

US Steps Up Covert War Against Iran with yet Another Assassination of a Nuclear Scientist

It's not just an act of war; it's a taunt for response

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The US covert war against Iran raised the stakes even higher today with the assassination of yet another nuclear scientist, with some analysts saying that the Islamic Republic is being pushed into a corner to either back down in its confrontation with the US or retaliate – the latter most certainly triggering an all-out war.

Thirty-two-year-old chemical engineer Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan was inside his small Peugeot car when two assailants on motorbike rode up alongside and planted a magnetic bomb on his vehicle in the capital, Tehran. The scientist was killed instantly by the explosion. His driver died later from injuries. And elderly bystander was also killed in the attack.

Roshan was head of technical procurements at Iran's first uranium enrichment facility at Natanz. His killing bears all the hallmarks of a targeted assassination by foreign covert military agents. Iranian state-owned media and parliamentarians immediately denounced "Mossad", "Zionists" and the Western proxy-terrorist group, the Mujahedine-e Khalq Organisation (MKO), for having a role in the murder.

Such involvement is likely true, but ultimately the author must have been Washington. None of the groups would dare carry out this high-profile hit without clearance from handlers in Washington. Noticeably, Iranian sources shied away from articulating this obvious conclusion, perhaps realizing the gravity of the consequences.

For the past two years at least it is an open secret that Washington (along with British MI6, Mossad and local proxies) has been orchestrating a campaign of terrorist subversion in Iran – the ultimate aim being to overthrow the 33-year-old Islamic Republic, which replaced the West's favourite client, the Shah of Iran in 1979. This is the real reason for the contrived confrontation over Iran's nuclear activities.

Dozens of Iranian scientists, engineers and academics have either been abducted or assassinated by US-led covert ops. Most of them have been closely involved in Iran's nuclear research. Two years ago, Professor Massoud Ali Mohammed was killed when a booby-trapped motorcycle exploded outside his home in Tehran. Last year, in an attack identical to the latest, nuclear scientist Majid Shahriari was murdered when motorcyclists planted magnetic bombs on his car. Another scientist, Fereydoun Abbassi, who is now head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, was seriously wounded in a simultaneous attack.

On 12 November last year, a massive explosion ripped through a military installation at Bid

Kaneh, near Tehran, killing 17 personnel, including Brigadier Hassan Moghadam who is believed to have been a senior missile technician. In that attack, there is suspicion that the explosive payload may have been fired from a CIA aerial drone. Then two weeks later, another explosion hit a nuclear facility in Isfahan, Western Iran.

Combined with CIA cyber-attacks on Iranian research networks and increasing drone incursions into Iranian territory, it is clear that the cold-blooded murder of the country's nuclear experts is part of a deliberate cover campaign of terrorist subversion – orchestrated by Washington.

The latest assassination in Tehran comes only two days after an Iranian court sentenced a former US marine to death after he was convicted of operating in Iran as a CIA spy. That announcement provoked condemnation from the White House and an irate response in the American media. A US state department spokeswoman lashed out at the Iranian regime accusing it of committing routine political abductions of American citizens.

The details on the convicted man, Amir Mirzae Hekmati (28) from Flint, Michigan, seem murky. But it appears that he was given due process since his arrest in August, including access to a lawyer. He has 20 days to appeal the verdict. It should be noted that three other American citizens arrested previously in Iran on suspicion of espionage were eventually released by the Iranian authorities. It has been mooted that the government in Tehran released those detainees as a gesture for diplomatic dialogue with the Obama administration. The rebuff from Washington may have hardened Tehran to push for the full prosecution in the case of Hekmati.

But the wider context is the concerted efforts by Washington to overthrow the Islamic Republic's government headed by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The sentencing of Hekmati is another twist in the spiraling tensions between Iran and the US and its Western allies – tensions that have escalated because of relentless Western aggression over unsubstantiated claims about Iran's nuclear programme. According to Tehran and undisputed by countless UN inspections, Iran's nuclear programme is for civilian energy and medical applications and is legitimately within the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

With tightening US-led sanctions bearing down on Iran's Central Bank and oil industry, the naval war of nerves in the Strait of Hormuz, and the constantly amplified, provocative threats of pre-emptive military strikes against Iran, it is any wonder that Tehran needs to show defiance and assert its sovereign rights with regards to foreign nationals suspected of covert operations.

However, in the climate of hostility, any such move by Tehran is immediately portrayed as a provocation – just as its warning was last week over the closing of territorial waters in the Strait of Hormuz to oil trans-shipments if the West proceeds with sanctions. If the murder of the Iranian scientist is a US strike over the sentencing of the alleged CIA spy, then the Iranians are being told that they have no room for manoeuvre – even when the manoeuvre is covered by a claim to sovereign rights.

It seems that the near decade-long Western confrontation with Iran has now shifted gear to an irrevocable vicious cycle where war is all but inevitable.

The latest murder of a senior Iranian scientist seems to be a trenchant ultimatum dispatched from Washington to Iran. The assassination campaign on Iranian territory against

its citizens and scientific experts is not just as an act of war. It is a premeditated taunt for a response.

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