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Trends. Assassination as a National Security Tool: When is Killing Time the Right Time?

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A national security tool is supposed to be able to support national security. It is this premise that makes the alleged, attempted assassination of a Hamas leader, Khaled Mashaal, by Israeli agents of the Mossad controversial to so many diplomats, government officials, and political and intelligence authorities throughout the world. Although there are many arguments that can be made by opponents of the alleged attempted assassination, the conclusion of virtually all these argument is that Israeli security would not have been supported whether Mashaal was assassinated or not.

These arguments suggest that--either way--Israel would have garnered its resultant political problems with Jordan, the Palestinian National Authority, Hamas, and the United States among others. However these arguments are based on the source of the successful or unsuccessful assassination becoming known. If the clandestine and covert nature of an assassination attempt were successfully protected, these arguments can be successfully refuted. The death of a political leader in Jordan can reasonably be attributed to intrafactional or interfactional conflict, bad health, "nonpolitical" crime, mistaken identity, being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and so on.

An opponent may certainly advance arguments that assassination violates moral and ethical standards or that gentlemen don't read each other's mail and kill each other. However, in the case of Khaled Mashaal, making political objections more likely masks conflicts of power between the Netanyahu administration and its domestic and foreign opponents. (See Amon, M. (1996). Cultural clues: The nature of intelligence after Rabin's assassination. *Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 9, 1-15; deMause, L. (1995). Shooting at Clinton, prosecuting O.J., and other sacrificial rituals. *Journal of Psychohistory*, 22, 378-393; Indinopulos, T. (1997). Shin Bet's blind side. *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 10, 91-96; Schemann, S. (October 7, 1997.) Netanyahu remains defiant on botched assassination attempt. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>.) (Keywords: National Security, Assassination, Israel, Mossad.)