



January 22, 2015

The Cover-Up of Iran's Responsibility for Terrorist Attacks on Argentine Soil: Alberto Nisman, Federal Prosecutor Who Accused Argentina's President of Conspiring to Sabotage Inquiry Linking Bombings at Israeli Embassy and the AMIA Building to Iran, Found Dead



Argentine federal prosecutor Alberto Nisman (Twitter)

The Death of Alberto Nisman – Initial Findings¹

1. On January 18, 2015, **Alberto Nisman**, the Argentine federal prosecutor who investigated the terrorist attacks on the Jewish Community Center (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina, AMIA) in Buenos Aires in 1994, was found dead in his home in a Buenos Aires suburb with a gunshot wound to the head. A .22 caliber handgun was found next to the body; it was not registered to him.
2. According to initial reports he committed suicide, but **the reports have not been confirmed**. It is more likely that **he was murdered** by his enemies because of **his determined objection to the attempts of the Argentine government to cover up Iran's responsibility for the two terrorist attacks on Argentine soil** (the attack on the Israeli embassy in 1992 and the AMIA attack in 1994). Prosecutor Viviana Fein, who leads the investigation of Nisman's death, said she could not rule out the possibility that he was "convinced" to commit suicide. However, on January 22, 2015, Argentine President Cristina Kirchner claimed that a prosecutor who died just as he was due to accuse her of covering

¹ Initial findings update to January 20, 2015, based on Argentine and global media reports.

up a Jewish bombing was murdered to implicate her. She argued that Nisman did not commit suicide, but was instead killed in an "operation" against her government (Dailymail.co.uk, January 22, 2015).²

3. **The day after his death (January 19, 2015)**, Alberto Nisman was supposed to testify at a hearing held behind closed doors at the Argentine Congress. The hearing would have dealt with Nisman's accusations that Argentine President Cristina Kirchner and Foreign Minister Héctor Timerman **tried to make an arrangement with Iran that would take its involvement in the terrorist attacks off the Argentine agenda in return for political and economic benefits** (See below).

4. On January 14, 2015, four days before Nisman's death, he issued an approximately 300-page report (including evidence from wire taps and other sources) in which he detailed his accusations against the president and foreign minister. He stated that **associates of the president had secretly negotiated with Iran** for a deal that would normalize relations between the two countries. Part of the deal included an offer **to cancel the international Interpol arrest warrants issued for senior Iranians in return for economic benefits, such as the import of Iranian oil and the export of Argentine wheat.**

5. Based on the findings in the report, Alberto Nisman asked the Argentine court to initiate an investigation of the president and foreign minister for whitewashing Iran's involvement in the attacks and obstructing the investigation into them. He said that **the cover-up and obstruction were reflected by the agreement Argentina and Iran signed in January 2013.**

The Argentina-Iranian Agreement of January 27, 2015

6. On January 27, 2013, Argentine President Cristina Kirchner announced that Argentina had reached an agreement with Iran, a so-called "truth commission," whereby **both countries would "investigate" the circumstances of the attack on the AMIA building in Buenos Aires to "reach the truth."** To that end a joint community would be appointed "to find the truth." Two days previously, **Argentine Foreign Minister Héctor Timerman and Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi**, both in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for the 20th meeting of the Organization of African Unity, **had signed a memorandum to that effect.**

² <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2921838/Argentinian-president-Cristina-Kirchner-says-prosecutor-murdered-implicate-her.html>



The Iranian foreign minister (left) and Argentine foreign minister (right) sign a memorandum of understanding to carry out a joint investigation to "discover the truth" about the AMIA bombing (Presidencia.gov.ar, January 25, 2013).

7. According to the agreement, the joint investigative committee was supposed to be composed of international jurists who would be chosen by the two countries, but none of whom would be a citizen of either one. They would be able to meet with anyone mentioned in the material compiled by Argentina and Iran investigators and allegedly interview them freely. It was also agreed that the signed memorandum would be presented to the secretary-general of Interpol, who was involved in the investigation and the search for the suspects after the international arrest warrant had been issued and periodically renewed (Website of the Argentine president's office). However, **Alberto Nisman** persisted in his objection to the cover-up of Iran's involvement in the terrorist attack. His position was endorsed by the Argentine court, which later **prevented the appointment of the joint Argentine-Iranian "investigative committee."**

8. Argentina's diplomatic and commercial ties with Iran deteriorated after the Argentine authorities issued international arrest warrants in 2006 for seven senior Iranian figures and senior Hezbollah terrorist Imad Mughnieh. The warrants were issued on the grounds that they were suspected of involvement in the terrorist attack on the AMIA building in Buenos Aires. Approximately five years later **the Argentine regime began looking for ways to improve relations with Iran at the expense of the investigation into the AMIA attack.**

9. In March 2011 Perfil, a daily Buenos Aires paper, reported that the Argentine foreign minister was secretly negotiating a deal with Iran in which **the Argentines would "forget" the bombings of the Israeli embassy and AMIA building in return for improved relations with Iran.** According to the paper, the Argentine government was prepared to freeze the investigation of the bombings in return for the renewal and improvement in

commercial relations with Iran (Haaretz.co.il, March 27, 2011). Iran, for its part, denied any involvement in the attacks, but in July 2012 proposed holding talks with Argentina to "shed light" on the affair.

