

WHAT NISMAN SAID ABOUT IRAN

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By Richard Horowitz

"It can be said with certainty that the highest-echelon Iranian government officials were directly responsible for the AMIA attack . . . We will show that said officials made the decision to carry out the attack, defined the manner in which it was to be implemented, and instructed the terrorist organization Hezbollah to carry out the operation in its capacity as a mere instrument, in this case, of the will of the Teheran government . . . We will also show that for Iran's leaders, there was nothing unusual or exceptional about the realization of an attack of this nature. To the contrary: an analysis of the information that has been gathered in this case shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that the realization of acts of terrorism abroad was not the outgrowth of an unusual foreign policy instrument, but was instead based on the principles of the Iranian revolution of February 1979, the ultimate goal of these principles being to propagate Iran's fundamentalist view of Islam throughout the world."

The Nisman Report (2006)

The investigation of the July 18, 1994 bombing of the Israeli-Argentine Mutual Aid Association (AMIA) which killed 85 and injured 300 was assigned to then Argentinean attorney general Alberto Nisman in February 2005. Prior to Nisman, Judge Juan José Galeano headed the investigation though was dismissed from this position in December 2003. In March 2012, it was announced that Galeano, along with former Argentine president Carlos Menem, president during the bombing, two former heads of the Argentine intelligence service, and two former Argentine police commanders, were to stand trial for obstructing the investigation. In 2013 Menem was sentenced in a separate matter for arms smuggling

On October 25, 2006, Nisman released his [674-page report](#) (co-authored by district attorney Marcelo Martínez Burgos) concluding that Iran executed the AMIA attack. On January 18, 2015 his dead body was found in his apartment. The next day he was to have testified before the Argentine Congress that President Christina Kirchner and Foreign Minister Hector Timerman, obstructed his investigation into Iranian involvement in the attack in order to secure an oil deal with Iran. Four days prior to his death, Nisman presented a [289-page report](#) to an Argentinean court stating "The deliberate decision to cover up the Iranian nationals accused of having perpetrated the terrorist

attacks of 18 July 1994” was taken by Kirchner and Timerman. A draft of an arrest warrant for them prepared by Nisman was found at his home after his death.

On February 14, 2015 Nisman’s replacement, Gerardo Pollicita, accused Kirchner and Timerman of the same charges Nisman had been preparing, though two weeks later an Argentine judge dismissed the case against them. On March 3, Pollicita appealed the dismissal.

The 2006 Nisman report cites Iran on nearly every page and issued arrest warrants for eight suspects—Iran’s then president Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, the nation’s foreign minister and minister of intelligence and security, the commanders of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards and the Guard’s Quds Force, two Iranian embassy diplomats in Buenos Aires, and Imad Mughniyeh, head of Hezbollah’s international operations, suspected by the United States of executing the 1983 Beirut marine barracks attack that killed 241. On March 15 2007, [Interpol issued arrests warrants](#) for these suspects except for Iran’s former president and foreign minister. According to the [Washington Post](#), the United States and Israel assassinated [Imad Mughniyeh](#) in a joint operation in Syria in 2008.

To date, no one has been arrested or extradited to Argentina. As Nisman wrote: “The uncooperative and oftentimes manifestly evasive attitude on the part of Iranian officials in response to repeated complaints lodged by Argentine authorities has further confirmed that our suspicions of Iranian involvement in the AMIA attack are justified.”

THE AMIA ATTACK AND IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

The Nisman report concluded that (a) the idea for the AMIA attack originated with Iran’s Office of Intelligence and Security headed by Iran’s president and comprised of Iran’s foreign minister and the commander’s of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard and its Quds Force; and (b) the decision to execute the AMIA attack was taken by Iran’s Committee for Special Operations composed of Iran’s Supreme Leader, its president, foreign minister, and intelligence minister, at a meeting held in the Iranian city of Mashad on August 14, 1993. The two Iranian diplomats in Buenos Aires were “summoned” to attend the meeting. Nisman noted that Iran’s ambassador to Argentina left the country on June 30, his deputy on July 8, and that Iran’s ambassadors to Chile and Uruguay left these countries the day before the July 18 attack.

