

Rebels hunt Gaddafi relatives, loyalist in Tripoli

Reuters

August 25, 2011

TRIPOLI, Aug 25 — Rebels fought gun battles in Tripoli with loyalists of Muammar Gaddafi yesterday as they hunted for his relatives and supporters, Reuters witnesses and an Arab television station said.

A Reuters correspondent said bursts of gunfire rang out near the Corinthia Hotel in central Tripoli late yesterday and a column of smoke rose from the area.

The shooting came after a group of heavily armed rebels arrived at the hotel demanding to search room after they had heard that one of Gaddafi's sons, Saadi, was inside.

A Reuters reporter saw about half a dozen rebels arrive in the hotel forecourt in a truck mounted with an anti-aircraft gun. The men ran into the hotel and blocked off access to the elevators as they prepared to search the building room by room.

Foreign journalists who had been trapped for days in the Rixos hotel in the capital had been taken to the Corinthia after their release yesterday.

In a separate incident, a rebel spokesman told Al Arabiya Television that gunmen fought a fierce battle with Gaddafi's top military commander, General Abdul Rahman Al Syd, at his farm in Tripoli yesterday, but it was not clear whether he had been captured.

"He (Syd) is leading the battle with the rebels and he is still inside the farm," the spokesman, Abdel Salam Abu Zaakouk, told the Dubai-based channel without giving further details.

Abu Zaakouk also said that rebels had found Gaddafi's office director, Bashir Saleh, and his four children at a family farm in Tripoli. The spokesman said Saleh had tried to conceal his identity by wearing Sudanese garb.

A Reuters television crew filmed heavy clashes yesterday afternoon on the edge of Gaddafi's Bab al-Aziziya compound, which was ransacked by rebels on Tuesday.

The crew said rebels were seen stepping over the bodies of pro-Gaddafi soldiers as they moved from one building to another trying to clear the area.

The rebels pulled back at sundown, saying they did not want to hurt civilians they believed were caught in the cross fire inside some of the buildings. The rebels vowed to return to fight again in the morning.

Rebels stormed Gaddafi's headquarters on Tuesday, a day after they first entered the Libyan capital following a six-month insurgency.

Gaddafi has fled and Libyan rebels are offering a US\$1.3 million (RM3.9 million) bounty for his capture alive or dead. — Reuters

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