10. In September 2011 the Argentine president told the UN General Assembly that Argentina was willing to hold a dialogue with Iran and called on Iran to show good faith and help the investigation into the bombings. She said that it was a proposal for a dialogue that Argentina could not and should not reject." As a gesture to Iran the Argentine representative to the UN remained in his seat during the speech given by Iranian President Ahmadinejad, who attacked Israel, and did not leave the room, as did the representatives of many other nations, to protest his rhetoric (Reuters.com, December 5, 2011).

11. The Argentine effort was rewarded in a 2013 agreement signed with Iran which, in ITIC assessment, reflected the interests of both sides: **Iran** would be able to continue **denying the involvement of senior Iranians in the terrorist attacks** in Argentina, and Iran would be able to overcome its image as a terrorism-sponsoring country and improve its relations with the rest of Latin America.³ The agreement would allow **Argentina** to improve its relations with Iran and receive economic benefits **in return for dropping from its political agenda the issue of the 1990s Iranian-orchestrated terrorist attacks**.

Appendices

12. Two appendices follow:

- 1) The Iranian-orchestrated Hezbollah suicide bombing attacks of the AMIA building and the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires.
- 2) Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center bulletins dealing with the bombings in Buenos Aires, available on the ITIC website.

³ For further information about Iran's activities in Latin America, see the April 18, 2012 bulletin "[Latin America as a Terrorist, Subversive, Criminal Arena for Iran and Hezbollah.](#)"

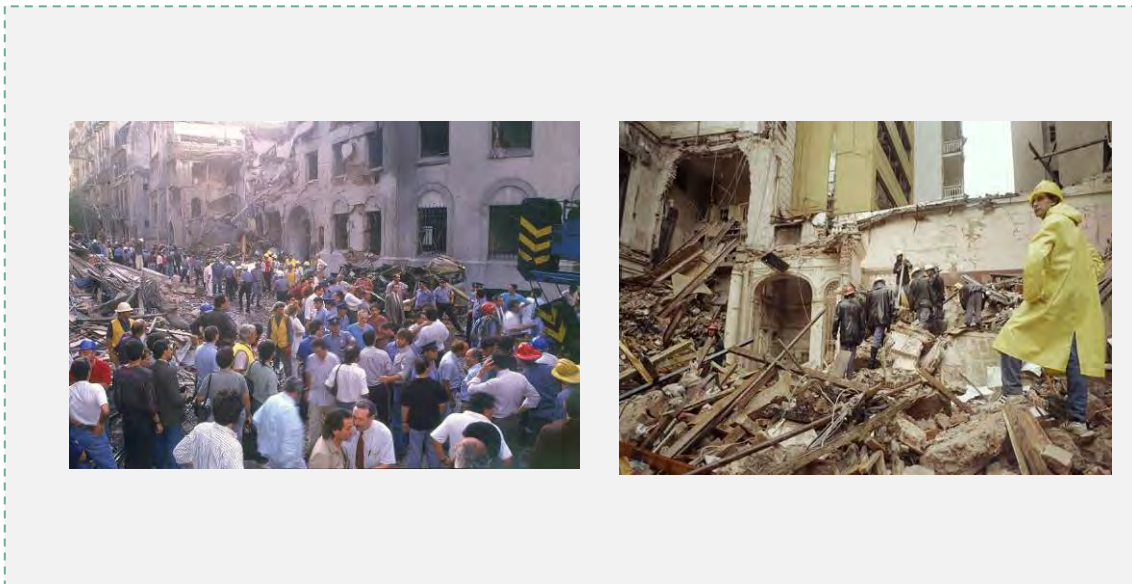
Appendix A

The Iranian-orchestrated Hezbollah suicide bombing attacks of the Israeli embassy and the AMIA building in Buenos Aires⁴

The bombing of the Israeli embassy, 1992

1. On March 17, 1992, a suicide bomber blew himself up in a car bomb in front of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In ITIC assessment the attack was carried out by Hezbollah and orchestrated by Iran. The car contained an estimated 300 kilograms (660 pounds) of TNT. Most of the building collapsed as a result of the explosion. **The casualties included 29 Israeli and Argentine killed and more than 250 wounded.** Serious damage was caused to other structures in the area.

