

## The US-Israeli coup in Beirut

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*The United States and Israel have executed a stealth coup that has precipitated the collapse of Lebanon's unity government.*

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton preemptively torpedoed negotiations between Saudi Arabia and Syria by telling "Saudi King Abdullah and Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri that the U.S. would reject any settlement at the expense of the UN tribunal." (Tehran Times) Clinton knew that the Saudi-Syria team was close to a "breakthrough" that would have resolved contentious issues related to the investigation of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. She could not allow that to happen because it would derail the US/Israeli plan for regime change and another Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

The UN's Special Tribunal for Lebanon—or the STL, as it is called—is a US/Israeli invention designed to tarnish Hezbollah by leveling trumped up charges against its members. Tel Aviv and Washington want to connect Hezbollah to the murder of Rafik Hariri in order to brand the nationalist militia a "terrorist organization." Once the group is convicted on charges of terrorism, Israel will be able to conduct its cross-border attacks with impunity.

According to AFP, the STL's indictments could be delivered (secretly) as soon as Monday and members of Hezbollah will be implicated.

AFP: "Citing sources close to the tribunal, the newspaper said on Saturday that prosecutor Daniel Bellemare will present the findings of his probe into the murder to pre-trial judge Daniel Franssen at a hearing behind closed doors in The Hague, where the tribunal is based for security reasons.

"According to several sources close to the office of the prosecutor, the charges target members of Hezbollah," it said. ("Hezbollah 'expected to be named in Hariri probe'," AFP)

Also, it looks like the US and Israel have decided to cast wider net and use the court to implicate Israel's arch-rival Iran at the same time. This is from Israel's YNet News:

"Sources say UN tribunal will present evidence showing the murder of former Lebanese premier was committed by Iran's Quds force and Hezbollah at Khamenei's order. 'They considered him Saudi agent,' source says.

Sources familiar with the investigation into the assassination of Rafik Hariri in 2005 told Newsmax that the United Nations Special Tribunal for Lebanon will accuse Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei of giving the order to murder the former Lebanese prime

minister, according to the Lebanese website Naharnet.” (“Report: Iran ordered Hariri assassination”, ynetnews.com)

Hezbollah’s Secretary General, Hassan Nasrallah knows the game that the US and Israel are playing, which is why he called for an emergency cabinet meeting last week to see if an agreement could be reached that would settle the matter internally. But current Prime Minister Saad Hariri—who is allied to the White House—rejected the idea leaving Nasrallah no choice but to disband the government and call for new elections.

Hezbollah’s action has been sharply criticized in the western media, but it was perfectly legal within the framework of Lebanon’s constitution. Hezbollah and its allies control more than a third of the cabinet which allows them to dissolve the government whenever they choose. Hariri’s collaboration with Washington forced Nasrallah act in a way that served Lebanon’s greater interests.

Hariri has seriously compromised Lebanese sovereignty by allowing foreign powers to rule on a domestic criminal case. Imagine if the shoe was on the other foot, and Lebanese leaders demanded that the investigation into the assassination of President John F. Kennedy not be conducted by the FBI, but by politically-motivated bureaucrats in Brussels. What American president would ever accept such a demeaning offer?

Hariri should have denounced the STL long ago, and he would have if he was not secretly operating on behalf of the US and Israel. It is worth noting that, according to recently released memos from Wikileaks, high-ranking officials in the Lebanese government collaborated with US diplomats prior to the 34-day war with Israel in 2006 assuring that Lebanese civilians would be killed in the onslaught. Here’s a summary of the memo:

“A classified cable from the US embassy in Beirut has revealed how Lebanon’s ruling March 14 alliance discussed with the US its preparations for a military attack by Israel against its rival Hezbollah....

“According to the dispatch in March 2008, Elias Murr, Lebanon’s defense minister....told US diplomats how in the event of a military attack by Israel on Lebanon, Israel should avoid damaging Lebanese infrastructure in order to stop public opinion turning against the March 14 Alliance, as had happened when Israel invaded Lebanon in the 2006 war...

