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Internacionales

## Winds of War in the Levant and Middle East - The Hariri and AMIA cases

*by* Horacio Calderon

*Working paper # 14  
Programa Medio Oriente*



# Winds of War in the Levant and Middle East

## The Hariri and AMIA cases

By Horacio Calderon<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

This paper is mainly focused on three *casus belli* that could help to trigger a new domestic Lebanese sectarian struggle, or also a big war on many simultaneous fronts in the Levant and Middle East.

First and mostly -- because of its sensitiveness and centre of gravity in a volcanic region as the Levant--, an expected indictment that regards to the assassination of the Lebanese politician and former Premier Rafiq Hariri.

Secondly, the bombings of the Israeli Embassy and the AMIA Jewish centre in Buenos Aires that were launched in 1992 and 1994, respectively.

Lastly, the conviction of several members of a terrorist cell that were plotting to launch an attack against the John Fitzgerald Kennedy International Airport (JFK), located in Queens, New York.

The paper also include an extensive analysis about a highly complex and fascinating geopolitical manoeuvres led by Saudi Arabia, whose main objective is to break the existent strategic alliance among Iran, *Hizballah* and Syria.

The Levant and Middle East regions have interconnected highly sensitive conflicts, which create a very dynamic, changeable and critical situation, as the tensions mount and the winds of war start to blow.

The last regional events that were focused on the Iranian nuclear and ballistic missile programs, have delayed this release, which will be periodically updated.

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<sup>1</sup> Expert in Middle Eastern affairs and specialist in counterterrorism. He is currently devoting his efforts to study, monitoring and denounce global and regional terrorism, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. <http://twitter.com/horaciocalderon>, [hc@horaciocalderon.com](mailto:hc@horaciocalderon.com).



## Unusual Meetings in Damascus and Beirut

Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud paid a second and exceptional visit to Syria since he was crowned in 2005 upon the death of his half brother Fahd. It was a very unusual royal gesture, because of the long-standing rivalries between Saudi Arabia and Syria, which are not only based on Lebanese affairs but also on other key regional geopolitical issues.

King Abdullah and Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad flew after together to Beirut on July the 30<sup>th</sup>, after holding several meetings in Damascus, mainly focused on a new potential Lebanese inter-sectarian struggle among their main Sunni and Shia allies.

The Syrian President paid his first visit to Lebanon since his government was accused of being behind the assassination of the former Lebanese Premier Rafiq Hariri, who was killed by a massive bomb on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

Syria -- a country governed for decades by the Assad clan, which belongs to the minority Alawi sect -- is one of the most important state actors in the ongoing crisis. Any Syrian geopolitical U-turn against Iran and/or *Hizballah* will perhaps help reshape the map of the entire Middle Eastern arena for decades to come.

All the above mentioned meetings were held in Beirut by several heads of State led by the Saudi King and the Syrian President. Also, the gatherings included the Lebanese Christian Maronite President Michel Suleiman and Sunni Premier Saad Al-Hariri, among other very important political figures.

The summits in Damascus and Beirut were apparently aimed to ease tensions and block any trigger that could ignite a new war in the Levant. Notwithstanding, there are several issues that could be out of control for all the parties involved. The main one is the verdict on the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri that could be released soon by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL). According to leaking information, all the gathered evidence point to *Hizballah*<sup>2</sup> as responsible for that tragic bomb attack.

## The Hariri Killing and the “Special Tribunal for Lebanon” (STL)

On December the 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005, the Government of Lebanon requested the United Nations to establish a tribunal to try all those allegedly responsible for the attack which killed Rafiq Hariri and 22 others.

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1664 (2006), the United Nations and the Lebanese Republic negotiated an agreement establishing the “Special Tribunal for Lebanon”.

Finally, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) was created on June the 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007, by Resolution 1757 of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This autor use this word, but other transliterations include Hizbullaha, Hizbollaha, Hezballaha, Hisbollaha, and Hizb Allah. Therefore, the readers will find different words used by other cited authors.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, “Factsheet: Special Tribunal for Lebanon”. Access in Internet at: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/lebanon/tribunal/factsheet.shtml>



The mission of the “STL” is very specific and its aims have been officially expressed as follows:

*“The mandate of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon is to prosecute persons responsible for the attack of 14 February 2005 resulting in the death of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and in the death or injury of other persons. The Tribunal’s jurisdiction could be extended beyond the 14 February 2005 bombing if the Tribunal finds that other attacks that occurred in Lebanon between 1 October 2004 and 12 December 2005 are connected in accordance with the principles of criminal justice and are of a nature and gravity similar to the attack of 14 February 2005. This connection includes but is not limited to a combination of the following elements: criminal intent (motive), the purpose behind the attacks, the nature of the victims targeted the pattern of the attacks (modus operandi), and the perpetrators. Crimes that occurred after 12 December 2005 can be eligible to be included in the Tribunal’s jurisdiction under the same criteria if it is so decided by the Government of the Lebanese Republic and the United Nations and with the consent of the Security Council<sup>4</sup>.”*

The official Mandate/Jurisdiction states that on December the 13<sup>th</sup> 2005 the Government of Lebanon requested the United Nations to establish a tribunal of an international character to try all those who are alleged responsible for the attack of February 24<sup>th</sup> in Beirut that killed the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 22 others. Also, that the United Nations and the Lebanese Republic, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1664 / 2006, have negotiated an agreement on the establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. Besides, further to Security Council resolution 1757 / 2007 of the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2007, it becomes effective on June the 10<sup>th</sup> 2007.

### *The Plot to Kill Rafiq Hariri*

There are a few little doubts regarding the volcano that could erupt in Lebanon when the “TEL” finally accuses a group of *Hizballah* high-ranking members in connection with the Rafiq Hariri crime. The indictment could include names as the assassinated Moughniyed, his lieutenant and relative Mustafa Badr Al-Din and operatives as Abd Al Majid Ghamlush and Hajj Salim, among other suspects.

According to some sources from Lebanon and Syria, neither Badr Al-Din nor the other people mentioned are in any of these countries at the present time. As occurred in the AMIA case, it is very likely that the suspected individuals are alive and kicking, but very far from Lebanon and probably hidden in Iran.

It is very important to take into account that the killed political leader was aware of the heightened threat against his life. Besides, he was well protected by highly trained bodyguards and several sophisticated security measures.

Most of the horrifying details that have emerged during the past years regarding the Hariri killing could compete with Hollywoodian popular thrillers of corruption, power and crime in the Levant, as “Syriana”, “Body of Lies”, etc.