2. A fictitious organization calling itself "Islamic Jihad," a name used as a cover by Hezbollah, claimed responsibility for the attack. It issued an announcement claiming the attack was revenge for the killing of Sheikh Abbas Musawi (Musawi was killed in a targeted IDF attack in February 1992, approximately a month before the bombing in Argentina).



The Israeli Embassy after the bombing (Tags.walla.co.il)

⁴ A short summary of the attacks is provided here. Further information can be found in the ITIC bulletins listed Appendix B.



Left: A wounded woman is evacuated after the attack. Right: The area around the embassy after the attack.

The bombing of the AMIA building in Buenos Aires, 1994

3. At 09:53, Buenos Aires time, July 18, 1994, there was an explosion at the AMIA building, **killing 85 people** who were in or near the building at the time and **wounding more than 300**. A large part of the building collapsed, damaging nearby structures. Investigation indicated that a commercial vehicle rigged as a car bomb had been **detonated by a Hezbollah suicide bomber** near the entrance. It was estimated to have contained 400 kilograms (880 pounds) of explosives. Evacuating the bodies of the victims lasted several weeks.



Left: Evacuating the wounded from the debris. Right: The front of the building after the explosion.

4. Prior to the suicide bombing attack of the AMIA building Hezbollah suffered two painful blows dealt by Israel: the abduction of Mustafa Dirani (once head of security for the Shi'ite

Amal terrorist organization in Lebanon) on May 21, 1994, and the killing of 26 Hezbollah terrorist operatives in its training camp in Ain Dardara in eastern Lebanon on June 2, 1994. **Senior Hezbollah figures indicated the organization had the capability to respond abroad:** a month before the AMIA bombing Hezbollah leader **Hassan Nasrallah** boasted that **"a thousand suicide bomber commandos were ready to strike Israel all over the globe"** (Al-Watan Al-Arabi, June 17, 1994). After the attack on Ain Dardara, **Khader Kleis**, a Hezbollah-faction member of the Lebanese parliament, warned that Israel knew Hezbollah could "also act outside Lebanon" and threatened to strike Israel "inside Lebanon and beyond its borders."

5. Israel's investigation of the attack, whose findings were made public by former Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom in 2003, indicated that the most senior echelon of the Iranian regime knew about and sanctioned the Hezbollah attack. An Israeli analyst has said that several transmissions between Iran and its embassy in Buenos Aires during the two weeks prior to the attack and taped by the American intelligence community showed that Iran was directly involved in it.⁵

The Argentine Investigation

6. The Argentine investigation of the terrorist attacks had its ups and downs. Initially, when Carlos Mendez was president, it proceeded slowly and there were even claims that an attempt was being made to obscure the findings and hide information. When Néstor Kirchner (the husband of current President Christina Kirchner) was appointed president in 2003, he promised to reopen the investigation and said that it was a national shame that justice had not yet been served. Despite the previous waste of valuable time, the Argentine investigative judges, who received help from intelligence agencies around the globe and used the wire taps and the forensic evidence of the remains of the explosives and vehicles, constructed a fairly complete picture of the attacks, **including the chain of instructions from Iran, which not only to the attacks but to the identities of who had carried them out.**

7. On October 25, 2006, Dr. Alberto Nisman, the Argentinian attorney general, along with prosecutor Marcelo Martínez Burgos, revealed the findings of the AMIA investigation, carried out by a specially appointed team. The findings were issued in a report more than 800 pages long and indicated that the investigation had unequivocally determined **that the decision to bomb the AMIA building had been made by the leadership of the Iranian**

⁵ Ephraim Kam, *From Terrorism to Nuclear Power, the Significance of the Iranian Threat*, (Hebrew), Ministry of Defense Publication, Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2004, p. 274

regime and that it had been carried out by Hezbollah, which served the Iranians as a proxy for implementing their policies.

8. In light of the report, the Argentinian prosecution asked Judge Rodolfo Canicoba Corral to issue international arrest warrants for seven high-ranking members of the Iranian regime and one senior Hezbollah terrorist operative (Imad Mughnieh), all of whom had been involved in the terrorist attack in Argentina. One of the seven Iranians, some of whom still serve in high positions in the Iranian regime, was **Ahmed Vahidi**, Qods Force commander at the time of the attack (1994) and later on Iran's minister of defense.

9. However, a warrant was not issued for the arrest of Iranian Supreme Leader **Ali Khamenei**, even though the 2006 report explicitly stated that he had been party to the decision to bomb the AMIA building, and despite the fact that such a decision could not have been made without his authorization. After weighing testimonies presented by Argentina and Iran, Interpol decided to accede to Argentina's request for arrest warrants.



The seven senior Iranians and one Hezbollah terrorist operative for whom Argentina issued international arrest warrants (Lower left corner: Imad Mughnieh, commander of Hezbollah's military-terrorist wing).

