, who is a terrorism specialist with the Swedish National Defense College says Stockholm is about to double its estimates to 150-200. He said that in the last two months, "there has been an acceleration in the number of people going to Syria."

Thomas Hegghammer, an analyst at the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, said: "More Europeans have gone to Syria than have gone to all the other conflict zones put together," including Iraq

and Afghanistan.

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