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<sup>4</sup> Factsheet: Special Tribunal for Lebanon, U.N. In Internet at: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/lebanon/tribunal/factsheet.shtml>



As it appeared *prima facie* during the first stages of the criminal investigations and according to many experts, the highly complex criminal operation that killed Rafiq Hariri would not have been done without close cooperation between the Syrian and Lebanese intelligence services (*Mukhabarat*) that were very linked at that time.

Notwithstanding, it is highly probable that the Tribunal will accuse *Hizballah's* leading members for the murder of Rafiq Hariri, exonerating Syria from all of the charges and leaving the terrorist Lebanese organisation in a very difficult situation.

Syria was accused and expelled from Lebanon because of its high profile connection with the mentioned political crime. A few months after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, Syria notified the United Nations that it had withdrawn all of its troops, military assets and intelligence apparatus from Lebanon.

But many events have occurred thereafter, when the skilful Syria began to cut all the links between the Hariri crime and his Government. Among other several suspicious facts was the "suicide" of brigadier general Ghazi Kanan, a leading member of the Assad clan in Lebanon for twenty years.

Syrian sources claim that Khanan acted alone and independently of his government, something that is unthinkable, if not a joke, because of the tight control on the most prominent officials of its intelligence services. He could have been killed or pressed to commit suicide, but his disappearance was very convenient to cut a key link to the suspected Syrian participation in the plot to kill Rafiq Hariri. The same President Bashar Al-Assad had threatened Mr. Hariri to break Lebanon over his head if he did not back an extension of Emile Lahoud's presidency. Al-Assad was quite sure that Hariri was part of a plot -- together with France and Saudi Arabia -- to separate Lebanon from Syria.

Another missing "link" could be the late megaterrorist commander Imad Moughniyed, who was also killed by a bomb after being handed to his assassins on a silver plate. That very complex operation could not have been executed without the complicity and cooperation of several foreign intelligence services, including a sector of the Syrian "*Mukhabarat*" led by members of the Presidential family<sup>5</sup>.

Besides, if the potentially accused perpetrators of the Hariri assassination are running away to Iran and being hidden in that country -- as occurred in Argentina's AMIA case --, it will be an impossible mission to expect any kind of cooperation from its authorities. The main Iranian indicted individuals who ordered and planned the terrorist attack that killed 85 people in Buenos Aires on July the 18<sup>th</sup> 1994, are now high-ranking members of the Cabinet<sup>6</sup>, the "Council of Guardians" and also advisors to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's inner circle.

On March the 17<sup>th</sup>, 1992, a pickup truck driven by a suicide attacker slammed into the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires. The terrorist killed 29 and wounded over 200 people, most of them Argentine citizens, including priest Juan Carlos Brumana, who died in the Catholic Church *Mater Admirabilis*, placed in front of the embassy. That church and a school building suffered extensive and severe damages.

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<sup>5</sup>H. Calderón, Art. Cited. Available from: [http://www.horaciocalderon.com/Articulos/Moughniyeh\\_Siria\\_Crisis\\_13042008.doc](http://www.horaciocalderon.com/Articulos/Moughniyeh_Siria_Crisis_13042008.doc)

<sup>6</sup> Ahmed Vahidi, minister of Defence.



## Repercussions Before the “STL” Indictment

Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary-General of *Hizballah*, had already declared in May 2009: “we should make a new review of the assassination case of former Prime Minister martyr Rafiq Hariri and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon”<sup>7</sup>. He was probably aware at that time that Syria had “cleaned” all the links with such crime, and leaving the *Hizballah* alone -- legally speaking -- before the “STL” indictment.

*Al-Hayat* quoted sources that say that Hussein Khalil -- a Nasrallah’s political assistant -- stressed to Saad Hariri that *Hizballah* does not accept accusations of involvement in his father’s murder “that’s why it cautioned against plots”<sup>8</sup>. And *YaLibnan* says Saad Hariri was upset over the way Nasrallah addressed him in his speech<sup>9</sup>.

The “STL” on the Hariri case did not announce yet the expected indictment, but Nasrallah fiercely rejected any involvement in the killing, accusing Israel for the assassination. Of course, Nasrallah expects a huge backlash for the *Hizballah* and himself upon the official release of the expected indictment. If the “STL” finally accuses senior *Hizballah* members, as expected, it will probably have serious consequences for the terrorist organisation; domestically, regionally and globally as well.

Despite his objections against the “STL” during the past years, *Hizballah* approved the constitution of the tribunal for the Hariri case, when they were part of the Lebanese Cabinet of Ministers. Therefore, it is not acceptable that Nasrallah and his main lieutenants intend now to ignore the results of the “STL” investigation, even if he feels that *Hizballah* was abandoned, if not betrayed by the Syrian Government.

Again, the Syrians would be appearing as almost immaculate, thanks to its demonstrated skills to cut all the links, which could have connected them with the Hariri murder.

The summits in Damascus and Beirut should be considered as steps in a wider extraordinary political and diplomatic scheme that seem aimed to avoiding new Lebanese inter-sectarian struggles. Such combats took place in May 2008 when the Shia *Hizballah* terrorist organisation attacked and seized Sunni areas in West Beirut, which were controlled by followers of Saad Hariri, backed by Saudi Arabia.

King Abdullah, President Assad and the other chiefs of State could have recommended Saad Hariri -- the Lebanese Premier and son of the assassinated politician -- to avoid any implementation of a “STL” ruling against the *Hizballah*. Otherwise, some sources say, the *Hizballah* could have at its disposal a new pretext to assault again the Sunni areas of Beirut or even provoke a new war with Israel.

As that heavyweight championship of hypocrisy seems to have no limits, the Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad declares that “his country would stand by the Shiite

<sup>7</sup> Al-Manar, “Sayed Nasrallah: Martyr Hariri’s Case and STL Must be Reviewed”. In Internet: <http://www.almanar.com.lb/newssite/NewsDetails.aspx?id=83972&language=en>

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Hayat*, “Report: Hariri Criticizes Hizbullah for Addressing Him Through Screens”. Beirut, July the 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Available from:

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/Lebanon/A92312BA05C2B660C225776F00232444?OpenDocument>

<sup>9</sup> *YaLibnan*, “Hariri upset over the way Nasrallah addressed him in his speech”, Beirut, July the 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Available from: <http://www.yalibnan.com/2010/07/30/hariri-upset-over-the-way-nasrallah-addressed-him-in-his-speech>



organization in any case, and added that Syria considers any blow to Hezbollah a line that should not be crossed<sup>10</sup>. His statement seems to be a clear mafia's godfather-like message from President Assad to "STL". Notwithstanding, it could be based on his own tempo of operations connected with the ongoing negotiations with Saudi Arabia against Iran and *Hizballah*.

