



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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At U.N., Netanyahu Warns of Iranian Nuclear Threat

Iran's Cyber Warfare Commander Killed in Suspected Mossad Assassination

Mojtaba Ahmadi, who served as commander of the Iranian Cyber War Headquarters, was found dead in a wooded area near the town of Karaj, north-west of the capital, Tehran.

Five Iranian nuclear scientists and the head of the country's ballistic missile program have been killed since 2007. The regime has accused Israel's intelligence agency, the Mossad, of carrying out the assassinations.

Western officials said the information was still being assessed, but previous deaths have been serious blows to Iran's security forces. Tighter security measures around leading commanders and nuclear scientists have instilled a culture of fear in some of the most sensitive parts of the security establishment.

The last victim of a known assassination was Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, a chemist who worked in the uranium enrichment plant at Natanz. He died when an explosive device blew up his car in January of last year.

The death of Ahmadi, a leading specialist in cyber defenses, could be an extension of this campaign of subterfuge. Iran has been accused of carrying out a number of cyber attacks detected in the West.

The killing of Ahmadi coincides with a new diplomatic effort by Hassan Rouhani, Iran's newly elected leader. He has voiced the hope that Iran's confrontation with America and the leading Western powers over its nuclear ambitions can be settled within months.
[theguardian]



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sought to shred the credibility of Iran's new president, using his annual speech at the United Nations to cast the Iranian as a man who could not be trusted and to press the international community to keep up sanctions to prevent Iran from building a nuclear bomb. Clearly concerned that

the Iranian president, Hassan Rouhani, had succeeded in portraying himself as a friendly and pragmatic leader during his visit to New York, Mr. Netanyahu focused the majority of his 33-minute address on Mr. Rouhani. He described Mr. Rouhani as a beguiling figure who used reassuring words to mask malevolent intentions.

Only "tough sanctions and credible military threats," Mr. Netanyahu said, will compel Mr. Rouhani to negotiate. Iran has repeatedly said uranium enrichment is its legal right and that the country's nuclear ambitions are peaceful.

"I wish I could believe Rouhani, but I don't," Mr. Netanyahu told the General Assembly, where Iran's seats were vacant in apparent response to Israel's boycott of Mr. Rouhani's speech a week earlier. "Because facts are stubborn things and the facts are that Iran's savage record flatly contradicts Rouhani's soothing rhetoric."

The contrast in tone between Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Rouhani was stark. Unlike the Iranian, who smiled during his address at the same podium and sought to appear conciliatory, the Israeli prime minister was low on smiles, high on sarcasm. Mr. Rouhani did not mention Israel by name, nor its prime minister; Mr. Netanyahu spoke the Iranian president's name 25 times.

Mr. Netanyahu compared a nuclear-armed Iran to 50 North Korea. He suggested that Iran's behavior resembled those of Europe's fascist dictatorships of the 20th century. In seeking sanctions relief, Mr. Netanyahu said, Mr. Rouhani "thinks he can have his yellowcake and eat it too."

Mr. Netanyahu also said that the sanctions, which have deeply affected Iran's economy, were precisely what had driven Iran to appear more flexible about making a deal. "That's why Rouhani got elected in the first place," Mr. Netanyahu said. "That's why he launched his

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Construction Approved for High-Speed Train Between Tel Aviv and Eilat

Israel's cabinet has approved construction of a new high-speed train line between Tel Aviv and the southern port city of Eilat. The electrified rail line will reach top speeds of 186 miles per hour, allowing it to complete the trip in two and a half hours, reducing travel time from four or five hours by car or bus. The 220-mile long route will include 63 bridges and five tunnels. An estimated 5 million passengers a year are expected to ride the train once it goes into operation.

"For 63 years, there has been talk about linking up the periphery to the center, but nothing has been done," said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, adding that the new rail line would "change the face of the country." He emphasized the line's advantages as an overland route for passenger and cargo traffic. "We have the ability to create an alternative transportation route that bypasses the Suez Canal – this is an insurance policy," he said.

A team led by the Prime Minister's Office Director-General Harel Locker is considering various funding options for the project, and is expected to make a recommendation to the government within 90 days. Transportation Minister Yaakov Katz, who submitted the proposal to the cabinet, said he had reached an agreement with his Chinese counterpart to pursue cooperation between the two countries on transportation projects, including the new train line to Eilat. Katz said the line should be complete within five years of its authorization. It will constitute a significant step toward the government's goal of connecting the north and south of the country with the more heavily populated central regions.

Finance Ministry officials, however, objected to Katz's proposal that the project be carried out by China. Labor party leader Shelly Yachimovich also criticized the transportation minister's intention to entrust the project to China, which would involve importing thousands of foreign workers from China to construct the project. "The Chinese will doubtless be deeply grateful to Transportation Minister Israel Katz, but the government's first responsibility is to its citizens," she said.

The railway's proposed route can be divided into three parts: Beersheba–Dimona, Dimona – Mount Tzin, and Mount Tzin – Eilat. The line would connect to the existing railway to Beersheba. The track will be out of range from most rockets fired from Gaza.

The approved route was chosen after consultation regarding its expected environmental impact. Planners hope to mitigate the train's environmental effects using tunnels and bridges. Environmental protection activists have warned that the planned route will run through wildlife reservations and hiking trails.

[Haaretz.com, Wikipedia, and Arutz Sheva]



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- Rabbi Scolnic

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(Continued from page 1)

charm offensive."

Mr. Netanyahu said the international response to Iran's entreaties for sanctions relief should be "distrust, dismantle and verify," and he repeated his warnings that Israel reserved the right to strike Iran's nuclear facilities preemptively if it deemed the Iranians were close to producing nuclear weapons. He mentioned Mr. Obama only once, praising him for insisting that Iran take concrete steps to back up its words. But in contrast to the display of unity during Mr. Netanyahu's meeting with Mr. Obama at the White House, the Israeli leader hinted at their differences. "If Israel is forced to stand alone, Israel will stand alone," Mr. Netanyahu said.

Mr. Netanyahu's address, the last of the General Assembly's opening session, served as a bookend to a conclave that had been dominated by the Iranian nuclear issue and Iran's aggressive diplomatic outreach. Mr. Rouhani blitzed New York with closed-door meetings, public addresses and television interviews, all the while seeking to convey his desire to resolve the nuclear standoff with the West swiftly.

Mr. Netanyahu declared that Mr. Rouhani was no different from any other president of Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. "They've all served that same unforgiving creed, that same unforgiving regime," he said.

[NY Times]