

Assassination Central

Contributed by WSJ
Saturday, 26 January 2008

Is the West Partly to Blame?

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Wall Street Journal, January 26, 2008, Page A10

There's a fearsome consistency to the assassinations that have bedeviled Lebanon for the past three years. The victims are invariably killed by remotely controlled car bombs. Invariably, too, they are opponents, or obstacles, to Syria's designs in the colony it supposedly surrendered nearly three years ago.

Yesterday marked another such murder, this time of Captain Wissam Mahmoud Eid, a terrorism investigator who had already survived one assassination attempt in 2006. Eid had been involved in the forensic investigation following the February 2005 assassination of former premier Rafik Hariri, and later in the Lebanese government's battle with Fatah al-Islam, a Sunni terrorist group based in a refugee camp north of Beirut. Neither role could have endeared him to Damascus, which is generally believed to have played the main part both in Hariri's death and Fatah al-Islam's uprising.

Eid's murder ought to be a powerful reminder that Syria's purposes in the region remain intractable and malign. Yet as Detlev Mehlis, the German investigator who formerly led the U.N. inquiry into Hariri's murder, makes clear in the "Weekend Interview," the willingness to prosecute the case to a just conclusion seems to be petering out.

Much of the blame here lies with Washington. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi put to rest whatever lingering fears Damascus might have had about U.S. intentions with her visit in April. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice followed up by inviting Syria to November's Mideast conference in Annapolis, and Hillary Clinton promises to offer diplomatic carrots to Damascus if she is elected. The killings will continue in Beirut, as long as nobody save the Lebanese seem to care. WSJ.