According to unconfirmed rumours, the Beirut meetings could have culminated in a secret pact among all the parties involved, excluding *Hizballah*. If the suspected secret agreement really exists, it could severely restrict a future implementation of any "STL" ruling against *Hizballah*. Also, they could have been done with the purpose of delaying or purely and simply suspending *sine die* any further legal actions to punish the accused individuals, institutions, etc.

Although perhaps some of the mentioned heads of State and leaders are awaiting new events, which could create other kind of scenarios, and that they had preferred to avoid any unexpected risk attaching to the "STL" indictment... Yes, one of the most likely war scenarios – that could appear at any time -- would start with an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear sites. If this were the case, it would be rational to think that King Abdullah and his main partners had decided to dedicate their best efforts to delay the "STL" expected announcement. Or, in contrary, evading or delaying to implement any enforcement measure against *Hizballah* in Lebanese territory.

But there is no theoretical or practical reason for reducing this analysis to just two threat-based scenarios, which could also be interconnected: a Lebanese inter-sectarian struggle and/or a war among *Hizballah*, Israel and perhaps other state and non state actors.

To assess the real situation it should also be taken into account the very complex nature of some of the main conflicts that underlie under the Middle Eastern arena.

## The Real Game in the Levant and Middle East

### SYRIA, SAUDI ARABIA AND A SOPHISTICATED GEOPOLITICAL OPERATION

The Saudi monarch tour to Damascus and Beirut seems to be part of a sensible geopolitical game of chess, whose main prize could be the breaking point for the old strategic axis among Syria, Iran and *Hizballah*.

King Abdullah left for a while the seat of his restless and unstable throne, just to lead a highly complex and sophisticated geopolitical manoeuvre, whose main objective is breaking up the entente among Iran, *Hizballah* and Syria. This Middle Eastern geopolitical trident threatens not only the Saudi Kingdom but also the whole Gulf Arabian

States, among other countries. Thus, the royal trip was aimed to prepare the ground to wage a secret diplomatic war to isolate and weaken Iran -- the centre of gravity of such axis -- to the maximum possible extent.

Syria is the Achilles heel of such entente, due to its old role of strategic bridge between Iran and the *Hizballah*'s strongholds.

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<sup>10</sup> <sup>10</sup>Ynet News: "Assad on Hariri probe: We'll stand by Hezbollah", July 31, 2010. In Internet: <http://www.ynetnews.com/Ext/Comp/ArticleLayout/CdaArticlePrintPreview/1,2506,L-3927529,00.html>





Besides, the Syrian strategists probably fear that any suspected move detected by Iran, could unleash destabilisation campaigns and other covert actions against its regime. Moreover, the Syrian *Mukhabarat*<sup>11</sup> should be aware that Iran and its proxies have secret assets inside the country and the Government, which could be activated at any time.

There is no doubt that Syria has historical regional geopolitical ambitions that are not rigidly limited by its claims regarding the return of the Golan Heights, which were seized by Israel during the 1967 “Six-Day War”. These ambitions have a name: Lebanon.

Downgrading or breaking the Syrian existing alliance with Iran lies only on a price, although a huge price. Or perhaps a prize, which sounds better...

But a Syrian U-turn against Iran and *Hizballah* has a political and geopolitical cost that is higher than some state global actors as the United States thought it would be: a full patronage of Lebanon. A difficult and complex “barter” operation, of course; but it should be remembered that all is negotiable in the political *souks*, which arise in the whole Middle Eastern political arena.

Syria could be willing to discuss with Israel some conditions that concern to the captured Golan regions. Notwithstanding, Lebanon is for Syria a buffer, an urgent geopolitical imperative, but also a matter of national security and economic survival. The Lebanese territory has strategic insurmountable natural barriers, as the Eastern Lebanon Mountain Range<sup>12</sup> and other mountain valleys, which Syria needs to secure the vital core of its own territory, which does not have any important natural geographical defence. As far as economic matters are concerned, other remarkable “treasures” are the Lebanese ports<sup>13</sup> that Syria also needs to insert the country in the global economy. Besides, its jobless labour force could be more easily absorbed in Lebanon, alleviating the Syrian high unemployment rate.

Although this assessment is not written in detriment of Lebanese sovereignty, it is noteworthy to admit that Syria without Lebanon could be as weak as Russia losing control of any of its key geopolitical buffers.

Israel considers Syria a predictable enemy that has respected during decades a *de facto* peace, while controlling the Southern Lebanese frontier and acting as a stabilising force at the same time. For that reason, Israel will probably not raise any major objections to a future and *de facto* Syrian patronage of Lebanon. At the present time Israel probably felt that Syria could neutralise and perhaps destroy the *Hizballah* military wing and therefore influence the post-war political outcome by regulating the activity of the current Iranian proxy.

Besides, Israel is really worried regarding any change in Syria that could replicate an Iraq-like regional and domestic chaotic scenario<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> “General Intelligence Directorate”

<sup>12</sup> Also known as Anti-Lebanon Mountain.

<sup>13</sup> Beirut, Tripoli, Tyr, Sidon and other ones.

<sup>14</sup> During a visit paid by the author in November 2006 to Israel and Palestinian Territories, he asked to a very experienced Israeli military intelligence officer “why Israel does not sign a full peace treaty with Syria, assuring its frontiers and perhaps gaining an ally against the regional and global jihadism?”; “well, because the United States does not allow us to do it”, he responded laconically.





The requested price to be potentially paid to Syria, if all the parties involved finally close a deal, is not as higher as some state regional actors thought it would be. But many governments, such as the United States, France and the United Kingdom, are wondering if the planned Machiavellic agreement is really worth the price if it includes a spoil of war called Lebanon. Nonetheless, all those state actors are aware that giving the patronage of

Lebanon to Syria is a *condition sine qua non* for any deal with President Al-Assad. If it could not be so, they will have to find another way to disarm by force the *Hizballah* and taking this dangerous leverage off Iranian hands.

Regarding the Palestinian forces -- also united, which is very unlikely --, they have no chance to strategically threaten the Israeli national security at the present time and perhaps for a long time.

New "peace talks" between Israel and the "Palestinian National Authority" (PNA) will take place in Washington, D.C. on September the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010. Regrettably, it is highly likely that this new event will end without any remarkable outcome. If Israel and the Palestinian Government will be holding direct talks is because they were pressed by President Obama. Of course, he needs and wants to show something more than his empty rhetoric regarding his promises to "resuscitate" a death peace process. The other parties were unable to refuse such invitation, because they need to care their relationship with the Obama Administration, which is as dangerous as a double-edged blade in hands of a child.

Besides, neither Egypt nor Jordan want to have a sovereign Palestinian state threatening its secular regimes from the West Bank or/and the Gaza Strip.