The report “deem[ed] it an established fact that the main driver of the decision to carry out the AMIA bombing was the [November 1992] unilateral cancellation of Argentina’s nuclear technology transfer contracts with Iran.” The report explained: “Although Iran was a signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and had signed a safeguards

agreement with the IAEA, there were concrete indications that Iran had non-peaceful plans for its nuclear capacities." Nisman referred to a report by Argentina's Secretariat of Intelligence quoting a sermon given by then Iranian President Rafsanjani: "The Jews (that migrate to Israel) should expect the 'exodus in reverse' to occur, since one day the tumor will be cut out of the body of the Islamic world and then millions of Jews that have migrated to Israel will once again be stateless . . . The imperialist strategy will be stopped dead in its tracks because the use of just one atomic bomb inside Israel will wipe it from the face of the earth."

EXPORTING THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

The Nisman report underscores Iran's intention to spread the Islamic revolution through the use of terrorism. One section of the report is entitled "Methods Used by the Government of Iran to Export the Islamic Revolution."

"There is a clear dichotomy between Iran's foreign policy activities that it conducted openly through normal diplomatic channels, and those which it conducted undercover through illegal actions such as the AMIA attack." The report cites the preamble to the Iranian constitution, that the constitution "shall pave the way for perpetuation of this [Islamic] revolution within and outside the country...the constitution seeks to lay the groundwork for the creation of a single world nation...the army of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the troops of the Revolutionary Guard will be...entrusted with the task of not only protecting and preserving our borders, but also an ideological mission, that is to say, Jihad in the name of God and the world." The report concludes: "[Iran's] doctrine of exporting revolution...does provide a theoretical and ideological justification that allows for the use of violence in specific cases in which violence is necessary in order to further the regime's strategic objectives."

A section of the report analyzing "other terrorist acts attributed to Iran" states "This evidence constitutes the most compelling proof that the Iranian regime has systematically resorted to violence in its efforts to export the Iranian revolution...the verbal excesses and veiled threats that Iran's leadership directs every so often toward its opponents and the government of Israel are more than just verbiage: they translate into concrete criminal acts"

The Nisman report highlighted Iran's "strategy aimed at spreading the ideas of the Iranian revolution to Latin America." In May 2013 Nisman published a 500-page report devoted to Iran's efforts in Latin America, stating that Iran has developed "local clandestine intelligence stations designed to sponsor, foster, and execute terrorist

attacks." On July 9, 2013, a subcommittee of the House Homeland Security Committee held a hearing entitled "Threat to the Homeland: Iran's Extending Influence in the Western Hemisphere," noting that Argentine's President Kirchner's prohibited Nisman from appearing to testify at the hearing.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

The Nisman report presents additional reasons why Iran attacked Argentina and AMIA. "Witness A stated that the criteria for selecting target countries included how close their ties were with Israel and the U.S., and how the greatest harm could be inflicted on the Jewish people." Elsewhere the report states that Iran "has proclaimed itself the mother country of world Islam and is the Middle East's most prominent proponent of antisemitic ideologies."

According to the Nisman report, the Mid-East peace process was among Iran's concerns in choosing its target: "Iran attempted to undermine and if possible sabotage the Middle East peace process, faced as it was with mutual recognition by Israel and the PLO, the subsequent negotiations between the parties to the Arab-Israel conflict, and the possibility of Iran's becoming isolated vis-a-vis the other countries of the Islamic world that had signed Middle East peace treaties in the early 1990s."

The Nisman report quoted from a book by Yves Bonnet, a former head of the French DST intelligence service: "Teheran is opposed to peace 'out of fear of seeing itself transformed into the next center of attention of the international community. 'If the Palestinian problem is resolved once and for all' Khamenei has stated, 'the U.S. will turn its attention to the main task, which is fighting against Islamic movements'"

The Nisman report stated that for Iran, Argentina was "a suitable place to which to extend the Middle East conflict and quoted former Iranian president Abolhassan Bani Sadr: "[Iran's] attacks constitute a message aimed at the Arab world, in order to show the Palestinians and the Arabs that Iran is present, inasmuch as the current regime plans to make itself the leader of the Islamic world." The Nisman report cited an Argentine intelligence report stating that for Iran, Argentina "will serve as a center from which Islam and its ideology will spread to the northern part of Latin America."

OTHER IRANIAN TERRORIST ATTACKS

The Nisman report analyzes the findings of several other terrorist attacks ascribed to Iran, focusing primarily on three attacks, in Switzerland, France, and Germany, occurring prior to the AMIA attack.

