

US, Israel invoke terror to ratchet up war threats against Iran

Bill Van Auken
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Both Washington and Israel have seized upon a string of abortive bomb plots in India, Georgia and Thailand to escalate war threats against Iran.

In India, an unknown individual on a motorcycle attached a bomb to a car in which the wife of an Israeli diplomat was riding in Delhi on February 13. The woman and the car's driver were lightly injured. On the same day in Tbilisi, Georgia, a bomb was discovered attached to an Israeli embassy vehicle and defused.

And in Bangkok, Thailand, three individuals identified as Iranians were arrested after a bizarre incident Tuesday in which explosives detonated inside their apartment and one of them blew off his own legs with a homemade grenade.

The three incidents, in which there were no fatalities, were immediately labeled by the Israeli government as terrorist attacks organized by Tehran that, in the words of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, demonstrated why all nations must draw "red lines against Iranian aggression."

"Iran's terror operations are now exposed for all to see," Netanyahu said during a Knesset [Israeli parliament] plenum on Wednesday. "Iran is undermining the world's stability and harms innocent diplomats."

What was striking about the first two incidents in Delhi and Tbilisi was that they involved the use of devices—bombs attached by magnets to cars—similar to those used to assassinate at least four Iranian nuclear scientists over the past two years.

The reported aim of these attacks has been to sabotage

Iran's supposed quest for a nuclear weapon, although Tehran has denied such aims and neither the International Atomic Energy Agency nor anyone else has provided evidence that Iran is seeking nuclear arms. For its part, Israel is believed to possess some 400 nuclear weapons.

As US intelligence officials and Israeli sources have confirmed, those terrorist attacks—the latest of which claimed the life of Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, a scientist employed at Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment facility, on January 11—were organized by the Israeli spy agency, Mossad, in collaboration with operatives of the MeK, or People's Mujahedin, a group classified by Washington as an international terrorist organization.

Despite Israel's assertions, no officials in any of the three countries that were the scene of the latest incidents have charged the Iranian government with responsibility.

What all three bomb plots appear to have in common is their inept, amateurish character. This was particularly the case in Bangkok, where the three individuals involved made no attempt at concealing their identities—all of them carried Iranian passports, moved into a building close to an Iranian cultural center and then proceeded to blow themselves up.

In Georgia, a government official suggested that a Georgian employee of the embassy may have been targeted for personal reasons.

Why Iran, if it were to seek revenge for Mossad's murder of its scientists, would choose to do it in two friendly Asian countries—India is the world's largest importer of Iranian oil—is far from clear. Nor for that matter does the wife of a low-level diplomat seem a likely target for such retaliation.

One curious piece of information was published in the *Times of India* Thursday. It seems that the chief of Mossad, Tamir Pardo, flew to Delhi just days before the bomb attack as the head of a large delegation of Israeli intelligence agents. While there he held talks with Indian officials on the possible threat of Iranian attacks.

In India itself, there is substantial skepticism about Israel's charges of Iranian culpability in the attack.

As *Times of India* columnist Shobhan Saxena commented Wednesday: "The West, led by the US, has been trying for years to damage India's ties with Iran, our second biggest supplier of oil. Is it a coincidence that this attack happened just about when Iran agreed to take payment in Rupees for the oil it's selling to India? The Rupee payment agreement signalled the total failure of western countries to stop India from doing business with Iran. So, if Delhi terror incident leads to a friction in Delhi-Tehran ties, who benefits? The whole incident has to be seen in this perspective...The only country that benefits is Israel."

In Tehran, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said that the Israeli charges of Iranian government responsibility for the incidents in India, Georgia and Thailand represented "the continuation of the US government's false claims [that Iran had plotted to] assassinate the Saudi Arabian ambassador to Washington."

That alleged plot was floated last October by US Attorney General Eric Holder. It supposedly involved a failed Iranian-American car dealer from Texas being recruited by Iranian agents in Mexico and then made the go-between for the hiring of members of the Mexican drug cartel, Los Zetas, to blow up the Saudi ambassador in a Washington, DC restaurant. Iran denied having anything to do with the supposed plot and its details were so improbable that it was widely dismissed as a fabrication, though it is now being revived by US officials in conjunction with the Israeli accusations.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast denied any Iranian role in the three latest incidents. "The Islamic Republic of Iran regards the Zionist regime's agents as perpetrators of such terrorist actions with criminal and hidden purposes," he said.

Meanwhile in the midst of the steadily escalating campaign of war propaganda by the US, Israel and the mass media, all depicting Iran as the greatest threat to world peace and security, two US intelligence chiefs presented revealing congressional testimony on Thursday.

Defense Intelligence Agency director Lt. Gen. Ronald Burgess told a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee that Iran is unlikely to initiate any war and would only respond if it were attacked.

"Iran can close the Strait of Hormuz at least temporarily, and may launch missiles against United States forces and our allies in the region if it is attacked," he said.

Despite the continuous provocations by Israel and Washington, however, along with an ever-tightening sanctions regime that is itself tantamount to an act of war, Burgess added that "the agency assesses Iran is unlikely to initiate or intentionally provoke a conflict."

Testifying at the same hearing, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper declared it "technically feasible" that Tehran could produce a nuclear weapon in one or two years, "but practically not likely."

In other words, beneath the unrelenting attempts to brand Iran as an aggressor that must be stopped from imminently acquiring nuclear weapons, the assessment of US intelligence is that Iran would only act militarily if attacked and is not even close to challenging Israel's regional monopoly on nuclear bombs.

The lies about "weapons of mass destruction" and terrorism are being used against Iran—just as they were a decade ago against Iraq—to prepare a war of aggression aimed at furthering US imperialism's aim of achieving hegemony over the strategically vital energy producing regions of the Persian Gulf and Central Asia.



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