

Saudi Crown Prince Ordered Khashoggi's Murder, CIA Concludes

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There never was any doubt about it all along. No one dares circumvent Saudi crown prince Mohammad bin Salman's (MBS) authority over most everyone.

Doing it risks ending up like Khashoggi.

MBS is de facto Saudi ruler. What he says goes on virtually all affairs of state, including decisions on life and death.

So-called Saudi courts do his bidding. So do all others in the kingdom except for his father king Salman – in poor health, why he effectively abdicated authority to his favorite son.

A previous article suggested MBS is damaged goods, too incompetent to succeed his father as king, perhaps unacceptable to the West – given repeated policy blunders, Khashoggi's murder the latest example.

Since appointed crown prince in June 2017, MBS consolidated power by eliminating potential rivals, solidifying control over kingdom domestic and geopolitical affairs – including its economy, foreign relations, military, interior ministry, and intelligence/security apparatus.

Did his power grab overstep? Did it destabilize the kingdom? Was Khashoggi's abduction and murder a glaring example of incompetence? Will it be his undoing?

It created an international uproar, continuing nearly seven weeks after the October 2 incident.

His elevation to power displaced Mohammad bin Nayef as heir to the Saudi throne, a Western intelligence favorite.

Some of Riyadh's closest allies believe he's too reckless and untrustworthy to lead the kingdom. The CIA and Britain's MI6 may want him replaced.

With international guarantees for his safety, dissident prince Ahmad bin Abdulaziz, king Salman's younger brother, returned to the kingdom from London.

Was it to challenge MBS as crown prince with CIA/MI6 support? Was it because both spy agencies want him replaced?

Will Abdulaziz succeed him as crown prince or be involved in selecting someone else to become future Saudi king?

According to the neocon/CIA-connected Washington Post, the NYT, Wall Street Journal, Reuters, and other major media, Langley concluded with high confidence, after examining relevant evidence, that MBS bears full responsibility for ordering Khashoggi's elimination.

Claims by Saudi foreign minister Jubeir and other regime officials, absolving MBS for the murder, are fabricated like all other kingdom versions of what happened to Khashoggi.

It's significant that the CIA refuted the White House and Riyadh in its conclusion about his murder, a major development.

Since the October 2 incident, Riyadh shifted from one phony explanation about his murder to another, clear evidence that nothing the regime says is credible.

The Wall Street Journal said the CIA's conclusion about Khashoggi's murder "may endanger President Trump's efforts to protect ties with Prince Mohammed," adding:

US officials familiar with the issue stress that Khashoggi's murder "would not and could not have happened" without MBS' involvement and authorization.

A statement by a spokesperson in Riyadh's Washington embassy denied the CIA's conclusion, saying "(t)he claims in this purported assessment are false. We have and continue to hear various theories without seeing the primary basis for these speculations."

Langley, Trump's spokeswoman, and the State Department declined to comment. Reuters said the CIA briefed the White House and Congress on its assessment of what happened to Khashoggi.

Its conclusion is the most damning one so far, linking MBS directly to Khashoggi's murder - what Trump, EU leaders, and others have gone all-out to prevent, wanting nothing interfering in dirty business as usual with the kingdom.

Damning intelligence comes from Turkish obtained audio recordings of what happened to Khashoggi inside Riyadh's Istanbul consulate, along with Ankara's forensic evidence.

Reports drip-fed what's known to Turkish and international media almost daily since the killing, refuting fabricated Saudi explanations about the incident.

Over two weeks elapsed after Khashoggi's October 2 disappearance before Riyadh admitted his elimination, one fabricated version of what happened after another.

None are credible - from an interrogation gone wrong to premeditated murder to killing him after failing to persuade him to return to the kingdom to saying he died from a lethal injection.

Turkish audio and forensic evidence refute all of the above - indicating Khashoggi was murdered straightaway after entering the Istanbul consulate, his body believed dismembered and dissolved in hydrofluoric acid.

He was suffocated to death by a bag over his head to cut off air. His final words were "I'm suffocating. Take this bag off my head."

How Trump and other world leaders intend dealing with the CIA's conclusion remains to be

seen.

One thing is clear. The world community won't let Khashoggi's murder change longstanding relations with Riyadh – not as long as the kingdom is oil-rich and super-wealthy.

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