Syria is not an exception to that rule because it did not ever abandon its dream to rebuild the ancient "Greater Syria" that included the current Israeli and Palestinian Territories, among other regions. Therefore and because of other reasons, the Palestinians could not count with Syria helping in any real state-building initiative.

Syria does not trust too much in Saudi Arabia and Israel, and is therefore negotiating very carefully with them any future action that could threaten Iranian national and regional security interests.

Notwithstanding, a Syrian secret collusion with Israel, Saudi Arabia and other countries has been evident for a long time. The main demonstration was the killing of the dangerous and lethal Imad Moughniyed, military commander of *Hizballah*, who was killed by a bomb that blew up in a very secure area of Damascus.

Such high-value target could not have been killed without the complicity of senior Syrian officials and in a close cooperation among a pair of countries, at least. "*The Syrian traitors assisted in my husband's murder*" shouted his widow, adding: "*The Syrian refusal to let Iranian investigators do their job is proof of Damascus' complicity in my husband's murder*"<sup>15</sup>. After her statements the Moughniyed's widow was urgently taken to a flight to Teheran in order to avoid further embarrassments and problems among Syrians, Iranians and *Hizballah* itself<sup>16</sup>.

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15 Al-Hayat, "Syria: Hizballah Leaders to Remain Active in Damascus", Beirut, February the 26th, 2008. .Available from: <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&889BCAE809D87823C22573FB002E698F>

<sup>16</sup> H. Calderón: "Importantísimas derivaciones en el caso de la muerte del terrorista Imad Moughniyed", Buenos Aires, 13 de abril de 2008. In Internet: [http://www.horaciodcalderon.com/Articulos/Moughniyeh\\_Siria\\_Crisis\\_13042008.doc](http://www.horaciodcalderon.com/Articulos/Moughniyeh_Siria_Crisis_13042008.doc)



There is an other important reason that will probably have an influence in any Syrian decision to break its alliance with Iran and neutralising, if not destroying the *Hizballah*: the Alawi Syrian rulers suspect that a stronger *Hizballah* -- backed by Iran -- could decide to overthrow its regime, in an attempt to replace it with a more pro-Iranian elite. Besides, the Alawi sect -- many of whose tenets are secret and known only to a select few high-ranking faithful -- is considered as heterodox by the majority Shia sect of the "Twelvers", which include the powerful Iranian rulers, Iraqi clerics and the *Hizballah* leadership.

The Syrians are always in alert regarding that danger, and have been working for a long time to neutralise it<sup>17</sup>. Helping to disarm the *Hizballah* could therefore be for them an "indoor" extra benefit.

## The Winds of War

The situation in Lebanon is complex, fragile and very dangerous, because *Hizballah* can trigger a new inter-sectarian domestic struggle, as occurred in Beirut in 2008. But the Lebanese terrorist organisation could also detonate a rematch of its war with Israel, which is always pending since the ceasefire of August 2006.

There are several existing early warning indicators of a potential new war in the Levant and perhaps the whole Middle East in the months to come, which have one or more imminent triggers.

Moreover, and despite grave internal dissent and distrust and its growing rivalry with the Syrian Government, *Hizballah* is the most powerful and reliable proxy of Iran to deal with Israel in the Levant.

*Hizballah* had a chance to rearm and also overcome the quantity and quality of the weaponry that was used during its 2006 war against Israel, thanks to the help of Iran and Syria.

*Hizballah* has already exceeded the limit that Israel is prepared to tolerate for too long, unless this country chooses to see its population living in underground shelters, as colonies of moles, thanks to new missile systems and rockets supplied by Iran and Siria.

As far as its Lebanese proxy is concerned, Iran could encourage its leadership to attack or provoke Israel in order to divert the attention given to its suspected nuclear programme.

Other expected war hypothesis is that Iran would preserve *Hizballah* until its country had been attacked and then launch a combined military counteroffensive against Israel, its allies and other targeted enemies.

Many experts agreed that the Iranian strategists are aware that it should be difficult for Israel to attack its nuclear sites, defend its own territory from a counterattack and at the same time warring in the Lebanese battlefield.

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<sup>17</sup> H. Calderón: "Novedades sobre el despliegue sirio en la frontera norte del Líbano", Buenos Aires, 6 de octubre de 2008. In Internet: [http://www.horaciocalderon.com/Articulos/HC\\_JAI\\_6\\_de\\_octubre\\_de\\_2008.doc](http://www.horaciocalderon.com/Articulos/HC_JAI_6_de_octubre_de_2008.doc)



One of the most important nightmares for Western strategists -- including Israel -- is to accurately assess the nature of the complex Iranian decision-making process, and therefore all the probable outcomes that can come off all and each very conflicting scenarios.

As far as Iran is concerned, its leadership, political decision-makers, military planners and the heads of the intelligence apparatuses are also worried and fully busy, trying to measure the Israeli predictability regarding a potential military attack on its country's nuclear installations.

An American expert who was consulted before concluding this document, says he believes there is not much chance of Israel attacking Iran's a nuclear power station as Bushehr, because it would be very difficult for different reasons. He also assess that if Israel is going to hit anything in Iran, the targets will only be the facilities associated with the nuclear weapons program.

Some analyst believe that Israel could also use its nuclear tactical ballistic missiles against Iranian nuclear sites but it is highly unlikely, unless Iran launches a counterattack to conventional bombardments using Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

There are other key scenarios regarding Iran that should be seriously taken into account.

On April the 22nd, 2008, and as a candidate for the nomination of the Democratic Party in the 2008 U.S. Presidential election, Hillary Clinton said to ABC News Good Morning America: *"If Iran were to launch a nuclear attack on Israel what would our response be? I want the Iranians to know that if I'm the President, we will attack Iran. That's what we will do. There is no safe haven."* She also stated, *"Whatever stage of development they might be in their nuclear weapons program in the next 10 years during which they may foolishly consider launching an attack on Israel, we would be able to totally obliterate them"*.

Ms Clinton did lose the Presidential elections but is the Obama Administration's Secretary of State and still holds a strong stance against Iran.

The President Barack Obama said in an interview it would use atomic weapons only in *"extreme circumstances"* and would not attack non-nuclear states, but at the same time he made it clear that he was carving out an exception for "outliers like Iran and North Korea" that have violated or renounced the main treaty to halt nuclear proliferation<sup>18</sup>.

Therefore, the President of the United States and winner of the Peace Nobel Prize -- while he has not done anything of real note to merit such and award -- is threatening to use nuclear weapons against other countries without these military capabilities.

The entire above mentioned threatening messages to Iran were recently updated by the U.S. Secretary of Defence, Robert Gates.

