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Israel likely killed Arafat

By Stephen Lendman

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Credible information on Arafat's death surfaced years ago. It wasn't natural. Evidence suggests he was assassinated. Israel most likely was responsible.

Al Jazeera provided new information. On July 4, it headlined "Arafat's widow (Suha) calls to exhume his body," saying:

"A nine-month investigation suggests that the late Palestinian leader may have been poisoned with polonium."

"Eight years after his death, it remains a mystery exactly what killed the longtime Palestinian leader."

"Tests conducted in Paris found no obvious traces of poison in Arafat's system. Rumors abound about what might have killed him - cancer, cirrhosis of the liver, even allegations that he was infected with HIV."

"A nine-month investigation by Al Jazeera has revealed that none of those rumors were true: Arafat was in good health until he suddenly fell ill on October 12, 2004."

Arafat's personal belongings were examined. They included his clothes, his kaffiyeh and toothbrush. Polonium traces were found.

In 1898, Marie and Pierre Curie discovered the substance. Laboratory exposure killed their daughter Irene. Marie died from symptoms related to radiation exposure.

Science Daily calls polonium a "rare and highly radioactive metalloid." It's chemically similar to tellurium and bismuth. It's found in uranium ores.

It's "around 109 times" more toxic than hydrogen cyanide. Its main hazard is radioactivity. It's "most lethal when ingested" or inhaled.

Evidence showed that polonium caused former Russian Federal Security Service officer Alexander Litvinenko's 2007 death. In November 2006 he was hospitalized. Three weeks later he died.

He became the first known polonium-210 victim. Acute radiation poisoning killed him. Tests found traces in his tea cup. Polonium is hard to detect because it doesn't emit gamma rays.

It emits only alpha particles. Normal radiation detectors don't recognize them. Hospital equipment only detects gamma rays.

Ingesting or inhaling alpha particles causes significant radiation damage. Special equipment is needed to recognize them.

Switzerland's Radiophysique (SR) analyzed Arafat's belongings. Blood, sweat, saliva and urine samples were obtained. Tests showed abnormal polonium levels in his body when he died.

SR director Dr. Francois Bochud said:

"I can confirm to you that we measured an unexplained, elevated amount of unsupported polonium-210 in the belongings of Mr. Arafat that contained stains of biological fluids."

As a result, Arafat's widow, Suha, asked Palestinian Authority (PA) officials to exhume his body. If bone, tissue, and/or other bodily evidence substantiates SR's diagnosis, conclusive proof of his poisoning will be confirmed.

"I know the Palestinian Authority has been trying to discover what Yasser died from," she said. "And now we are helping them. We have very substantial, very important results."

In 2004, Abbas was complicit in a coverup. Suha's hopes may go unfulfilled.

Known polonium poisoning deaths are rare. Scientific consensus on its symptoms is lacking. Litvinenko suffered from diarrhea, weight loss, and vomiting. Arafat exhibited the same ones.

Animal studied found similar symptoms. A US 1991 study said:

"The primary radiation target...is the gastrointestinal tract. (It) activat(es) the 'vomiting centre' in the brainstem."

SR scientists found Arafat's belongings contained abnormally high polonium levels.

It's present atmospherically. Natural amounts accumulating on bodily surfaces barely register. They dissipate rapidly. Polonium-210 found on Arafat's belongings has a 138-day half life. It means half the substance decays around every four and a half months.

SR said "(e)ven in case of a poisoning similar to (Litvinenko), only traces of the order of a few" millibecquerels would be found.

However, Arafat's belonging had much higher levels. Further tests 'concluded that...between 60 to 80 percent (of the polonium) was 'unsupported.' " It means it didn't come from natural sources.

SR scientists ruled out official or suggested causes of Arafat's death. Lausanne University Institute of Legal Medicine director Dr. Patrice Mangin said:

"There was no liver cirrhosis, apparently no traces of cancer, no leukemia. Concerning HIV, AIDS - there was no sign, and the symptomology was not suggesting these things."