Kazem Radjavi (Switzerland)

Swiss authorities concluded that Iran assassinated one of its former diplomats, Kazem Radjavi, near Geneva on April 24 1990. Nisman quoted Swiss investigators: "We are convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that one or more Iranian government bodies were involved in the assassination of Kazem Radjavi." A Swiss judge relied on its government report describing the contents of the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence file on this assassination: "the idea of assassinating the representative of the Iranian resistance in Switzerland was elaborated by the Ministry of Intelligence and was adopted by the Supreme Security Council, which was headed by [president] Rafsanjani himself."

A Swiss court issued an arrest warrant for Ali Fallahian, then Iran's intelligence ministers and one of the eight suspects for which Nisman issues an arrest warrant in the AMIA attack.

Chapour Bakhtiar (France)

Chapour Bakhtiar was the last Iranian president under the Shah and the secretary-general of an Iranian resistance movement when he was assassinated in Paris on August 8, 1991. According to Nisman, "The French court's proceeding clearly show that the assassins were not only acting under the protection and aegis of the Iranian government, but were also faithfully executing instructions from Iran's leaders to commit murder. The fact that the highest ranking officials of the Iranian government were responsible for planning, providing weapons for, and carrying out this highly selective assassination is clearly indicated by the obvious benefit resulting from the disappearance of one of the main political opponents of the Islamic regime."

Nisman quoted French authorities: "In reality, it is clear that the activities realized by Mr. Bakhtiar in Iran prior to his exile and those that he realized in France were the reason for his assassination"

Mykonos Restaurant (Germany)

Iran assassinated four Iranian-Kurdish opposition leaders at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin on September 17, 1992. The trial of the assassins lasted from 1993 to 1997, producing much information about how Iran plans and executes terrorist attacks.

Nisman quoted the Berlin court in describing how Iran decided on the Mykonos attack: "The first measures that gave rise to the subsequent decision to commit murder were taken by Ali Fallahijan in his capacity as minister of Vevak [Intelligence]."

The Nisman report relied on additional material from the Berlin court in the Mykonos trial.

“With regard to [the Mykonos] case, the Superior Court of Berlin stated that president Rafsanjani was a member of the committee that was empowered to approve the final decision to assassinate opponents of the Iranian regime,” adding, “The Superior Court of Berlin reached a similar conclusion in the Mykonos case, stating that the sole function of the Special Affairs Committee was to make decisions to carry out terrorist operations.”

“The German court’s ruling is significant in that it clearly states that the murders were not committed for personal reasons, but on the contrary were the result of a decision made by the Iranian government with a view to furthering its own interests.”

“In its ruling on the Mykonos case, the Superior Court of Berlin stated the following in reference to fatwas: ‘The decisions adopted by the Committee for Special Operations entailed the execution of specific operations, particularly abroad. If the operation in question involved an assassination, in his capacity as political instance the head of the revolution [Supreme Leader] was the person who issued the order to carry out the operation. He was also the person who, without any sentence having been pronounced, gave the secret order to eliminate persons who were opposed to the political interests of the Iranian regime or who were not to its liking for other reasons.’”

IRAN'S "TERRORIST MATRIX"

The Nisman report explained that it coined the phrase Iran’s “terrorist matrix” to describe “a pattern . . . constitut[ing] a work product whose execution was impeccably orchestrated by the Iranian government.”

Though the report analyzed the three attacks in Europe prior to the AMIA attack, it made reference to Iranian involvement other terrorist attacks, including the Khobar Tower bombing and the attack which killed Alisa Flatow. The Nisman report details Iran’s method of operations, with sections on safe houses, false documents, sleeper cells, cover businesses, mosques, and embassies. “The mosques were used by elements of the regime as a place from which to recruit persons whose ideology was consistent with the principles of the Islamic revolution, and as conduits for the transmission of sensitive information.” “In its ruling on the Mykonos case, the Superior Court of Berlin stated as follows: ‘In their capacity as intelligence services, Iran’s embassies and consulates in the zone of operations were required to provide the resources for execution...’”

Nisman also cited the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights of the British Parliament: "Once approved by the Supreme National Security Council, the Department of Intelligence decides whether the Ministry of Intelligence or the Quds Force of Pasdaran will execute said action plan, or if both will do it . . . The decision to implement the plan is made at a meeting that is attended by the head of the Department of Intelligence, the minister of intelligence, Ahmad Vahidi, and the representative of the Foreign Ministry. The head of the Ministry of Intelligence sends a letter to the Foreign Ministry describing the scope of cooperation that is needed from the ministry, including supplying passports, and the required budget (...) The Iranian embassy in the target country is informed and the action groups make contact with certain persons inside the embassy, who then take charge of sending and receiving messages."