10. The Argentine prosecutor's report stated with certainty that the decision to carry out the attack on the AMIA building was made in total consensus with the most senior representatives of the Iranian regime at the time. The main findings relating to Hezbollah were the following:

- 1) The report describes in detail how the Iranian upper echelons arrived at the decision to carry out the attack. It was the work of a group called the Special Affairs Committee, whose members at that time were Ali Khamenei, Ali Rafsanjani, Ali

Fallahian and Ali Velayati. **They met in the Iranian city of Mashhad on August 14, 1993 and decided to carry out a terrorist attack in Argentina. The highest ranks of the Iranian regime ordered Hezbollah to carry out the attack against AMIA.** The Iranian regime employed Hezbollah's terrorist infrastructure in Argentina and the rest of Latin America.

2) The attack was carried out by a Hezbollah squad that arrived in Argentina on July 1, 1994. Imad Mughnieh, head of Hezbollah's External Security Service, was responsible for running the squad and **to that end visited Argentina at the beginning of July 1994.** The Argentines have records of many phone conversations between Imad Mughnieh, Hezbollah's operational squad, Hezbollah operatives in Lebanon, and Hezbollah's network in the Brazilian side of what is known as the tri-border region.⁶ **In retrospect, it became apparent that on July 18 the last call received by Imad Mughnieh's cell phone was recorded and indicated that the attack had been carried out.**

3) At 09:53 on the morning on July 18, 1994 **a suicide bomber named Ibrahim Mohsen Berro** blew himself up inside a Renault van carrying 300-400 kg (660-880 lbs) of explosives (**Note: The Berros are a Shi'ite family in south Lebanon, some of whose members have links to Hezbollah and are involved in international drug trafficking**). **The report states that the method of the attack was identical to the one employed two years before in the attack on the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires carried out by Hezbollah.**

⁶ The tri-border region is the area where the borders of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay meet. A large Shi'ite population lives there and Hezbollah maintains a terrorist and subversive infrastructure in the region.

Appendix B

Bulletins Issued by the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center about the Terrorist Attacks in Argentina

1. **February 18, 2013** – Argentina and Iran have agreed to hold a joint investigation of the terrorist attack on the Jewish Community Center (AMIA) building in Buenos Aires
2. **November 29, 2012** – Hezbollah: Portrait of a Terrorist Organization. Hezbollah has a 30-year history of terrorist activity in Lebanon, the Middle East and around the globe, directed against Israel, the Jewish people, the United States and the West, pro-Western Arab states and Hezbollah's enemies in Lebanon.
3. **August 7, 2012** – The Quds Force, an elite unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, spearheads Iran's global terrorist campaign. In our assessment, the terrorist attack targeting the bus of Israeli tourists in Bulgaria was carried out by Hezbollah as part of the Iranian campaign and from their point of view was the most successful to date.
4. **August 30, 2009** – The report issued by the Argentinean Attorney General regarding the suicide bombing attack at the AMIA building in Buenos Aires.
5. **August 26, 2009** – Ahmad Vahidi, wanted by Interpol for participation in the 1994 terrorist attack in Buenos Aires, is the new designated defense minister of Iran (still unratified by the Parliament). His nomination signals the increasing strength of the Revolutionary Guards and Ahmadinejad's intention to continue defying the West and subverting the Middle East.
6. **April 8, 2009** – Iran increases its political and economic presence in Latin America, defying the United States and attempting to undermine American hegemony. It also foments radical Shi'ite Islamization and exports Iran's revolutionary ideology, using Hezbollah to establish intelligence, terrorism and crime networks, liable to be exploited against the United States and Israel.
7. **November 14, 2007** – Iran as a terrorism-sponsoring state
8. **March 28, 2007** – Following an appeal from the Argentinean Attorney General, Interpol issued international extradition warrants for five senior Iranians and one senior Hezbollah operative. The charge was involvement in the suicide bombing attack of the Jewish community center building (AMIA) in Argentina in 1994.

9. **April 2, 2007** – Using the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards as the main tool to export the revolution beyond the borders of Iran.

10. **November 14, 2007** – Iran as a terrorism-sponsoring state: Interpol rejected Iran's appeal and issued international arrest warrants for five senior Iranians (and one senior Hezbollah operative) who were involved in bombing the Jewish Community Center in Argentina (AMIA) in Buenos Aires in 1994.

11. **November 14, 2006** – Argentina accuses Iran of responsibility for the Hezbollah terrorist attack which destroyed Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, 1994. The Argentinean Attorney General's office announced it had found Iran responsible for the terrorist attack and an Argentinean judge issued arrest warrants for seven senior Iranians and one senior Hezbollah member (Imad Mughnieh).