Consequently, Benjamin Netanyahu or his successors could have the same reasoning than Barack Obama. Of course, Israel can not give any previous public explanation or threaten Iran, because its country did not ever officially confirm nor deny having a nuclear arsenal or even a military nuclear program".

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<sup>18</sup> New York Times, "Obama Limits When U.S. Would Use Nuclear Arms", April the 5th, 2010. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/06/world/06arms.html?pagewanted=all>



In fact, any country with nuclear weapons always has the ability, power and means to make use of their arsenals should its leadership decide to use it, although can find itself facing the most grave and severe consequences.

As far as any Iranian future potential nuclear threat or attack and obliterating promised responses are concerned, the best outcome to avoid any of the above mentioned Armageddon-like scenarios is blocking its programme before its could successfully concluded.

Besides, stopping the Iran's suspected military nuclear program will save millions of its citizens, because their country will really be "obliterate" before any of their leaders have had a chance to touch a trigger.

## The Role of the United States

Barack Obama is nebulous and unpredictable and his charisma -- his main asset -- is decreasing on a daily basis. Besides, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the United States can not govern his country wasting his time in trivial things, speaking demagogically as Hugo Chávez, or breaking his electoral promises.

The President's pillars of his proclaimed foreign policy goals and objectives -- as some of the most sensitive domestic issues as well -- are unrealistic and could never be implemented.

Therefore, the erratic Barack Obama and his lack of a good judgement make very difficult to predict how he will face up the most sensitive and very threatening current and probable future scenarios and developments.

The biggest problem for the Levant and Middle Eastern security at the present time is that President Barack Obama -- despite his threatening statements -- does not see any urgency to stop the Iranian nuclear and long range ballistic missile programs.

First, because his judgement really fails while assessing the real danger that poses a nuclear arsenal and ballistic missile systems in the hands of an apocalyptic semi-clandestine organisation like the Iranian *Hojjatie*. The Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi is the spiritual leader of this movement that was also banned by ayatollah Ruhollah Jomeini in 1983. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is the most important disciple of the ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi and an alleged high-ranking member of both the *Hojjatie* Society and *Jamkaran* group. Their Apocalyptic doctrine is also associated with Messianism and teaches that the return of the "Hidden Imam" (*Mahdi*), can be advanced by violence instead of awaiting a "celestial" decision. Thus, if such sect takes power in Iran their leadership will not hesitate to use its nuclear arsenal, if they believe that its *Mahdi* will come back upon this Armageddon-like disaster.

Secondly, because the U.S. Administration's urgent priorities do not include the existential Iranian threats against Israel, and prioritised the undergoing secret negotiations with Iran, mainly focused on Iraq and Afghanistan.

But all the problems posed by President Obama are also linked to the whole U.S. national security system failures, which were unveiled by recent studies.



As far as its national security is concerned, the United States is also at risk of failure and needs very urgently to make serious reforms in the whole outdated system that is just one step close to collapse. The recent "WikiLeaks" affair is only a chapter of this situation.

The interconnected failures and weakness of both the United States national security and foreign policy, and also between the conflated national security and national defence systems, have different negative combinations of global and international effects that must be taken into account by other countries.

Such negative outcomes are often derived from a lack of threat-based and scenario-based planning methodologies that can only lead to catastrophic results, as the strategic terrorist attacks on September the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq<sup>19</sup>.

A very important American team of experts and specialists called: "Vision working group report and scenarios" prepared an unclassified report and project to reform the U.S. national security.<sup>20</sup>

As far as the scenario-based planning is concerned and leaving aside the causes, there are some noteworthy results found by that group of experts after examine the extent to which the U.S. Government or components utilise this methodology to develop visions of success:

- "Overview. Overall Symptom - National security organizations are rarely prepared, organized, and/or resourced to address emerging national security challenges."<sup>21</sup>
- "Overarching Problem - The national security system does not have a core competence in strategic visioning. Consequence: The national security system cannot identify strategic capabilities needed to meet future threats and opportunities."<sup>22</sup>

Besides:

- "Problem 1 - There are many obstacles to building a core competence in strategic visioning using scenario-based planning."<sup>23</sup>
- "Problem 2 - There is a misunderstanding of what a vision is and the value it brings."<sup>24</sup>
- "Problem 3 - The need for scenario-based planning is not widely understood."<sup>25</sup>
- "Problem 4 - The national security system rewards short-term results over long-term results."<sup>26</sup>
- "Problem 5 - Without means for matching resources to strategy, the national security system would be unable to act on scenario-based planning's insights for solution sets."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> A war that did not come to an end.

<sup>20</sup> Project on National Security Reform: "Vision working group report and scenarios", Strategic Studies Institute - U.S. War College, July 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 227

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 227

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 228

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 229.



The "Vision Working Group" also agreed in criticising the "National Security Council" (NSC) and its system of "Policy Coordinating Committees" (PCCs): *"The PCC process is much more geared to the administration's daily inbox, short-term issues, and campaign goals"*. Finally recommend: *"A much more robust, dedicated, and comprehensive capability is needed in the executive branch"*.

Their assessments regarding to the core problems and causes of the U.S. national security system are really worrying, because such failures impact on the entire world.

After reading the cited paragraphs it might be think that such kind of assessment could only be related to Argentina or other developing country but not to the United States...

But going straight to one of the main points of this analysis -- an imminent "STL" indictment -- it could be said that any war in Lebanon will most probably harm the fragile strategy of President Obama for the Levant and the Middle East.

Besides, the White House does not trust the Syrians and is watching very closely all the above mentioned complex manoeuvring and covert negotiations. Moreover, Barack Obama did not abandon the long-standing military options to overthrow the Syrian regime, which have been and still remain on the table.

The fall of the Syrian regime that seems to be a permanent obsession for the United States, would probably not have another beneficiary than the Sunni Jihadism embodied by the domestic branch of the Egyptian "Muslim Brotherhood". The late General Hafez Al-Assad, father and predecessor of the current Syrian President, annihilated thousands of these militant jihadists. It occurred during a military offensive aimed to defeat a revolt, which took place in the city of Hama in February 1982. The successors of these killed Sunni jihadists have been waiting for a long time for a rematch against the hated secular Alawi Syrian regime.

They might be hoping that the United States will facilitate their job, as it also happened in Iraq. This probable scenario terrifies Israel, but also Egypt and Jordan, whose secular regimes are being threatened by the "Muslim Brotherhood".

As said before, the U.S. priorities at this time are mainly focused on an exit strategy for Iraq and Afghanistan. President Obama and his closest advisors surely think that those objectives will not be achieved without the Iranian helping, which could be as dangerous as a grizzly bear's embrace.

