

Israel Assassinate Syrian General

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The respected publication, [Intelligence Online](#), reported today that Samir al-Sheikh, the Syrian general responsible for intelligence operations in the southern sector bordering the Golan Heights, was assassinated on April 13th. The publication notes that the typical Syrian resistance means of assassination are booby-trapped cars or grenades. This killing was committed with a gun fitted with a silencer, indicating a different likely author of the crime.

The Hezbollah-aligned Al Akhbar [noted](#) that no Syrian resistance groups took responsibility for the killing. It also said:

General al-Sheikh is one of the most senior Syrian army officers who runs the security branch responsible for all the Syrian borders, especially the southern borders with the Golan Heights and occupied Palestine.

While official Syrian sources refuse to comment on the issue, informed security sources told Al-Akhbar that “the assassination of al-Sheikh was done in a professional manner and is very similar to operations conducted by Israeli military intelligence and the Mossad against Syrian officers and scientists.”



Image: Gen. al-Sheikh takes oath of office as new governor of restive Syrian province in 2011. (EPA)

My Israeli source confirms the hit was organized by the Mossad. The general was targeted because recently he'd begun [using Hezbollah fighters](#) (Hebrew) to infiltrate the Golan and mount operations against the IDF. In a separate incident, a [bomb exploded](#) (Hebrew) next to an IDF patrol alongside the military fence wounding four soldiers, one of them severely. These operations were thought to be the work of Gen. al-Sheikh.

Interestingly, there has been no coverage of the Syrian assassination in the Israeli media at all, which suits the Mossad just fine. If they'd wanted this murder known widely as a form of deterrence or boasting, they'd have gone out of their way to leak it to the Israeli media.

Over the past two years, while declaring its neutrality, Israel has mounted six air attacks against Syrian, Iranian and Hezbollah installations and convoys transporting advanced weapons systems. In at least one of these incidents, Israel attempted to destroy some of Russia's most sophisticated air to sea missiles, which were intended for Hezbollah's use in Lebanon. In another attack, Israel killed the IRG's senior commanding general in Lebanon. So though Israel feigns neutrality, and is quite happy to allow Syrians to continue blowing each other apart, it ultimately views Assad as the more potent enemy. Secondly, Israel views the al-Qaeda elements of the Syrian resistance as another enemy, and it has lent a hand in various ways to the Free Syrian Army, which is one of the weaker fighting forces.

Further, Israel has actually sent commando teams into Syrian territory to liaise with Druze rebel fighters. For this reason, Assad has been willing to mount reciprocal attacks against Israeli forces letting them know that he's unhappy with such Israeli intervention. Israel's assassination of one of his senior generals is yet another "message" from Israel about its red lines.

This isn't the first time that Israel assassinated one of Assad's trusted generals. Some years ago, Mohammed Suleiman, who was said to have masterminded construction of the Syrian nuclear reactor and been a key coordinator of weapons transfers from Iran to Hezbollah, was [killed at his beachfront villa](#) by an Israeli team which infiltrated by sea and used a sniper to do the job.

This is part of Israel's standard repertoire of "statecraft." Instead of negotiating with its neighbors to resolve its disputes it pursues its interests out of the barrel of a gun. It does it with the Palestinians, Hezbollah, the Iranians, and in this case, the Syrians.

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