

Bulgaria has evidence linking Hezbollah to Burgas bombing: report

BEIRUT: Bulgaria has informed European officials of evidence implicating Hezbollah in last year's attack on an Israeli bus at the Black Sea airport of Burgas, Al-Hayat, quoting a source, reported Tuesday.

The paper, quoting what it described as a "European source," reported that Bulgaria's interior minister informed his European counterparts during a closed-door meeting last Thursday of evidence collected by authorities indicating Hezbollah's involvement in the July 18 bomb attack.

The report comes days after Bulgaria's Foreign Minister Nikolai Mladenov paid a surprise visit to Tel Aviv to brief leaders there on its probe into the bus bomb attack that claimed the lives of five Israeli tourists, their Bulgarian driver and the bomber.

Earlier this year, Bulgaria denied a report carried by Israel's Channel 2 alleging Sofia's investigation will link Hezbollah to the attack.

Israel and the U.S. have both accused the Lebanese resistance group of being behind the bombing and urged the European Union to blacklist Hezbollah as a "terrorist" group.

The Lebanese resistance group has not denied or confirmed any role in the bombing.

The pan-Arab daily added that the Bulgarian minister would hold a news conference next week in which he would discuss the probe into the attack at the Black Sea airport of Burgas.

The source, according to the paper, said Germany and France both opposed blacklisting Hezbollah as they believed the time was not right to destabilize Lebanon.

On the other hand, the source added, the United States, United Kingdom and Israel were pressuring the EU on the matter.

The EU is expected to discuss the issue of blacklisting Hezbollah in February, according to the newspaper.

In July of last year, the EU turned down a request by Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman to blacklist Hezbollah after the Bulgaria attack, arguing that there was no consensus on the issue within the organization.

The European source also said that Lebanese officials had not yet been informed about the details of the probe and that President Michel Sleiman and Prime Minister Najib Mikati would be

notified at a time that Bulgaria deems appropriate, according to Al-Hayat.

The paper quoted another source within the EU as saying that Bulgaria has also not revealed to the EU's foreign commission anything with regard to the case yet.

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