Israel is fully aware that *Hizballah* has acquired a devastating capacity and that it is able to fire its medium range ballistic missiles and rocketry deep into its territory<sup>28</sup>. Because of this, it is highly likely that Israel would launch a pre-emptive attack to destroy the depots containing the most dangerous weaponry provided to *Hizballah* by Iran and Siria since 2006.

Conventional military wisdom states that Israel should attack *Hizballah* -- with or without Syrian helping -- before the enemy field commanders had had a chance to use their lethal arsenals against strategic military and civilian targets.

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<sup>28</sup> Its arsenal includes surface-to-surface, surface-to-air, and surface-to-sea missiles.



Stratfor<sup>29</sup>, a Texas-based global intelligence company, also confirmed that “some evidence suggests that Arab states have been working closely with Israel -- which has played a key role in undermining Hezbollah’s telecommunication network -- to hamper the group’s ability to lash out.”<sup>30</sup>

Turkey sent a secret but clear message to *Hizballah* making it clear that will not tolerate new attacks against Lebanese Sunni communities. A high-ranking source from Beirut also assures that Egypt has already dispatched to Lebanon a contingent of Special Forces disguised as workers.

During a press conference at the Pentagon shared with Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak, the U.S. Secretary of Defence Robert M. Gates said: “*And we are at a point now when Hezbollah -- where Hezbollah has far more rockets and missiles than most governments in the world. And this is obviously destabilizing for the whole region, and so we’re watching it very carefully.*”<sup>31</sup>

Iran and *Hizballah* are prepared for a very likely war against Israel, which could easily involve the entire neighbouring region and countries and many global state actors as the United States and Russia.

Iran is since a long time a real danger and the centre of gravity of an historical geopolitical axis that would be very vulnerable if Syria makes an expected U-turn against *Hizballah* -- its prime proxy in the Levant. But nobody can assure when and how any of the expected new wide conflicts will begin. This conflicts are mainly based on existential threats to Israel and Arab countries, posed by a potential future nuclear Iran.

Metaphorically speaking, these conflicts are just earth tremors caused by a volcano called Iran, which could erupt soon, launching a torrent of lava that could stream and cover any part of the greater Middle East.

But an “Iran going nuclear” is also facing a strategic threat at the present time, which it is not only represented by an already nuclear Israel and the United States. Also, by a raising *de facto* alliance formed by Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt, Turkey and other Sunni countries that are now manoeuvring to confront the Iranian influence in Iraq. Notwithstanding, and as far as Turkey is concerned, this NATO country is seeking to organise a front to reduce the influence of the Iranian and U.S. influence in Iraq.

All the above mentioned countries have a common strategic threat: Iran. Therefore but not surprisingly, a long time ago Israel became a key *de facto* ally of some of the previously mentioned Sunni states, sharing the same goal of confronting the threat that *Hizballah* poses.

Due to its global terrorist reach, *Hizballah* is a great danger and a disgrace not only for the Levant but also for the entire world. It may therefore be a matter of time before the United Nations and global and regional state actors decide that it is time for all that to end, and resolve to disarm *Hizballah*. Besides, this terrorist organisation has always

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<sup>29</sup> [www.stratfor.com](http://www.stratfor.com)

<sup>30</sup> Stratfor: “Saudi Arabia: The Syrian Key to Countering Iran in Lebanon”. In Internet: [http://www.stratfor.com/archived/168057/analysis/20100727\\_saudi\\_arabia\\_syrian\\_key\\_countering\\_iran\\_lebanon](http://www.stratfor.com/archived/168057/analysis/20100727_saudi_arabia_syrian_key_countering_iran_lebanon)

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of Defense - Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), April the 27<sup>th</sup> 2010. In Internet: <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4616>





violated all the terms of the 2006 ceasefire with Israel, as demanded by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701.

## Expected Casus Belli against Iran and *Hizballah*

The invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein's Sunni secular regime and occupation of this country, have demonstrated that launching a war does not need anything more than a very well-organised pretext conducive to the politically planned objective. Especially, when the Iraqi post-invasion facts clearly showed that the Tony Blair's accusations against Saddam Hussein, regarding alleged Iraqi military capabilities to unleash weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes, were only part of a spider net of lies. Their objectives, backed by many state and not state actors, were to raise a set of *casus belli* to attack and occupy the country, including link between the Iraqi Government and Al-Qaeda. Also and not surprisingly, Iran was part of this deadly net, preparing and executing a very sophisticated and thorough set of intelligence operations, which includes high-profile double agent schemes -- as in the case of the Shia Iraqi politician Ahmed Chalabi<sup>32</sup> --, to encourage the invasion and dragging the United States into a trap.

It was not the case of Afghanistan, after this country was used by Al-Qaeda as a territorial base to plan and launch strategic terrorist attacks in the United States on September the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

As far as Iran and proxies as *Hizballah* are concerned, the main *casus belli* would be represented by the public and official existential threats launched against Israel and other countries by the Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamanej, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and other very important ayatollas and high-ranking officials. Besides, their endless and stressful public relations campaign that regards to uranium enrichment process, long range ballistic missile systems and all type of defence-related achievements.

Notwithstanding, and despite that facts, which represent a set of threats that shows by itself the most serious challenge to the regional, international and global security, those *casus belli* could no be enough to justify a war. Therefore and thanks to the experience of Iraq, an all the conspiracy theories that are running for a long time in absence of clear explanations regarding sensitive facts, new evidence and *more casus belli* against Iran and *Hizballah* are being prepared to be unveiled at the appropriate time.

Having said all that as a brief introduction to many of the following highly sensitive assessments, it is noteworthy that there are a triple important and real *casus belli*, which could be part of a package to declare and/or justify attack/s against Iran and/or *Hizballah*:

First, the Israeli Embassy and AMIA terrorist attacks, which took place in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994, respectively.

Secondly, the assassination of Rafiq Hariri in Beirut on February the 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

Lastly, the alleged links between *Hizballah*'s militants, who were indicted in the United States, and the Iranian MOIS with its current agent Mohsen Rabbani, who is wanted by

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<sup>32</sup> A former Pentagon favourite that worked as an Iranian spy, providing false intelligence to the own U.S. Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, which helped to raise a *casus belli* against Iraq under Saddam Hussein's regime.



an Argentine Court for the AMIA bombing when he was Cultural Attaché to the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires.

