

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

The Independent

Saudis vow revenge for Iran's 'plot' on US soil

Biden hints at sanctions as analysts puzzle over shock assassination claims

By Rupert Cornwell in Washington
10/13/2011

Saudi Arabia vowed yesterday that Iran would "pay the price" for an alleged plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to the United States that has further destabilised the already fraught relationship between the Middle East's two premier powers.

After the US made the extraordinary allegations on Tuesday night, it took steps yesterday to increase global pressure on the Tehran regime; these included sanctions against an Iranian airline and fresh moves at the United Nations. In London, meanwhile, the former Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki al-Faisal said that the evidence against Iran was "overwhelming... and clearly shows official Iranian responsibility for this. Somebody in Iran will have to pay the price."

There were also unsubstantiated allegations from the US and Saudi Arabia that responsibility for the plot went to the very top. As US officials speculated to Reuters that it was "more than likely" that the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei knew of the plot, the Saudi-backed news network Al-Arabiya quoted official sources as claiming that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was the "mastermind" behind it and had recently suggested Iran "resume its assassination policy". Iran's foreign minister, Ali-Akbar Salehi, said the best reaction to the claims would be to "ignore" them. Whatever the truth, the Saudi warnings seemed to indicate a troubling worsening of relations between the two nations. Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran have long been at odds, and tensions have risen during the Arab Spring with allegations that Iran has bolstered a Shia uprising against the Saudi-backed Sunni regime in Bahrain.

As reactions oscillated between outrage and bafflement yesterday, the State Department briefed the diplomatic corps about the plot. Simultaneously, US ambassadors abroad were urging their host governments to take steps to punish Iran and further isolate it on the world stage. In New York, Susan Rice, the US ambassador to the UN, was meeting other members of the Security Council.

It was being stressed yesterday that there was never any danger to Adel al-Jubeir, the envoy, and close adviser of King Abdullah, who was supposed to be killed – along with dozens of Americans too if necessary – while dining at a restaurant here.

But senior officials did not hide their shock and anger at the plan, said to be organised by the Quds Force, an elite arm of Iran's revolutionary Guard responsible for subversive operations abroad. For all its bizarre and Hollywoodian aspects, the plot was deadly serious, they insist.

"Nothing is off the table," Vice-President Joe Biden told ABC News. "They have to be held accountable; this was really over the top." As a first move, the Treasury Department imposed sanctions on Mahan Air, an Iranian airline which it said provided funds and transport for Iran's security forces. Hillary Clinton, the Secretary of State, accused Tehran of "undermining the international system" by violating conventions protecting diplomats, to which it was a signatory.

Iranian representatives denied the charges, calling them a "fabrication." History, moreover, showed that the US had a good deal of experience in such matters, a spokesman for President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad said.

Policymakers and analysts were struggling to interpret the news, asking in particular why Tehran would have embarked upon an action extreme even by the standards of the hardliners currently in charge, and which might have provoked conflagration in the region and a devastating military retaliation from the US.

Some said that the recruitment of Mansour Arbabsiar, a car salesman with dual Iranian and US citizenship who was to enlist hired hitmen from Mexican drug gangs, made no sense as a strategy for the Quds Force, who are usually depicted as a highly efficient and sophisticated organisation.

Incredulity was nowhere greater than in Mr Arbabsiar's home state of Texas. Friends knew him as "Jack" because his name was too hard to pronounce, said David Tomscha, who briefly owned a second-hand car business with him in Corpus Christi.

He was likeable if somewhat lazy, but "certainly no mastermind," Mr Tomscha told the Associated Press. "I can't imagine [him] thinking up a plan like that. He didn't seem all that political, he was more of a businessman."