

Iranian nuclear scientist assassinated in Tehran

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Iranian nuclear scientist Professor Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, 32, was killed yesterday in a bomb blast in Tehran. Witnesses saw motorcyclists attach a magnetic explosive device to his car before the blast.

Roshan's bodyguard, who was driving, was also killed, and an 85-year-old passerby was reportedly wounded. The motorcyclists escaped into traffic.

BBC journalists in Tehran reported that the bomb was highly specialized, "a targeted, focused device intended to kill one or two people and small enough not to be heard from far away."

Roshan was a professor at a Tehran technical university and a supervisor at the uranium enrichment facility in Natanz. He had reportedly met with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors a few days before he was assassinated. It was the fourth killing of an Iranian nuclear scientist since 2010.

The US, Israeli and European governments, which are pushing for an oil embargo against Iran to undermine the country's currency and economy, have accused Iran of intending to build nuclear weapons. They have made clear that they would stop at nothing, including war, to prevent Iran from acquiring such weapons. Iran claims that its nuclear program is for peaceful energy-generating and medical purposes.

Tehran Deputy Governor Safar Ali Baratlo blamed the Israeli government for the attack. "The bomb was a magnetic bomb and is the same as those previously used to assassinate scientists, and is the work of the Zionists," he told *Fars News*. He speculated that the killing might also be aimed at discouraging people from voting in the March Iranian parliamentary elections: "It seems the Zionists' efforts are meant to

undermine security ahead of the election, so that the people will not turn out in great numbers."

Israeli sources acknowledged that there is a campaign of assassination directed against Iranian scientists, though they did not explicitly take responsibility for Wednesday's attack. Mickey Segal, a former director of Israel's Iranian intelligence department, said: "Many bad things have been happening to Iran in the recent period. Iran is in a situation where pressure on it is mounting, and the latest assassination joins the pressure that the Iranian regime is facing."

The day before the murder, Israeli military chief Lt. General Benny Gantz issued what was widely seen as a veiled threat that there would be further attacks inside Iran. He told an Israeli parliamentary panel that 2012 would be a "critical year" for Iran, due to "things that happen to it unnaturally."

US officials responded provocatively to the latest instance of terrorism inside Iran by denouncing Tehran. US State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said she had no "information to share one way or the other." Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attacked Iran for its alleged "provocative rhetoric," adding that she wanted to "categorically deny" that the US was involved in acts of violence inside Iran.

These assurances are politically worthless. It is widely acknowledged, even in the pages of the bourgeois press in the United States and allied countries, that the Western powers are mounting a covert terrorist campaign to destroy Iran's nuclear infrastructure.

Theodore Karasik, a security expert at the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis in Dubai, told the *New York Times* that magnetic bombs were "clean, easy, and efficient" and therefore commonly used in covert operations. The *Times* concluded that the

assassination “fit a pattern over the past two years of covert operations by the West and its allies to ‘degrade and delay’ Iran’s nuclear program.”

The right-wing French daily *Le Figaro* wrote that “the US and Israel have carried out multiple acts of sabotage against sensitive nuclear installations, while ordering targeted killings of Iranian nuclear experts.” It cited an Iraqi security official, who said: “[The Israeli intelligence agency] Mossad uses the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region, which has been infiltrated by its agents. The Israelis use Kurdish opponents of the Iranian regime who have fled to Kurdish regions of Iraq.”

There is total silence in the press, however, on the criminal and reckless character of this policy and Washington’s hypocrisy in waging a supposed “war on terror” while supporting terrorist actions against regimes it has targeted for removal. The US and its allies are conducting a campaign of attacks aiming to terrorize Iranian scientists and possibly goad the regime into retaliating in a way that would provide a pretext for a US, Israeli or NATO assault on Iran.

In January 2010, a remote-controlled bomb killed Massoud Ali Mohammadi, a Tehran University nuclear scientist. In November 2010, two car bomb blasts similar to those that killed Roshan yesterday killed Shahid Behest University nuclear engineering professor Majid Shahriyari and wounded Imam Hossein University physics department chair Feredeyoun Abbasi-Davani. In July 2011, gunmen in Tehran shot physicist Dr. Darioush Rezai, who reportedly had helped design switches needed to trigger a nuclear warhead.

There was also a series of unexplained explosions at Iranian military sites. A November 12, 2011 explosion destroyed the Iranian Revolutionary Guard base at Bid Kaneh, killing 17 people. A separate blast last month damaged a facility for enriching uranium in Isfahan.

Tehran also blamed the Western powers for transmitting to Iran the Stuxnet computer virus, which was discovered in late 2010 and badly damaged centrifuges and computer systems at Iranian nuclear facilities, including Natanz. Last February, a video shown at Israeli Lt. General Gabi Ashkenazi’s retirement party reportedly claimed the Stuxnet virus as well as the 2007 bombing of an alleged Syrian nuclear site in the Deir ez-Zor region as Israeli intelligence

successes.

Last month, Art Keller, a former CIA case officer who worked on Iran, told the *Los Angeles Times*: “We are definitely doing that. It’s pretty much the stated mission of the [CIA’s] counter-proliferation division to do what it takes to slow... Iran’s weapons of mass destruction.”

The murder of Roshan brings the Persian Gulf region and the world one step closer to what would be a devastating regional and possibly global war. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told ITAR-Tass yesterday that military action against Iran would be a “grave mistake, a flagrant error” that could “shake the foundations of the international system.”



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