There are very interesting and remarkable connexions and common links among state and non state actors as well as individuals involved in both the AMIA and Hariri cases:

1. *Hizballah* is responsible for both crimes, as their main link was its killed military commander Imad Moughniyed. He was mainly loyal to Iran and in second term to *Hizballah*, although he was not sympathetic to Hassan Nasrallah<sup>33</sup>. He also participated in other joint operations among *Hizballah*, the Iranian intelligence and the security apparatus led by the MOIS. Also, Iran must have had some connection in the plot to kill Rafiq Hariri, because of Moughniyed's involvement in its planning and his terrorism-related relationship with this country and *Hizballah* in global and international operations.
2. The Iranian leadership ordered the attack against the Buenos Aires-based AMIA Jewish building. The major terrorist operation in Buenos Aires was planned and coordinated at its highest level, including Ahmed Vahidi, current Minister of Defence. Vahidi was appointed member of the cabinet by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and had the blessing of the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, despite being prosecuted by an Argentine Court.

The Tribunal that requested and obtained six INTERPOL Red Notices<sup>34</sup> in connection with the 1994 bombing of the AMIA building in Buenos Aires<sup>35</sup>. The early intelligence gathering-process and subsequent operational stages were executed by Iranian diplomats, strategically placed logistic and operative cells, and *Hizballah*'s networks headquartered in the Triple Border Area. *Hizballah* also provided the suicide terrorist attacker, who drove the vehicle that destroyed the AMIA Jewish Community Centre, killing 85 and wounding over 300 people. In fact, on March the 17<sup>th</sup>, 1992, *Hizballah* and Iran had carried out a joint terrorist attack that destroyed the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires.

3. The Syrian Government could be cleared of any criminal charge on the Hariri case, because the entire human links and other substantial material evidence have disappeared from the record.

However, it is very clear that such a complex criminal attack could not have been organised and launched without a joint high-ranking Syrian and Lebanese planning and close cooperation.

As far as the AMIA case is concerned, and although Syria might not have had any direct operational involvement, it is very doubtful that both Iran and its proxy *Hizballah* did not inform their President before that attack. Why this assessment?

Because Argentina had a President of Syrian descent at the time, Carlos Menem, and this must have been a highly sensitive issue for the planners of the attack. This

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<sup>33</sup> Many high-ranking Iranian Pasdaran suspected that Hassan Nasrallah could have been colluded with the Syrians to kill Moughniyed.

<sup>34</sup> INTERPOL, Red Notices. In Internet: <http://www.interpol.int/Public/Wanted/Default.asp>

<sup>35</sup> INTERPOL, Marrakech, Morocco, November the 7th, 2007. In Internet: <http://www.interpol.int/public/icpo/pressreleases/pr2007/pr200754.asp>



is only a hypothesis that this author has been suggesting for a long time, based on reasoning grounds and on over three decades of field experience in the Middle East and North Africa.

4. The trial of suspects of the Hariri assassination appears to have a more solid legal basis than the AMIA bombing at the present time, although both cases could be considered a *casus belli* against Hizballah and by extension against its patron Iran.

On August the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010, the United States Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York, issued a press release that was related to American and Guyanese citizens convicted of conspiracy to launch attack at JFK Airport. The statement said: *"Russell Defreitas and Abdul Kadir were convicted today in the Eastern District of New York of conspiring to attack John F. Kennedy International Airport in Queens, New York, by exploding fuel tanks and the fuel pipeline under the airport. The defendants believed their attack would cause extensive damage to the airport and to the New York economy, as well as the loss of numerous lives. Both defendants face sentences of up to life imprisonment. Sentencing has been scheduled for December 15, 2010"*<sup>36</sup>.

Besides, the official statement said: *"According to the trial evidence, the plot members also attempted to enlist support for the plot from prominent international terrorist groups and leaders, as well as the government of Iran, including Abu Bakr, leader of the Trinidadian militant group Jamaat Al Muslimeen, and Adnan El Shukrijumah, an al Qaeda leader. In February 2007, Defreitas recruited Kadir to join the plot because Kadir, a former member of the Guyanese parliament, was an engineer and had connections with militant groups in Iran and Venezuela. During cross-examination at trial, Kadir admitted that he regularly passed information to Iranian authorities and believed himself bound to follow fatwas from Iranian religious leaders"*<sup>37</sup>.

On account of such indictment, Defreitas was arrested in New York on June the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007, and Kadir in Trinidad aboard a plane headed for Venezuela, while travelling to Iran. Ibrahim and Nur were also arrested in Trinidad. Finally, the last three men were subsequently extradited to the United States.

But there is another surprise, which could officially link the above mentioned plot to launch a terrorist attack against the JFK International Airport and the AMIA bombing. On July the 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010, The New York Times published an article entitled: *"Trial Focuses on Iran Ties of Kennedy Plot Suspect"* that includes the following paragraphs regarding Abdul Kadir, a former Government official in Guyana: *"The former government official, Abdul Kadir, admitted under cross-examination that in the mid-1980s he drafted reports about Guyana's economy, foreign policy and military for the Iranian ambassador to Venezuela, which included details like the low morale in the army. The hand-written documents included a "five-year development plan" that made reference to infiltrating the military, police and other government agencies."*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> United States Attorney's Office - Eastern District of New York, "American and Guyanese Citizens Convicted of Conspiracy to Launch Attack at JFK Airport Defendants Plotted to Explode Fuel Tanks at Airport", FBI, New York, August the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010. Available from: <http://newyork.fbi.gov/dojpressrel/pressrel10/nyfo080210.htm>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> The New York Times, "Trial Focuses on Iran Ties of Kennedy Plot Suspect", New York, July the 21st, 2010. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/22/nyregion/22kennedy.html?scp=1&sq=.Trial%20Focuses%20on%20Iran%20Ties%20of%20Kennedy%20Plot%20Suspect&st=cse>



And the NYT added: “*Though he was adamant that he was not working for the Iranian government, his ties to Iran run deep, and he admitted that he had continued to correspond with Iranian officials. He travelled to Iran twice and sent several of his children there to receive religious training. Prosecutors noted that he had repeatedly communicated with Mohsen Rabbani, an Iranian diplomat who was accused of directing a deadly terrorist attack on a Jewish center in Argentina.*”<sup>39</sup>

Mr. Rabbani is wanted by and Argentine Court and INTERPOL and is accused of “Crimes against Life and Health, Hooliganism/Vandalism/Damage.”<sup>40</sup>

Although the U.S. Government could have enough intelligence gathered data regarding the NYT’s alleged links between Abdul Kadir and Mohsen Rabbani<sup>41</sup>, it is very unlikely that there will be any chance to capture this Iranian official in the future.

Once again, the JFK International Airport plot can be used as another *casus belli*, together with the AMIA bombing and the Hariri assassination to blow the winds of war against Iran, Hizballah and other non state actors that are part of the same terrorist network.

