

Book on Mossad confirms Israel assassinated Iranian nuclear scientists

Jean Shaoul
30 July 2012

Spies Against Armageddon: Inside Israel's Secret Wars states unequivocally that Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, assassinated five of Iran's top nuclear scientists over the last five years as part of a broader campaign aimed at sabotaging the country's nuclear programme.

It is already widely acknowledged that the Western powers are mounting a covert terrorist campaign to destroy Iran's nuclear infrastructure. But new allegations by authors Yossi Melman, a leading Israeli military and intelligence journalist who writes for *Ha'aretz*, and Dan Raviv, a CBS national political correspondent, reveal that the assassinations were all carried out by Mossad operatives who used "safe houses" maintained inside Iran since the Shah's era.

These were not contract killings, but "blue and white" operations—a reference to the colour of Israel's flag. Mossad operatives from Kidon, a unit responsible for assassinations and kidnappings, conducted the murders.

The authors of *Spies Against Armageddon* are not left-wingers seeking to expose Mossad's criminality. They glorify its services to Israel. Melman is on record as supporting an Israeli pre-emptive strike on Iran, penning an article in *Ha'aretz* in April 2009 headlined, "I would advise Netanyahu to attack Iran—Such a move would serve the interests of the West and the Arab world, but they can ill afford to admit it".

The book suggests that most of the assassins were Israelis of Iranian origin who probably held dual nationality and an Iranian passport. Tens of thousands of Iranian Jews left Iran after the 1979 revolution, many moving to Israel. Mossad selected and trained a few of them or their Farsi-speaking children. These agents have been able to access Iran regularly by numerous routes, including the Kurdish region and some of the states in the Caspian Basin, such as Azerbaijan, with which Israel has close relations.

US State Department cables in 2007 released by Wikileaks indicate that Mossad had planned to use its established links with disaffected minority groups in Iran—Baluchi, Azeri and Kurdish minorities, including Islamist groups—to delay Iran's nuclear project. Mossad chief Meir Dagan rejected subcontracting such sensitive missions as assassinations in Iran's capital to mercenaries.

The book makes clear that Washington was well aware of Mossad's campaign of "covert measures" and "counter-proliferation", if not the timing and specific details, so that the White House could preserve deniability.

Last December, nuclear scientist Professor Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, 32, was killed in a car bomb in Tehran after a motorcyclist was seen attaching a magnetic device to his car. The bomb killed Roshan's bodyguard, who was driving the car, and wounded an 85-year-old passerby. Roshan was a professor at a Tehran technical university and a supervisor at the uranium enrichment facility in Natanz. He had met with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors days before he was assassinated.

In January 2010, a remote-controlled bomb killed Massoud Ali Mohammadi, a Tehran University nuclear scientist.

In November 2010, another car bomb blast killed Majid Shahriyari, a professor of nuclear engineering at Shahid Behest University.

An attempt to kill Feredeyoun Abbasi-Davani, the head of the physics department at Imam Hossein University, failed because he jumped out of his car in time.

In July 2011, gunmen in Tehran shot physicist Dr. Darioush Rezai.

Another scientist died supposedly as a result of carbon monoxide from a heater in his home.

There have been 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 massive blast in December 2011 destroyed much of a facility for enriching uranium in Isfahan, killing dozens. One of those who died was Revolutionary Guard Major General Hasan Moghadam, in charge of developing long-range missiles and responsible for liaison with Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Mossad's other strategies included attempts to close down Iran's international supply chain, shipping faulty components, planting a computer virus known as Stuxnet to disrupt the Siemens computerised system that runs centrifuges in Natanz, and two further cyber attacks, including another computer virus called Duqu.

Melman and Raviv recount how Israel's determination to preserve its own monopoly on nuclear weapons in the region was behind its attack on September 6, 2007 on al-Kibar in northeastern Syria. Mossad believed it housed a nuclear reactor designed by North Korea, whose purpose was to produce plutonium as the fissile material for bombs.

The assassinations serve to intimidate scientists and their families. Mossad intelligence believed that some scientists left the programme and scientists from China, Russia, Pakistan and elsewhere turned down invitations to work in Iran.

The assassination and terror campaign is being waged alongside the imposition of a list of sanctions against Iran by the United States, Europe and other powers. Washington has dispatched aircraft carriers to the Persian Gulf, amid bellicose statements insisting that "all options" are on the table. There are constant threats from Israel that it will launch a pre-emptive attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, as it did against Iraq in 1981 and Syria in 2007.

The book also recounts some of Israel's highly illegal efforts to develop its own nuclear weapons arsenal, believed to contain at least 200 warheads with the ability to deliver them by intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarines and aircraft. Israel has never been subject to inspections, as it is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Tel Aviv, with Washington's full backing, routinely denounces Iran as a "state sponsor" of terrorism for providing support to Hamas and Hezbollah, bourgeois nationalist movements that arose in response to Israeli aggression and expansionism, and the Syrian regime of President Assad.

Washington and Tel Aviv accuse Tehran of illegally producing enriched uranium that serves as fuel energy or components for medical uses for nuclear weapons, a much more complicated purification process, without citing any reliable evidence. At the same time, the US has approved India's and Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons outside the framework of the international inspection regime.

For some years, Israel has maintained that Tehran is "just a year away" from being able to produce nuclear weapons. It carries out assassinations, bombings and sabotage campaigns, while the corporate media excuses these crimes and demonises their targets. This is entirely in line with the total silence on the criminal and reckless character of US policy in the region and its hypocrisy in waging a supposed "war on terror" while supporting terrorist actions against regimes it has targeted for removal. Much less will commentators explain the real reasons for the endless provocations against Tehran—US determination to secure its hegemony over the oil-rich Middle East and Caspian region.

Ever since the overthrow of the Shah's regime in 1979, Washington has been determined to end Iran's challenge to US strategic interests. Contrary to expectations, the war on Iraq has served to strengthen Iran's position in the region. This, and the mass movement of the working class that brought down longstanding US allies Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, threatening to destabilise America's allies in the Gulf, have led the US to pursue its agenda against Tehran ever more recklessly.

It has worked with a motley collection of pseudo-liberals, Islamists and ex-regime loyalists to launch a NATO-led war against Libya and now to topple the Assad regime in Syria. In each case, the US is relying on political forces backed by Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, Egypt and Turkey.

Washington is attempting to redraw the political map of the entire Middle East. It threatens not only region-wide conflict, but the involvement of the powers it is trying to exclude from this area of vital geostrategic concern, Russia and China.



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