

US Air Strike on China's Embassy in Belgrade in 1999 was Deliberate

The attack planned as a "decapitation" attack, intended to kill Milosevic

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Highly-placed NATO sources have confirmed the reason behind the US air strike – with three Tomahawk cruise missiles – against the Embassy of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Belgrade, (then) Yugoslavia, on May 7, 1999. The then-Clinton Government of the United States said at the time that the strike was accidental, due to faulty maps and intelligence, but this has been disproven by the NATO sources.

The NATO sources told Defense & Foreign Affairs that the attack was based on intelligence that then Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic was to have been in the Embassy at the time of the attack. The attack, then, was deliberately planned as a “decapitation” attack, intended to kill Milosevic.

The London Observer, on October 19, 1999, had said that the attack had been deliberate, noting: “... Politiken newspaper in Denmark and Ed Vulliamy cites senior military and intelligence sources in Europe and the US stating that the embassy was bombed after its NATO electronic intelligence (ELINT) discovered it was being used to transmit Yugoslav army communications.

“Supportive evidence is provided by three other NATO officers – a flight controller operating in Naples, an intelligence officer monitoring Yugoslav radio traffic from Macedonia and a senior headquarters officer in Brussels.

“All three say they knew in April that the Chinese embassy was acting as a “rebro” (rebroadcast) station for the Yugoslav army. The embassy was also suspected of monitoring NATO's cruise missile attacks on Belgrade, with a view to developing effective countermeasures.”

The Clinton Administration blamed the attack on inaccurate intelligence information provided by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), alleging that the three missiles, which landed in one corner of the PRC embassy block, had been meant to target the Yugoslav Federal Directorate for Supply and Procurement (FDSP). US Defence secretary William Cohen said at the time: “One of our planes attacked the wrong target because the bombing instructions were based on an outdated map.” Sources within the US National Imagery and Mapping Agency reacted with anger at the allegation that their mapping had been at fault.

Moreover, it was clear that Clinton appointee George Tenet, the CIA Director at the time, was involved in the deception operation built around the failed assassination attack.

There was widespread disbelief of the US Clinton Administration claim that the attack was “accidental”, but no accurate background information as to why the attack against the Embassy was scheduled. The rationale cited by The Observer was not the true cause of the targeting.

In July 1999, then-CIA Director Tenet testified in Congress that out of the 900 targets struck by NATO during the three-month bombing campaign, only one was developed by the CIA: the PRC Embassy.

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