

# Washington's Assassination Bureau. What Exactly Did Ayman al-Zawahiri Do?

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*I often complain that Washington's heavily lopsided relationship with Israel is an arrangement that brings absolutely no benefit to the American people, and even less to our national security as it has involved the US in an endless series of completely avoidable conflicts. But there is one exception to that generalization, though one hesitates to call it a benefit, consisting of the White House's adoption of the Israel practice of referring to opponents as "terrorists." Israel uses it as a generic cover designation to denigrate and humiliate the Palestinians while also delegitimizing their resistance, permitting them to torture and kill Arabs at will, destroy their homes, and bomb them mercilessly. Washington, which claims to be the font of a "rules based international order" as well as the defender of global "democracy" and "freedom," has developed since 9/11 an unfortunate tendency to do the same thing as the Israelis to justify its attacks on civilians and its brutal assassination policies.*

In fact, [the US and Israel](#) are generally speaking the only two countries that openly use "targeted assassination" as a political tool without even bothering to fall back on "plausible denial" to conceal their actions. Israel only last week, initiated a politically motivated bombing attack on Gaza, which killed 45 civilians, including seventeen children and destroyed numerous homes. No Israelis were killed or even injured when the Gazans struck back with their home-made rockets. Both the White House and leaders in the US Congress congratulated the Israelis for "exercising their right to defend themselves."

The [principal targets](#) of the Israeli onslaught were two Islamic Jihad leaders whom both Israel and the international media have described as "terrorists" and "militants." The Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid described the operation as successful as the two men were reported killed. A retired Israeli general went so far as [to describe the massacre](#) as "really clean, very nice" and an "exceptional achievement."

The Israeli action recalls [the recent assassination](#) of Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The media coverage described how the Agency relentlessly stalked al-Zawahiri, described as the mastermind of 9/11, eventually learning that the 71-year-old was living in a house in an upscale Kabul neighborhood. It was also determined that he spent most days sitting on a terrace at the top of the house. The hellfire drone that killed him targeted the terrace at the time of day when he was normally sitting outside. Taliban sources report that his body was torn apart and incinerated by the two missiles that apparently struck him.

The White House is, of course, framing the assassination as a great success, a major blow in the war against terror. Joe Biden is hoping that it will improve the administration's dismal approval ratings in the lead-up to the November elections, but the information given to the media regarding the incident praising the CIA's tenacity and professional expertise is perhaps a bit over the top. Alternative reports from Afghanistan suggest that al-Zawahiri was living quite openly in Kabul and that he has not been active in any presumably radical activities for many, many years [beyond making](#) a number of "conspiracy theory" videos. Both al-Zawahiri and al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden were, at the times when they were assassinated by the US, leading quiet lives with little protection even though they allegedly continued to be nominal leaders of al-Qaeda, an organization that had lost its *raison d'être* years before.

Al-Zawahiri's record as a terrorist comes largely from US and UK intelligence sources as well as media innuendo, which should be automatically considered unreliable. Recall for a moment the lying that the George W. Bush administration engaged in to go to war with Iraq, with folks like Condoleezza Rice speaking of mushroom clouds spewing radiation over the US and a shop in the Pentagon run by a group of neocons producing fabricated intelligence reports. What has been confirmed from independent sources is that al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian medical doctor, was savagely tortured by the secret police during a crackdown on political dissidents initiated by US puppet President Hosni Mubarak. The torture reportedly radicalized him, and he joined Osama bin Laden's underground group, later apparently becoming its nominal leader after bin Laden was himself killed in May 2011 by US Navy Seals. Much of the rest of al-Zawahiri's presumed biography relies on little in the way of actual evidence.

What actually happened on 9/11 and who was behind it remains somewhat a mystery as all the apparent perpetrators of which might have occurred are dead. Consider for a moment that Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri never actually admitted that their group al-Qaeda was the perpetrator of the attack. In fact they denied it, sometimes attributing it to other radicalized Saudi Arabian underground groups. Nor is there any actual evidence that they planned the attack. They were accused because they had the claimed track record, resources, motive and possible access to carry out the incident, not because there was any real evidence that they had done the deed. When the US approached the Taliban government of Afghanistan in late 2001 and demanded that bin Laden be turned over to American law enforcement, the Afghans responded that bin Laden was a guest in their country, but they would surrender him if Washington could demonstrate that he had organized and ordered the attacks. George W. Bush's Pentagon and the CIA apparently could not make that case based on actual evidence, leading to the decision to go to war instead.

Also, of all the hundreds of "terrorist" prisoners that have been recycled through [the US](#)

[military prison at Guantanamo](#) only five have ever been charged with any involvement in 9/11. They are still being held but have never been tried and it is quite possible the case against them can never be made. They might even be completely innocent.

And there is more to the story. Bin Laden could have been arrested and tried but the Barack Obama administration decided to kill him and dump his body at sea, presumably to avoid a courtroom drama that would reveal government malfeasance. And then there are Anwar Nasser al-Awlaki and his son Abdulrahman, both of whom were American citizens killed by CIA drones in Yemen, where their family originated. The al-Awlakis may or may not have been actual members of al-Qaeda, but the elder al-Awlaki's sermons and writings certainly inspired groups that opposed US foreign policy's hostility towards Muslims. It is widely believed that Anwar al-Awlaki could have been captured and tried in the US if an attempt to do so had been pursued, but instead the Obama Administration again decided that he should be killed.

Finally, there is the death by drone of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani in January 2000 under President Donald Trump. In a recent book, Trump's Defense Chief Mark Esper [claims that](#) Trump lied after the assassination was criticized by saying that Soleimani was actively preparing "terror" attacks on four American Embassies in the Mideast region. Esper confirms that there was no intelligence to back up that claim, but interestingly goes beyond that to make clear that there was no specific intelligence at all suggesting that such an attack was imminent or even being planned. There were only generic regional security threats that many embassies in the world respond to and make preparations to defend against.

The Esper claim is supported by the Iraqi government itself, which declared that Soleimani, widely regarded as the second most powerful official in Iran after the Ayatollah, was in Baghdad to discuss peace arrangements and that the US Embassy had been informed of his planned trip and had raised no objection to it. Instead, the US used the opportunity to launch an armed drone to kill him and nine Iraqi militia members that were accompanying him from the airport. In other words, there was no imminent threat, nor even a plausible threat, and the US went ahead anyway and killed a senior Iranian government official in a targeted assassination.

So, the United States and Israel have a formula down pat whereby they can kill anyone anywhere without any due process or rule of law, even if they don't know who you are as in the cases of the "signature" or "profile" executions by drone in Afghanistan. And all the presidents and senior officials know that no matter what they do there will be no accountability. All one has to do is call it terrorism prevention, which might include citing terrorist attacks that can in no way be linked by way of actual evidence to the person being killed. Once a terrorist, always a terrorist, repeat as needed, and the public and media will swoon with pleasure at being so well-protected. And, as the Israeli general described it, the end result will be "really clean, very nice" an "exceptional achievement."

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