

Iran: Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid (#2)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Israel's alleged Natanz strike was 'as complex as Stuxnet,' and a major blow to Iran.

The story of how Israel's attack at Natanz set Iran's nuclear project back not "by two months" as was first thought, but rather by two years, is [here](#).

An alleged Israeli attack on an advanced centrifuge development and assembly plant at Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment facility exhibited the complexity of the Stuxnet virus that sabotaged Iranian enrichment centrifuges a decade ago, experts and analysts said in a new report Friday.

Officials with knowledge of the blast at Natanz last week told The New York Times that it was most likely the result of a bomb planted at the facility, potentially at a strategic gas line, but that it was not out of the question that a

cyberattack was used to cause a malfunction that led to the explosion.

New satellite photographs from Natanz “show far more extensive damage than was clear last week,” the Times reported.

“The Stuxnet virus was uncovered in 2010 and was widely reported to have been developed together by US and Israeli intelligence agencies. It penetrated Iran’s rogue nuclear program, taking control and sabotaging parts of its enrichment processes by speeding up its centrifuges. Up to 1,000 centrifuges out of 5,000 were eventually damaged by the virus, according to reports, setting back the nuclear program.

“The July 2 Natanz explosion was one of a series of mysterious blasts at Iranian strategic sites in recent weeks – the latest of which occurred Friday morning – which have once again been largely attributed to either Washington, Jerusalem, or both....

“A spokesman for Iran’s foreign ministry said Friday [July 10] that the cause of the Natanz explosion was not yet known, but warned that the country would retaliate severely if it emerges that a foreign entity was involved, according to the semi-official Fars news agency.

“If it emerges that a foreign entity was involved”? But of course it was. You Iranians know perfectly well who was involved. Tiny, maddening, derring-do-ish Israel, employing its greatest natural resource, its brainpower, is running circles around you. Israel just gave Iran another example of what it is capable of. And just how does Iran propose to “retaliate severely,” given what we can be sure Israel will do in return? When Iran launched a cyberattack on Israel’s water supply, that was supposed to add toxic levels of chlorine to the water, the attack was detected and stopped by Israel within a

few minutes. In response, however, Israel – angered at the attack on a civilian facility – launched a cyberattack on Iran's busiest port at Bandar Abbas, snarling traffic both on sea and land, and causing all manner of disruption that lasted for days. Do the Iranians want to risk trying something again? In peace, Israel is the tech *wunderkind*, the start-up nation. In war, it's strictly clint-eastwood – "make my day."

However, he also sought to downplay Israeli involvement, claiming that such reports were only intended to aggrandize Israel and asserting that Jerusalem claims responsibility for incidents "in every corner of the world."

But everyone knows the Israelis never confirm or deny their involvement in attacks. The spokesman for Iran's foreign ministry is now in the peculiar position of claiming that Israel was claiming credit – "aggrandizing" itself – for this or that attack that it had nothing to do with. But everyone knows Israel is quite the opposite: it never confirms nor denies its involvement in attacks. Remember its studied silence over Stuxnet? Even today Israel still does not claim credit for that attack. Remember the attack on the suspected nuclear reactor at Kibar in Syria 2007? The Israelis waited eleven years to admit that it was they who had done the deed of spectacular derring-do. On September 6, 2007, eight Israeli fighter jets flew north along the Mediterranean toward their target 280 miles from the Syrian capital, Damascus. Close to 1 a.m., they dropped 24 tons of ammunition on an isolated desert building, suspected to be a secret nuclear reactor being built by President Bashar al-Assad. They blew it to smithereens. But Israel never said a word until 2018, when Assad needed to be reminded what Israel was capable of. Israel waited three decades to admit that it had destroyed the Osirak Reactor in 1981 that Saddam Hussein had been building. Israel has never claimed to have been behind the assassinations of four Iranian nuclear scientists. It never claimed credit for Stuxnet. And there are many more examples of Israel's studied silence about

such matters. But the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman found himself presenting Israel as merely a braggart warrior, claiming credit for attacks it had nothing to do with. For if Israel were implicated, Iran would feel great pressure to retaliate, and any Iranian attack would then, of course, bring a massive response from Israel.

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