



The Attack on Karaj:

Analysis of the attack on an Iranian atomic energy agency facility

Future Briefs

Issue 557, 08 Jul 2021

The 'shadow war' between Iran and Israel continues. The sabotage operations remain, evident in the attacks on Natanz, the most famous uranium enrichment facility in Iran in July 2020 and in April 2022, and assassination of nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh in Tehran. This is in addition to the mutual targeting of ships in the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea between the two sides.

A building for manufacturing centrifuges, which belongs to the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization, was attacked by a drone. The plant is known as the 'Iran Centrifuge Technology Company (TESA), which is one of the main factories for the production of aluminum foils used in the installation of centrifuges within the uranium enrichment processes. The drone that targeted the building took off from a location near the factory located in Karaj. Analyzing the incident, one can note the following :

1- Iranian denial: There is a collective consensus amidst the Iranian media about defusing the attack on such an important facility that belongs to the Iranian Atomic Energy Agency. Noor News Agency, which is affiliated with the Iranian Supreme National Security Council, stated that the Iranian security services had thwarted a sabotage act on a building

that belongs to the Iranian Atomic Energy Agency in the outskirts of Karaj. It also noted that no damage was caused without disclosing the name of the facility, while a learned source from the Khatam al-Anbia Air Defense Base denied in a release to ISNA that the attack was executed by a large drone.

2- Israeli allusions to carrying out the attack: Israeli media, including the 'Jerusalem Post' and Channel 13 of the Israeli television, confirmed that the factory that produces centrifuges had been seriously damaged. Last Friday, the Israeli newspaper 'Yedioth Ahronoth' suggested that Israel was behind targeting the Karaj factory in Tehran, on the grounds that it has an interest and an operational ability to carry out such a complex operation inside Iranian territory. Last Thursday, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, in a speech during the graduation ceremony for Israeli

The Attack on Karaj: Analysis of the attack on an Iranian atomic energy agency facility. Future Briefs, Issue 557, 08 Jul 2021, Abu Dhabi, Future for Advanced Research & Studies.



2- Iran’s inability to confront sabotage operations:

The successive Israeli sabotage operations reveal the continued penetration of the Iranian interior, which has been repeated in previous incidents, such as the attack on the Natanz facility and the assassination of nuclear scientist Fakhrizadeh in the centre of Tehran. The recent sabotage operation in Karaj is quite consistent with this strategy as the attack was carried out by a drone that was launched near the site of the accident. This indicates the failure of the Iranian security services to identify

Air Force pilots, implicitly alluded to his country’s role in the latest attack, saying, «Our enemies know — not from statements, but from actions — that we are much more determined and much more clever, and that we do not hesitate to act when it is needed», adding that Israeli prime ministers have always had “a sacred responsibility not to allow an existential threat to the State of Israel».

Implications of the accident:

It is important to accentuate that an incident such as the attack on Karaj has several implications such as:

1- Targeting the Iranian nuclear program: The attack, as reported by the Israeli media, represents a validation for the new Israeli government led by ‘Naftali Bennett’, regarding confronting Iranian threats, and not allowing Iran the possibility of a nuclear escalation that would threaten Israel’s national security. What supports this conclusion is that this operation is the first one during the era of Bennett, who is affiliated with the Israeli anti-Iranian right, as well as the head of the Mossad, David Barnea, who was appointed as the head of what Former Israeli Prime Minister described as the key intelligence apparatus in Israel to confront the Iranian threat.

and dismantle the Israeli spy networks inside the country.

3- Decelerating the Iranian nuclear program: The series of attacks linked to Iran’s nuclear capabilities indicates Israel’s intent to slow down the Iranian nuclear program, in light of Tehran’s insistence on proceeding with uranium enrichment at high levels of 60% by the installation of advanced centrifuges such as IR-4, and IR-2M, and IR6, as well as other centrifuges used to speed up uranium enrichment in Natanz and Fordo facilities. Several reports indicated that the Karaj factory was producing substitute centrifuges to replace the ones damaged in the Natanz facility after the recent attack last April. Therefore, the exposure of the Iranian nuclear program, particularly the uranium enrichment operations, to acts of sabotage will slow down Tehran’s endeavors to possess a nuclear bomb.

4- Depriving Tehran of employing uranium enrichment as a bargaining chip:

The recent incident in Karaj is inseparable from the context of the ongoing negotiations in Vienna, on the grounds that it is one of Washington’s pressure cards on Tehran to make concessions in order to reach an

agreement with it. It seems that the incident received a green light from the US, on the grounds that the targeted centrifuge factory in Karaj was among the list of targets that Israel presented to the Trump administration, meaning that Israeli intelligence had been tracing the activity of the factory for a long time.

5- A warning to Raisi: The attack in Karaj is a message to the hard-line Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, that Tel Aviv will not back off from its strategy of slowing the nuclear program, and that Raisi's adoption of hard-line foreign policies will not deter Israel from targeting Iran.

Adopting previous policies


Both the Iranians and the Israelis have political and strategic fundamentals that would never be compromised, regardless of the different orientations of the ruling elite in both countries. The Supreme Leader still has the upper hand in Iran, while the space granted to the president is fixed, and may vary according to his proximity to the Leader and key decision-making circles in Iran. The situation is not much different for Israel, as there is

a firm conviction that is based on preserving Israeli interests, weakening opponents and confronting any existential threat from Israel's perspective. Furthermore, the ruling security and military elite in Israel did not differ much, despite the departure of Netanyahu, which gives continuity to Israeli policies towards Iran.


Due to these stipulations, the tension, between the two states, is expected to continue over the coming period, with an unequal Iranian response to Israeli threats. As Israel continues to complete its policy of penetrating the Iranian interior, with the aim of destroying some components of its nuclear program, Iran is seeking to respond by reinforcing its military deployment near Israel, supporting forces and armed militias that are hostile to it, and even expanding maneuvers by targeting US and Israeli interests in the region. Meanwhile, Iranian officials continue to confirm that the Karaj facility did not suffer any material damage in the latest attacks, which relieves it of the embarrassment of responding to this attack, at least for a while.

ABOUT FARAS

Future for Advanced Research and Studies (FARAS) is an independent think tank founded on April 4, 2014 in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. FARAS seeks to enrich public dialogue, support decision-making and enhance academic research pertaining to future trends that currently constitute a real problem in the Middle East region. In light of instability and unpredictability, the overarching goal of FARAS is to help ward off future shocks regarding these developments.

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