The Nisma report on the role of Iran's Supreme Leader in its terrorist attacks: "Once the operation was approved, the Spiritual Leader issued a fatwa that authorized the action and legitimized it from the standpoint of Islamic law, in whose eyes the action would have otherwise been a crime. On the basis of the fatwa, a specialized entity was tasked with carrying out the operation, a responsibility that was generally taken in charge by the Ministry of Intelligence, the commander of the Quds Force, or both at once."

The Nisman report made numerous references to Hezbollah; one section devoted to Hezbollah is entitled "The Organizational Structure That Carried Out the Attack." The Nisman report concluded regarding Hezbollah's role in Iranian terrorism: "It is also indispensable to mention in this regard the role played by Hezbollah, which was frequently summoned to carry out the final (i.e. operational) phase of terrorist attacks. Such a request was always a safe bet, since Hezbollah had a subordinate relationship with the Iranian government."

It's worth noting that arrest warrants were issued for Ali Fallahian, Iran's Minister of Intelligence from 1989 to 1997, in the Swiss, Mykonos, and AMIA attacks, and Mohsen Rabbani. Indicted for his role in the AMIA attack, Rabbani arrived in Argentina in 1983 and headed a local mosque until four months before the AMIA attack when he was appointed Iran's cultural attaché, thus receiving diplomatic immunity prior to the attack. [According to the U.S. Justice Department](#), Rabbani was connected to the failed 2007 attack on New York's JFK airport.

NEGOTIATING WITH IRAN

The Nisman report referred to Iran's "obstructionist behavior" in its attempt at obtaining Iranian cooperation in investigating the AMIA attack. "The requests for cooperation

submitted [by Argentinean officials] were fruitless." None of the five "requests for cooperation" issued by an Argentine judge "received a response to date." Nisman even reported that the Iranian government "devoted a great deal of effort (through the local press or the country's embassies) to discrediting the testimony of witnesses who compromised Iran's interests" and that "Argentina's diplomats in Tehran were being pressured to some extent by local Iranian authorities."

"One alarming aspect of the Iranian attitude toward the investigation of the AMIA attack was the attempt to negotiate information as a quid pro quo for quashing suspicions concerning Iran's involvement in the bombing and definitively ruling out any Iranian connection with the event." An Iranian letter responding to an Argentine request for assistance stated, "The main issue is that we need to be absolutely sure that if we cooperate, the judge in the case will reach the conclusion that such and such persons were not involved in the AMIA attack."

A "non-paper containing a proposal for an agreement between Argentina and Iran" handed to an Argentine diplomat in Tehran, contained a clause stating, "The parties accept that no accusation has ever been made against any Iranian citizen concerning the AMIA case" N468. The Nisman report commented: "These passages appear to state clearly the Iranian government's position, which is that in order for Iran to respond to the various requests for cooperation from Argentine judicial authorities, Argentina will first have to agree that no Iranian official and/or citizen will be accused of any crime in connection with the AMIA attack."

From the Nisman report: "The facts presented here clearly indicate that at every step along the way, Iranian officials have attempted to obstruct the investigation of the crime. In comparing what has happened in the AMIA case and other terrorist attacks that have been attributed to the Iranian government, we have found that the Iranians habitually attempt to discredit witnesses, abrogate all of the principals of international law concerning judicial cooperation, and exhibit arrogance—all of which appear to be emerging as rules of conduct for Iran in its relationships with other countries whenever Iranian interests are involved."

CONCLUSION

Among the first things the Islamic Republic of Iran did after its establishment in 1979 was to announce to the world through its [constitution](#) its "hope that this century will witness the establishment of a universal holy government and the downfall of all others" and

assigned the responsibility of spreading its revolution worldwide to its Revolutionary Guard and army.

In December 2007, Alberto Nisman gave a presentation of his findings at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs in Israel ([Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#)). He answered a question about his concern for his personal safety towards the end of his presentation.

Alberto Nisman's 2006 report detailed Argentina's concern about Iran's nuclear weapons program, decisions by Iran's top leadership, including Iran's Supreme Leader, to use terrorism to export its revolution and its use of Hezbollah for that purpose, detailing several successful terrorist attacks, Iran's growing influence in Latin America and its interference with the Middle East peace process. Unfortunately, what Nisman said about Iran in 2006 was generally unrecognized when his body was found in 2015.

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<https://web.archive.org/web/20210302065902/http://worldpolicy.org/2015/03/18/what-nisman-said-about-iran/>