HIV specialist Dr. Tawfik Shaaban agreed there was no evidence of the disease.

Lausanne doctors wanted to study blood and urine samples taken when Arafat was hospitalized at France's Percy Military Hospital. His wife Suha requested them. She was told they were destroyed.

"I was not satisfied with that answer," she said. "Usually a very important person like Yasser" would require they be kept. Something suspicious was involved.

Doctors who treated him were told not to discuss his case even with Suha's permission. It was considered a "military secret." Most of his former Cairo and Tunis doctors refused interview requests.

Perhaps official coverup of his true cause of death is why.

It's now up to PA officials to exhume him. Abbas may block credible efforts. He's a longtime Israeli collaborator.

PLO official Saeb Erekat said two committees will be formed to investigate his death. PA ministers will comprise one. The other will include Fatah central committee members.

Key is whether efforts will be pro forma or real. Will a credible autopsy be performed? If so, will full disclosure follow?

Most important is that if evidence proves Arafat was murdered, will efforts be made to assign blame?

Key also is that sending bone, tissue and/or other bodily samples to reputable labs abroad requires Israeli permission. Expect it to be denied. Doing so would raise obvious suspicions that Israel wants potentially incriminating evidence suppressed.

It had clear motive and opportunity. Mossad has a long history of targeted assassinations. It uses many methods including poison.

Attempts don't always succeed. In 1997, Mossad agents failed to kill Hamas leader Khaled Mashal by spraying poison in his ear in Amman.

Hamas' Mohammad al-Mabhouh wasn't as lucky. In January 2010, he was found dead in his Dubai hotel room. Initially it was believed by natural causes.

Investigation determined he was injected with succinylcholine. It's a quick-acting depolarizing paralytic muscle relaxant. Motor skills are lost instantly. He apparently died from suffocation. Mossad agents were named responsible.

In his book titled "Gideon Spies: The Secret History of the Mossad," Gordon Thomas provided chilling examples of how it uses biochemists and genetic scientists to develop lethal agents.

They include nerve, choking, blood, and blister agents. Tuban is used. It's virtually odorless and invisible when dispensed by aerosol or in vapor form. Various other substances are used to kill.

Effective ones do it efficiently and covertly. They leave behind minimal evidence. None is ideal. They try to leave those responsible unidentified. Mossad's long history reveals a legacy of state-sponsored assassinations.

For now, Suha said:

"We got into this very, very painful conclusion, but at least this removes this great burden on me, on my chest."

"At least I've done something to explain to the Palestinian people, to the Arab and Muslim generation all over the world, that it was not a natural death. It was a crime."

In January 2007, this writer's article headlined "Former Longtime Confidant Accuses Ariel Sharon of Assassinating Yasser Arafat."

Uri Dan was close to Sharon. In 2006, his book titled "Ariel Sharon: An Intimate Portrait" accused him of assassinating Arafat by poison.

He claimed George Bush approved it. At the time, he was under siege at his Ramallah compound. Israel destroyed most of it.

Israeli and Washington officials wanted Arafat removed and replaced. They succeeded. On November 11, 2004, he died in Paris. He was 75.

In early October he took ill. On October 29, he was flown to France's Percy Military Hospital for treatment. Doctors examining him couldn't determine why.

On November 3, he slipped into a coma. Eight days later he was dead. French doctors prepared a 558-page report. They claimed he died of complications from a blood disorder.

They described what they called "disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC)." It causes malignancy and infection, they said.

They claimed his blood vessels exhibited small clots. They deplete platelets and clotting factors needed to control bleeding. It can cause death by hemorrhaging.

They also called DIC a secondary condition. In other words, it wasn't the main cause of his illness or death. Something else was responsible. They left that issue unanswered.

At the time, this writer said:

"He may have been the victim of a slow acting....hard to detect poison somehow administered to him inside his West Bank compound from which no cure was possible at least once (he) arrived in Paris."

