

## Kidnappers deny deal to release reporter

*by UPI*

GAZA - The kidnappers of a BBC journalist in Gaza have denied an earlier deal they made with Hamas to release the correspondent.

Alan Johnston, 45, was kidnapped more than three months ago by a group calling themselves the Army of Islam, the BBC reported, Johnston was the only Western reporter stationed in Gaza.

The Army of Islam reportedly posted a video on the Internet in which Johnston appeared and said he was being treated well.

"The BBC journalist will be released within the next hours, today," Hamas spokesman Abu Osama al-Mouti said at a news conference Sunday in Tehran.

But, the BBC reported, the group later denied the deal, saying Johnston could still be killed, making vague references to "developments" in talks with Hamas.

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