

Israel is Prime Suspect in Lebanon Assassination

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Text of commentary by Mehdi Shakiba'i:

"Israel the prime suspect in Hariri's assassination",

published by the Iranian newspaper E'temad web site (original Persian, translation BBC)

International desk: The terrorist operation committed last evening (Monday (14 February)) in Beirut that resulted in the assassination of Rafiq Baha al-Din al-Hariri, the former prime minister of Lebanon and the architect of that country's new economy, put another twist in the blind knot of the situation in the Middle East. Those who planned, guided and executed that heinous act are hoping that they may calculate their own gains or losses within the framework of their future plans, regardless of the anxieties of the Lebanese people.

The absence of that charismatic figure from the political and economic scene in Lebanon who, despite some differences of views with some influential regional countries, was never prepared to go beyond the circle of diplomatic activities, can help advance the aims of some foreign and international sides in the region. The important point is that Israel can be regarded as the prime suspect (in Hariri's assassination) because it benefits most from Hariri's absence from the political stage in Lebanon.

The assassination of the former prime minister of Lebanon takes place at a time when the division of power in that country is based on ethnic participation. The Lebanese constitution has given the presidency to the Christians, the post of prime minister to the Sunni Muslims, and the chairmanship of the Majlis (parliament) to the Shi'is.

Tel Aviv could be regarded as the number one suspect in yesterday's terrorist operation because of the following reasons:

1. After the UN Security Council Resolution 1559 put forward by France and America was passed, Lebanon was divided between two camps, those in favor of the presence of Syrian forces in Lebanon and those against. As a person who was close to the French President Jacques Chirac, Hariri joined the group that was opposed to the presence of Syrian forces on the Lebanese soil. That split, which incidentally was also based on some form of ethnic division, provided Israel with the opportunity that by assassinating Hariri it could make it appear that he had been assassinated due to his differences with Damascus and the Hizbullah, and in this way to inflame ethnic strife in Lebanon.

2. As (President) George Bush's government in his second term has concentrated its efforts to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in the eyes of Tel Aviv trying to portray an unstable situation in Syria and Lebanon can force Damascus, as the front line of the Arab-Israeli conflict, to retreat from her former positions. Israel is hoping to force Syria to gradually distance herself from the Lebanese Hizbullah as the front line of resistance against Israel.

3. In the eyes of Israeli security and intelligence organizations, the victory of the Iraqi Shi'i alliance (in Iraqi election) could automatically result in strengthening the Shi'is in Lebanon. Therefore, it was essential to disrupt that line of thinking (the unity of Lebanese Shi'is) by creating an event based on sectarian conflict. Hariri's assassination will help the Mossad to implement its aims.

4. The relations between Syria and Russia could have also played some role in yesterday's operations. Tel Aviv regarded the new Damascus-Moscow front, which due to some probable sale of advanced weapons (to Syria) had entered a new phase, as a potential threat. Russian participation in the power equations in the Middle East could have helped to upset the balance of power in the region, something that Washington was not prepared to accept.

5. Tel Aviv has recently increased its activities in Europe against the Lebanese Hizbullah. With the arrival of Silvan Shalom, that regime's foreign minister, in London (today), Tel Aviv is trying to include that movement's name in the list of the so-called terrorist organizations. In this way (presumably as the result of Hariri's assassination), Israel will be able to intensify the volume of her propaganda and psychological war against that movement. One reason for these activities is that, according to the security services of the Zionist regime, HAMAS and Islamic Jihad resistance groups may imitate the methods used by the Lebanese Hizbullah in their confrontation against the Israeli army.

6. The Zionist regime is preparing itself for the forced withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. In order to prepare for the post-withdrawal period, that regime must create some problems for any outside support for the Palestinian groups from beyond Palestinian borders. Syria and the Lebanese Hizbullah as the moral supporters of the Palestinian groups have become the targets of that conspiracy.

7. The activities of the Israeli foreign intelligence organization (the Mossad) have been so extensive during the past few months that even the second television channel of that regime has recently criticized that organization. It has accused Mayer Dunman (phonetic), the head of that organization, of dangerous adventurism, because it had tried to assassinate Khalid Mash'al, the political leader of the Hamas, inside Syrian territory, without thinking of its negative consequences.

Consequently, one can regard that organization (the Mossad) of involvement in yesterday's adventurism in Beirut.

Source: E'temad web site, Tehran, in Persian 15 Feb 05

BBC Monitoring

Summary of article entitled

"The Syrian MIG Planes Downed by Israel, the Assassination of Hariri, and All-out

War” ,

Feb 15, 2005

by Ibrahim Karagul

Yeni Safak, Ankara

Columnist Ibrahim Karagul suggests links between the assassination of Former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, the recent defeat of the pro-Syrian Lebanese government, and “the plan to fuel divisive sentiments in Lebanon. ” He claims that the killing of Hariri might touch off a civil war in Lebanon and that rather than being independent developments, the division of Iraq, the growing tension in Syrian-Lebanese relations, the Israeli preparations to “wage war” on HAMAS and Hezbollah, the accession to power of Mahmoud Abbas in “Palestine” and the US plan to hit strategic targets in Iran are all interrelated parts of the US-Israeli plan detailed in the policy paper entitled “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm.”

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