

# “RUNNING SHORT OF NEW TARGETS”: Israel’s Secret Service is “Cutting Back on Assassinations” in Iran

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Contradicting a recent report in the UK’s authoritative [Sunday Times](#), America’s [Time Magazine](#), quoting unnamed senior Israeli intelligence officials suggests that Israel’s Secret Service the Mossad has, in recent months, been “cutting back” on covert operations inside Iran including the conduct of targeted assassinations.

Ironically, the *Times* and *TIME* contradict one another. *The Sunday Times* in its March 25 issue, stated that Israeli intelligence services had increased their covert activity at the Iranian Parchin military base, allegedly looking for evidence to the effect that Iran was building a nuclear weapon. These Israeli intelligence operations were carried out while Tehran was negotiating with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The IAEA had pressured the Iranians to authorize a visit at that very specific military base. (Julie Lévesque, [Fabricating A “Smoking Gun” To Attack Iran? Israeli Spies Disguised as Iranian Soldiers on Mission Inside Iran](#), Global Research, March 27, 2012)

Another article called [US steps up intelligence, sabotage missions in Iran](#) published by *The Hill* on April 9 seems to corroborate the information revealed by *The Sunday Times*. *The Hill* points to an increase of covert operations in the Islamic Republic by the CIA and its allies in the region. Since the closest U.S. ally in the region is Israel, one can assume that Mossad was participating in those sabotage missions.

Quoting *The Washington Post*, Carlo Munoz writing in *The Hill* reports that:

**American intelligence agencies are ramping up intelligence and sabotage missions focused on Iran’s nuclear program**, just as Tehran prepares to renew talks with Western powers over the effort.

Iranian officials are scheduled to meet with the so-called P5+1 group — the five permanent United Nations Security Council countries plus Germany — on Friday in Istanbul, Turkey, to discuss the country’s nuclear program [...]

The **CIA and other agencies have also ramped up sabotage missions in the country**, geared toward **disrupting Iran’s ongoing nuclear work**.

To do that, the agency has leaned upon its **partnerships with allied intelligence services in the region to recruit operatives for intelligence and sabotage missions inside Iran**, the Post reports. (Carlo Munoz, [US steps up intelligence, sabotage missions in Iran](#), *The Hill*, April 9, 2012.)

*The Washington Post's* account further reveals that the "intelligence effort" was used to increase economic sanctions on Iran:

The **expanded intelligence effort** has coincided with a **covert campaign by the CIA and other agencies to sabotage Iran's nuclear program and has enabled an escalation in the use of [targeted economic sanctions](#) by the United States** and its allies to weaken Iran's resolve [...]

The CIA's expanded efforts continued under director Leon E. Panetta, who built **partnerships with allied intelligence services in the region capable of recruiting operatives for missions inside Iran**, former intelligence officials said. (Joby Warrick and Greg Miller, [U.S. intelligence gains in Iran seen as boost to confidence](#), *The Washington Post*, April 7, 2012.)

These two reports clearly cast doubt on the credibility of the *TIME* report, published on March 30 entitled "[Mossad Cutting Back on Covert Operations Inside Iran, Officials Say](#)".

According to the *TIME* account, the Mossad has reduced its operations in Iran, contradicting the reports of *The Washington Post* and *The Sunday Times*.

However, the most striking aspect of the conflicting *TIME* revelations is not the reduction of the Mossad's covert activities in Iran, but rather the nature of the operations themselves, namely assassinations and attacks, about which *TIME* reports in a very casual manner:

**The reduction runs across a wide spectrum of operations**, cutting back not only alleged **high-profile missions such as assassinations and detonations at Iranian missile bases**, but also efforts to gather firsthand on-the-ground intelligence and **recruit spies inside the Iranian program**, according to the officials. (Karl Vick, [Mossad Cutting Back on Covert Operations Inside Iran, Officials Say](#), March 30 2012.)

Without evidence, Israel has casually been accusing Iran of being responsible for bomb attacks perpetrated recently in Thailand and India, which claimed no lives but wounded 5 people. Rightfully so, these bombings were qualified as terrorist attacks.

However, in the *TIME* report cited above, assassinations and bomb attacks committed by Israel in Iran are not considered to be bona fide terrorist acts. A clear case of double standards.

The article focuses on the alleged reason for the cutbacks, namely the unfortunate consequences of the bombings and assassinations on Israel's "public image". While the report acknowledges that the Mossad has been involved in assassinating Iranian nationals, among others, and committing bombings on Iranian soil, the criminal nature of these actions is never acknowledged:

Iranian intelligence already has cracked one **cell trained and equipped by Mossad**, Western intelligence officials earlier confirmed to *TIME*. The detailed **confession on Iranian state television last year by Majid Jamali Fashid for the January 2010 assassination by motorcycle bomb of nuclear scientist Massoud Ali Mohmmadi was genuine**, those officials said, blaming a third country for exposing the cell.

In that case, the **public damage to Israel** was circumscribed by the limits of Iran's

credibility [...]

**But that could change if the Islamic Republic produced a captured Israeli national or other direct evidence** - something on the lines of the closed circuit video footage and false passports that recorded the presence of **Mossad agents in the Dubai hotel where Hamas arms runner Mahmoud al-Mabhouh was found dead** in his room in January 2010.

Some warn that the **assassinations already run that risk**. After the most recent **killing, of nuclear scientist Mostafa Ahmadi-Roshan** in January, the United States “categorically” denied involvement in the death and issued a condemnation. **Western intelligence officials say he was at least the third Iranian scientist killed by Mossad operatives, who lately are running short of new targets, according to Israeli officials [...]** (*Ibid.*)

On the other hand, in a *TIME* article related to the bombings targeting Israeli nationals in India and Thailand and which were blamed on Iran, *TIME* was adamant on the definition of terrorism:

To be fair, there is no internationally agreed-upon definition of terrorism. But **when bombs start going off, no parsing of words or twisting of definitions is going to stop people from concluding that terrorism has taken place**. (Robert Horn, [Thai Tourism Sector Must Face, Not Dismiss, the Threat of Terrorism](#), February 20, 2012.)

### **Israeli “terrorist team” arrested in Iran**

These conflicting reports pertaining to the number of secret operations in Iran might be an indication that Israel and the U.S. are bluffing and leaking information as part of a psychological operation (PsyOp). But on April 10, the Iranian government claimed to have arrested an Israeli-backed terrorist team, without giving much detail:

The **officials alleged the terrorists were funded and sponsored by Israel and were planning to attack nuclear scientists and nuclear sites in the country**. The terror plan was foiled, the ministry officials were quoted by the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) as saying. (Stephen Manual, [Israel-backed terrorist team arrested in Iran](#), All Voices, April 10, 2012.)

The alleged terror plan acknowledged by Tehran is broadly consistent with the covert operations detailed in the *TIME*. But the Iranians could also be bluffing.

If it is true and the Islamic Republic “produced a captured Israeli national or other direct evidence”, as mentioned in the *TIME* report, this could expand the “limits of [Tehran’s] credibility.” And that, could in turn, backlash on Israel’s “public image”.

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