## Argentina Under Terrorist Threats

As far as Argentina is concerned, there are no reasonable doubts regarding the involvement of Iran and *Hizballah* in the attacks that destroyed both the Israeli Embassy and the AMIA building in Buenos Aires. Also, that future attacks are highly likely if Iran and *Hizballah* were attacked based on accusations from Argentina regarding the mentioned bombings, which could be used as *casus belli* to declare a war against these terrorist state and non state actors.

In 1992 and 1994 Argentina was attacked as retaliation by several reasons that have been explained by this author since the first attack up to date<sup>42</sup>.

The U.S. Department of State last issue of its “Country Reports on Terrorism 2009”, which was release in August 2010. The report states regarding the status of Argentina:

*“Argentina and the United States cooperated well in analyzing possible terrorist threat information. Argentine security forces received U.S. government training in terrorism investigations, special operations related to terrorist incidents and threats, and in explosive and drug-sniffing dog handling and dog training. In addition, Argentina hosted U.S. government-financed regional training on the role of police commanders in responding to terrorist threats. Argentina takes seriously its responsibility to protect its nuclear technology and materials; it has begun to provide training to other countries on best practices against illicit trade in nuclear materials.”*

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> INTERPOL, “Wanted, Rabbani Mohsen”, August the 21st, 2010. Available from: [http://www.interpol.int/Public/data/wanted/notices/data/2007/60/2007\\_49960.asp](http://www.interpol.int/Public/data/wanted/notices/data/2007/60/2007_49960.asp)

<sup>41</sup> The author had a chance to hold a debate with the prosecuted Mohsen Rabbani in a TV programme, which was transmitted in Buenos Aires, few day after the suicide attack that destroyed the AMIA building. It was a surprise for criminal Rabbani, who was lying the audience denying any relationship between Hizballah and Iran. He finally left suddenly the programme, because after finding he was unable to give any response to all the evidence showed by the author concerning to Iranian assistance to Hizballah.

<sup>42</sup> The author sent a letter to President Carlos S. Menem in March 1992, upon the attack against the Israeli Embassy, warning that Argentina could be attacked again. After the attack against the AMIA building, he was interviewed by Radio and TV programmes and other media regarding the previous warning. Notwithstanding, neither the Government nor the Tribunal summoned him until Dr. Present left the Presidency...



Despite of the above mentioned statement, Argentina does not have enough preparedness to deal with the increased security threat from such regional and global terrorist organisations.

Argentina could be again a selected target to be attacked as retaliation from Iran, *Hizballah* and other proxies and allies -- also secular as the Colombian FARC<sup>43</sup> --, since all of them have operating bases and all kinds of logistic support from Latin American state actors, like Venezuela, for instance. Besides, all these state and non state actors have many and very important supporters and sympathisers in Argentina, which could increase the level of security threats.

Iran -- a State sponsor of terrorism -- its main proxy *Hizballah* and their respective networks of allied organisations and groups are still posing risks and threats that must be properly assessed very urgently. Notwithstanding, new terrorist attacks from Iran and *Hizballah* in Argentina or to Argentinean targets abroad have a low probability of occurrence at the present times, unless these actors were in war in the Levant and/or the Middle East. If a war in such regions is finally unleashed, it is highly probable that Israeli and Jewish buildings and very important people will be again high-value terrorist targets.

The Argentine intelligence and security apparatuses should take into account that Sunni and Shia terrorist organisations could also cooperate to launch attacks as occurred in other regions.

It must be said that the country has many vulnerabilities, which facilitates drug trafficking and all type of organised crime activities for a long time. It is noteworthy that Argentina has porous borders, official corruption, access to explosives, detonators, undefended targets and other advantages that were also used in previous terrorist attacks.

Therefore, the Argentine Government should plan and implement effective intelligence and security measures and countermeasures against terrorist threats. It will help to properly protect its citizens and goods and neutralise any attack future attack from *Hizballah*, Al-Qaeda or any other organisation.

Finally, it should be very helpful to establish an interdisciplinary centre for strategic assessment and analysis on safety and security issues, which could suggest plans to prevent, defend and counter new terrorist attacks in Argentina.

## Conclusions

- There are three *casus belli* -- among other -- that could help to trigger a new domestic Lebanese sectarian struggle, or also a big war on many simultaneous fronts in the Levant and the Middle East. The Rafiq Hariri Assassination, the Israeli Embassy and the AMIA Jewish centre bombings in Buenos Aires, and a recent indictment of several individual who were planning to attack the JFK Airport in New York. All of these cases are directly or indirectly linked to Iran and will therefore to other cases of war against this country and *Hizballah*, its prime proxy in the Levant.

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<sup>43</sup> Acronym in Spanish of "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia" (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces)



- The "Special Tribunal for Lebanon" (STL) will announce a verdict in the Rafiq Hariri case in the coming weeks, accusing to *Hizballah* of killing Rafiq Hariri.
- Saudi King Abdullah, Syrian President Assad, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman and Premier Saad Hariri and other leaders held several meetings in Beirut, to assess all the aspects that regards to the above mentioned "STL" indictment.
- The Saudi King is leading a wise geopolitical manoeuvre, whose main objective is breaking the old axis among Iran, Syria and *Hizballah*. His exceptional visit to Damascus and a further joint trip with President Assad to Beirut was also part of the geopolitical already described project.
- Both Iran and *Hizballah* are aware of such operation and are already taking pre-emptive countermeasures.
- Argentina is still under threat of new major terrorist attacks that could be launched again in its soil. Especially if Iran and/or *Hizballah*'s leadership conclude that Argentina is giving a *casus belli* to help mounting military attacks against them, instead of trying to settle the accusations before a court.

Finally, it would be time to see a real punishment for all those who were responsible for the Hariri assassination, the Israeli Embassy and the AMIA bombings, and the plot unveiled in the United States, just to mention the three *casus belli* that were the specific focus of this paper.

Besides, for all the crimes that were committed by Iran and its proxies led by *Hizballah* during the past decades, which also killed thousands of innocent Shia and Sunni people, including women and children. It must be also added to this accountability all the children who were also used as soldiers and suicide minesweepers during the Iran-Iraq war in the last 80s.

As an end to this paper, it could be worth wondering whether or not it is time to counter and defeat the threat that poses Iran and its terrorist network, led by the Lebanese *Hizballah* and other proxies and allies.

P.S. Few hours before releasing this paper broke out clashes earlier in the evening on Tuesday between members of the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects "*Al Ahbash*" (also known as *Jam'iyyat al-Mashari' al-Khayriyya al-Islamiyya*) and supporters of *Hizballah*. Mohammed Fawwaz, a *Hizballah*'s official in a Beirut suburb known as Burj Abi Haidar was killed during the clashes.

"*Al Ahbash*" is a pro-Syrian group and it could mean that the "winds of war" have already started to blow...

Buenos Aires, August the 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010