

PISSING ON THE PEACE PROCESS(ES)

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I hope to get around to saying more about the latest assassinated Iranian scientist, but in the meantime, I wanted to point out a coincidence of timing.

Jim Lobe argues convincingly that the assassination of Mostafa Ahmadi-Roshan was likely designed to scuttle any efforts to dial down the rhetoric between Iran and the US.

My sense of the last week or so was that the mostly verbal confrontation between Iran and the U.S., particularly regarding the Strait of Hormuz, was spinning out of control much more rapidly than anyone had expected and that the possibility of a conflict had suddenly become very real in ways the Obama administration certainly never intended. (See Anne-Marie Slaughter's CNN column, "Saving Face and Peace in the Gulf," as an example of "this is getting really dangerous all of a sudden". Until last fall, of course, she was Clinton's director of policy planning and a very influential figure in the administration.) So there seemed to be a real effort to dial things back, expressed not only in repeated statements by senior administration officials, including Clinton, emphasizing Washington's readiness to negotiate, but also, if the always well-informed Laura Rozen is to be believed, a lot of diplomatic – some of it, I'm sure, behind the scenes – manoeuvring to get the P5+1 process back into gear, with Turkey serving as the convenor/mediator.

Under these circumstances, the timing of today's assassination was particularly

remarkable. Among other things, it makes me believe that the U.S., which condemned the attack and categorically denied any role in it (See Clinton's statement in her press conference with the Qatari Prime Minister [here](#)), was not in fact involved.* That leaves two obvious suspects: 1) Israel and 2) a faction within the Iranian regime. If there was indeed an Israeli hand behind it, the assassination was not just an effort to set back the Iran's nuclear program and induce fear among other scientists working on it. I think it was also a provocation designed to 1) blow up prospects for progress in any p5+1 negotiations that might convene over the next month or so; 2) strengthen hard-line factions in Tehran that oppose negotiations; and 3) possibly provoke retaliation that will further escalate tensions, if not armed conflict. Of course, all three of these overlap and reinforce each other. If it was an internal Iranian faction, which, frankly, I find more difficult to believe, both 1) and 2) above also apply.

It makes sense. Everyone with a brain believes this was an Israeli op, and it's safe to conclude that Israel wants to press us towards actual conflict.

Now consider DDay's take on the video, apparently of Marines pissing on Taliban corpses, posted anonymously to YouTube.

Taliban negotiators approaching discussions on a peace deal with the United States claim that the talks will not be derailed by the emergence of a new video showing Marines urinating on dead Taliban soldiers.

The video, released near the 10th anniversary of the opening of the

terrorist prison at Guantanamo, was released anonymously on YouTube. The poster **claims** that US Marines with the elite combat unit Scout Sniper Team 4 engaged in this practice. International law may have been violated:

According to the Geneva Conventions, which the US military observes, combatants must "at all times, and particularly after an engagement...search for the dead and prevent their being despoiled." They are also required to "ensure that the dead are honourably interred, if possible according to the rites of the religion to which they belonged, that their graves are respected, grouped if possible according to the nationality of the deceased, properly maintained and marked so that they may always be found." (The UK's rules for its military members are even more explicit, threatening court-martial for any soldier for "maltreatment" of a dead enemy.)

The Pentagon is currently investigating. But the biggest fallout from the video may be to nip in the bud a new round of peace talks with the Taliban, which await a go-ahead from Afghan President Hamid Karzai (not a certainty; Karzai refused to go along with an earlier deal in December). So far, Taliban officials have said that this will not derail the talks:

As Jim pointed out earlier this week, this comes just after the Truth Vigilante Times drummed up more drone strikes which led to ... more drone strikes.

It sure looks like someone is trying to make sure peace doesn't break out in Afghanistan as well.

But who?

I'll just float that question for now—I expect Jim or I will return to it in the coming days. For the moment, though, I just wanted to note that someone is pissing on the peace process in at least two different fronts.