Nothing was done to determine precisely what killed him. His longtime personal physician was suspicious. Dr. Ashraf Al Kurdi said Assad blocked an autopsy.

"They didn't want to do it," he said. "When you talked to them about an autopsy they would get fits. (Abbas) said it would disturb relations with France."

Kurdi called this "stupid." In suspected criminal cases, autopsies are mandatory. Given the strong possibility that Arafat was poisoned, failure to determine cause of death was unconscionable.

French doctors would have conducted a thorough autopsy unless ordered to back off. If performed, it wouldn't have contradicted Islamic law.

Autopsies are permitted as long as performed as soon as possible after death and respect the deceased. Under normal circumstances, Muslims wish to bury their dead quickly. They also prefer to avoid embalming unless necessary.

On November 11, 2004, Arafat died. On November 12, he was buried beside his Ramallah compound. The ceremony was hurried. It didn't follow customary Islamic religious rites.

Chief Palestinian religious authority Sheikh Taissir Tamimi ordered Arafat disinterred for proper reburial on November 13.

In April 2005, Dr. Kurdi was interviewed by MiddleEast.org. He discussed Arafat's "stealth assassination," saying:

"If someone (of the Islamic faith) dies of unknown causes, it is mandatory to have an autopsy - mandatory. They know the regulations. Here in Jordan, bodies have been exhumed in criminal cases....I suspect Arafat died of a 'killing poison'....The death was due to this."

He said unfounded rumors claimed he died from HIV/AIDS. He conducted tests before Arafat died and dispelled them. He also said he had no longstanding health problems except a benign tumor. It caused a slight tremor in his lips and hands. It was not life-threatening.

Overall he was in good health. He saw Arafat on the 16th day after his illness became serious. It was shortly before he was flown to Amman then on to Paris.

During his last examination, Kurdi noticed what he believed to be signs of poisoning. Arafat had a reddish patch on his face and a metallic yellow coloring to his skin.

Before flying to Paris, he saw him one more time in Amman. He'd lost half his body weight.

Reddishness and metallic yellow coloring were prominent. He was sure he'd been poisoned and was dying.

Fourteen months earlier, then Israeli Vice Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told Israeli radio after a cabinet meeting:

"How are we going to" remove Arafat? Expulsion is certainly one of the options, and killing is also one of the options."

He'd been held captive in his Ramallah compound for 18 months. Supporters believed Israel wanted to kill him. Arafat addressed them saying:

"(S)hould the terrorist Sharon regime realize its threat to deport me, or assassinate me, the Palestinian people will continue, and even strengthen, the fight for national liberation and the independent statehood."

From his earliest days as PLO Chairman and President, Arafat went from enemy to ally back to enemy. Agreeing to Oslo got him a 1993 White House signing ceremony. He and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shook hands.

In July 2000, "permanent status" talks followed. Bill Clinton hosted Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak at Camp David.

Barak insisted Arafat sign a "final agreement" and declare an "end of conflict." Doing so would have renounced any legal claim to Palestine land.

Nothing was put in writing. No documents or maps were presented. Barak wanted Palestinian land divided into four isolated bantustans surrounded by expanding settlements and other Israeli controlled territory.

He offered terms Arafat had to refuse. No responsible leader would have agreed. They demanded unconditional surrender. Peace hopes would have been dashed.

He turned the deal down and was unfairly blamed. It very likely led to his death by assassination.

In February 2001, when Sharon became prime minister, he ended negotiations until George Bush's fake "road map" to nowhere.

Peace talks always ended up tragedies and travesties. How could Palestinians negotiate in good faith without a willing partner. They never had one and don't now with Netanyahu.

It shouldn't surprise if indisputable evidence proves Sharon assassinated Arafat. Israel targets all Palestinians it wants removed this way when other methods fail.

Arafat likely fell victim. Betting odds favor it. Hopefully one day we'll know for sure.