“If Israel were to bomb areas under Hezbollah control, Murr made clear that the Lebanese armed forces would not intervene. He said in the course of a two and a half hour meeting over lunch, ‘If Israel has to bomb all of these places in the Shiite areas as a matter of operational concern, that is Hezbollah’s problem.’” (“Lebanon government gave covert support for Israeli attack on Hezbollah”, Jean Shaoul, WSWS)

So, there are surely collaborators in the Lebanese government and they are helping the US and Israel to subvert the resolution process, undermine Lebanese sovereignty, exacerbate divisions between the factions, and create a pretext for a future Israeli invasion.

And there’s a bigger picture, too; a plot to lure Hezbollah into seizing power in Beirut. This is precisely what Washington and Tel Aviv are hoping for in order to justify another war. Here’s an excerpt from an article by former US Ambassador Marc Ginsberg on the liberal website Huffington Post:

“Hezbollah may ironically be on the verge of converting its dastardly assassination of Hariri into a golden opportunity to finally seize full power in Lebanon, by deploying its militia to confront Lebanon’s much more ill-equipped armed forces....Lebanon is increasingly becoming a satellite of Iran, and there is nothing Iran wants more than for Hezbollah to emerge as the only power left standing in Beirut, waiting impatiently to do Iran’s bidding as its frontline Frankenstein against Israel.... (“Firestorm among Lebanon’s Cedars, former US Ambassador Marc Ginsberg)

And here’s more-of-the-same from David Eshel in an article titled “Next Israeli-Arab War Could Begin In Beirut”:

“....despite an unprecedented period of calm for Israel right now.....there is a strong possibility of a major escalation of hostilities with two neighbors, Lebanon and Syria.

The flashpoint would be an attempt by Hezbollah to overthrow the Lebanese government, with backing from Syria and Iran. An overthrow could be triggered if an investigation by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) assigns responsibility for the 2005 murder of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri to Hezbollah....

Should Hezbollah gain control of the country, it would absorb the Lebanese military and its assets and be in a position to menace Israel with its own arsenal of 40,000 rockets, many of which are capable of reaching urban areas including Tel Aviv. Political analysts say Israel would not tolerate such a threat, and sporadic battles would erupt on the border, leading to an all-out war with Lebanon that could eventually include attacks by Syria and by Hamas in Gaza.” (“Next Israeli-Arab War Could Begin In Beirut”, David Eshel, aviationweek.com)

And then there’s this from the Israel Project.org in an article titled “Hezbollah aiming for Lebanon takeover”:

“The Iranian-backed Hezbollah organization with its 40,000 rockets aimed at Israel clearly aims to dominate the country and control the selection of its next leader, analysts believe....Now, the fundamentalist Shiite organization may be on the verge of taking over the entire country. Mustapha Alloush, a member of the political bureau of Hariri’s Future Movement told the Washington Post Hezbollah was trying to “rule Lebanon” and annex it for Iran.

With 20,000 trained fighters, Hezbollah is already much more powerful than the Lebanese army and in 2008 demonstrated its superiority by seizing part of the capital, brushing aside the army’s resistance. “There is currently no force within Lebanon able to stand firmly against the physical power of Hezbollah,” wrote Jonathan Spyer, a senior research fellow at the Global Research in International Affairs Center in Herzliya in the Jerusalem Post.

The impending Hezbollah takeover threatens to destabilize the entire region as well as Lebanon itself.... While analysts do not see an immediate outbreak of hostilities with Israel, few doubt that another confrontation is coming some time down the road....” (“Hezbollah aiming for Lebanon takeover”, Alan Elsner, The Israel Project)

So, is this the plan, to lure Hezbollah into seizing power in order to justify another invasion by Israel?

No one knows for sure, but there's a lot about the US/Israeli-backed tribunal that doesn't pass the "smell test".

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