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Case of Three Tinnars Set for Trial: Plea Deal Expected

A trial is expected soon to settle the notorious Tinner affair. On May 30, 2012, a Swiss court in Bellinzona, Switzerland will hear the case against Urs, Marco, and Freidrich Tinner. They were key members of the A.Q. Khan network and are charged with crimes against Switzerland's war materiel act for assisting Libya's nuclear weapons program.

Under a new law, Swiss prosecutors opted to obtain a deal whereby the Tinnars would plead guilty to charges and receive a reduced sentence as a result. The judge will need to approve the exact agreement whose specifics remain unknown publicly. The plea deal and expedited trial will avoid the need to publicly introduce embarrassing evidence in the case and serve to close this highly controversial case.

In 2010, [ISIS supported](#) that the Tinnars opt for a plea deal as the best way forward. Thus, the upcoming trial is welcome. The Swiss prosecutors acted wisely to reject efforts to stifle the prosecution because the Tinnars worked for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 2003 as it shut down the Khan network. The Tinnars deserve credit for their assistance but they are similar to Mafia informants. They do not deserve immunity from justice for their past crimes.

The Tinner affair exploded in controversy when it was revealed in 2004 that the CIA conducted a covert operation to bust the Khan network from inside Switzerland and used the Tinnars as operatives. The Tinnars were arrested and investigated as to their violations of Swiss intelligence, anti-proliferation, and money laundering laws. Bush administration officials launched a high-level effort to persuade the Swiss executive branch, ruled by the Federal Council, to support not charging the Tinnars. The Council in response ordered the destruction of the evidence in the case, attempting in the process to block the Tinnars' prosecution. Meanwhile, the Tinnars spent several years in jail before being released on bail. In late 2010, Swiss Magistrate Judge Andreas Mueller [reviewed](#) the case and recommended that the attorney general go ahead with charging them with violating war materiel and money laundering laws, using remaining evidence, some of which had been overlooked in the Federal Council's destruction order. Federal prosecutors reviewed the case throughout 2011, leading to the decision to move ahead with a trial and a plea bargain.

ISIS recommends that the Obama administration offer any support that Switzerland requires given the United States' past involvement with the Tinner affair. ISIS also applauds the efforts of the Swiss judicial branch in pursuing prosecution of the Tinnars and rectifying an embarrassing overreach by both the Swiss and U.S. executive branches.

One of the most egregious cases of nuclear smuggling associated with the Khan network is expected to soon reach a just conclusion.

Read ISIS's review of the Tinner affair, their cooperation with the CIA, and the Libya case here:

[The Tinner Case: Time for a Frank, Open Evaluation](#)

[CIA Recruitment of the Three Tinnars: A Preliminary Assessment](#)

[ISIS Special Report: Libya: A Major Sale at Last](#)