Iran Picked Up the Glove Thrown by Israeli Secret Services

In recent years, relations between Israel and Iran have deteriorated to the point that each of these states considers the other its main adversary. Despite the willingness of Israeli and Iranian politicians to even start military action against each other, an open war between them is highly unlikely, and there is more than one country between them. But the war on the new laws and rules is already in full swing, and both sides regularly test each other’s strength, actively engaging the capabilities of their intelligence services. Moreover, these services have been used most actively in recent years by Tel Aviv in the organization of numerous covert operations, up to and including economic sabotage and the physical destruction of prominent Iranian figures.

When it comes to Israeli intelligence agencies, the most frequently mentioned is the Mossad foreign intelligence service, which is the only intelligence and sabotage organization in the world, which, in addition to mining classified information, is engaged in the physical removal of the enemies of the Jewish state. For this purpose, it even set up the Komemiyut ("Sovereignty") covert operations directorate, which has secret combat units, the Kidon ("Spear").

At the same time in Israel, there are other secret services, about the existence and activities of which the average person knows almost nothing. As a result, there are many legends about the intelligence services of Israel, the most infamous of which is the omnipotence and elusiveness of Israeli spies. However, like the history of other intelligence agencies, the history of the Israeli secret services is made up of successes and sad failures.

In the sphere of covert operations, the long-standing confrontation between Israel and Iran is in no small measure of a war, Israel's hard actions against Iran have repeatedly been recognized by Tel Aviv as a strategy in general. The Mossad has a number of major operations under its belt, including, in particular, inciting separatist sentiments in Iran - both in provinces with a compact population of Kurds, and in Sistan-Baluchistan, where the "Junud Allah, mujahideen as-Sunnah" (Soldiers of Allah, mujahideen of Sunna or simply "Jundallah" — all these groups are banned
in Russia) operated knee-deep in blood. The establishment of an agent network in Iran itself has been repeatedly assisted by the Mossad opposition of the Mujahedin Organization of the Iranian People, which, in fact, has turned from an independent organization into a puppet.

Fearing the emergence of nuclear weapons in Iran, which, according to Tel Aviv, could pose an objective threat to the very existence of the Jewish state, the Israeli operations in this area have long become a kind of fetish.

The first "high-profile" allegations of special operations by Israeli secret services against Iranian nuclear scientists appeared as early as 2007. Allegedly, one of the first such operations by the Israeli Mossad was the assassination in February 2007 of Ardashir Hasanpour, 44, one of the leading Iranian scientists who worked at the nuclear facility in Isfahan, under mysterious circumstances (the official version was gas poisoning). However, there were other cases of mysterious deaths of his other colleagues. In February 2009, British and Italian newspapers (the Daily Telegraph, La Repubblica in particular) declared that Israel was waging a "covert war" against Iranian nuclear scientists by terrorizing key figures in Iran's nuclear program, as well as by sabotaging and setting up Israeli front companies that supplied Iran with inappropriate equipment and raw materials.

Although, at that time, as the Western media noted, the Mossad had already been involved in the murders of scientists it did not like on the territory of other countries. In particular, the Canadian scientist Gerald Bull, who designed the famous super cannon for Saddam Hussein, with which he hoped to bombard Israel. As well as in a series of attacks against a group of German scientists who had gone into the service of the Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser and were working for him on the development of the Egyptian missile program.

As noted by US media, Israeli intelligence agencies may also be behind a series of murders of Iranian physicists in 2010 and 2012, some of whom worked with Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. In January and November 2010, for example, Masoud Ali Mohammadi, a professor at Imam Hussein University in the capital, and Majid Shahriari, a professor at Beheshti University, were killed. In January 2012, Natanz Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, an employee of the nuclear center in eastern Tehran, was the victim of a car bomb thrown into the passenger compartment.

In January 2020, Israeli and US intelligence agencies assassinated General Qasem Soleimani, nicknamed "The Shadow" because of his leadership of all covert operations outside the country and head of the most secret elite unit of the Iranian army, Al-Quds.

On November 27, 2020, a leading Iranian nuclear physicist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, was killed in a Tehran suburb.

After the Stuxnet computer virus disrupted more than a thousand centrifuges at Iran's nuclear facilities in 2010, the cyber war between Iran and Israel became increasingly serious.

All such actions by the Israeli secret services, of course, could not remain unpunished, as the official authorities of the Islamic Republic of Israel have repeatedly warned. However, Tehran wisely did not carry out the earlier threat of a missile strike against Israel, but showed its commitment to their policy of "an eye for an eye" with little bloodshed. Earlier, Iran avenged the death of al-Quds Special Forces commander General Qassem Suleimani by destroying a CIA air command post in Afghanistan, where intelligence chief for the Middle East Michael D'Andrea was killed along with other US intelligence officers.

Mahmoud Alavi, Minister of Information and head of Iranian intelligence services, stated that his country's counterintelligence service had uncovered a network of 290 spies. And Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, also reported the neutralization of "a large spy network that operated in the country's cyberspace". Many of those arrested now face the death penalty. Press TV, a local English-language channel, showed the documentary "CIA Network" under the title of "Mole Hunt": Iran has dealt a heavy blow to the spy network in the region and beyond. This film presents details of the "hunt" for traitors and subsequent arrests, interviews with the exposed agents.

On December 3, Fahmi Hinawi, one of the heads of the Mossad, who was involved in the liquidation of the Iranian nuclear scientist M. Fakhrizadeh, was killed in his car near Tel Aviv. The scenario of his assassination followed the same pattern that the Israelis used: Hinawi's car stopped at a red traffic light and was riddled with bullets from automatic weapons. Israel is worried that Iran will not stop at the execution of the Mossad member, and a general alert was issued on December 4 at the Dimona nuclear facility in the Negev desert, with all of its employees warned of the possible danger to them "at every corner and even at home". This fear is intensified by Lebanese Hezbollah's threats of "revenge with sniper rounds".

In addition, the Israel Defense Ministry recently reported the theft of expensive radio-electronic encryption and
communication equipment at one of the military bases in Caelim. And it is not the first theft: in late December, 93 thousand cartridges of 5.56 caliber were stolen from an underground ammunition depot. As the Israeli media have already pointed out, if the "Iranian trail" is confirmed, then it will be certain that this is what it was all about. Confrontation of intelligence and special operations has never been a "one-player game," sooner or later the opponents begin to play on an equal footing. And if in the last two or three decades Mossad demonstrated its superiority in confronting the Iranian secret services, now it seems that its luck began to change. The operations of recent months are undoubtedly a success for the Iranian secret services, which have proved that they have found a weak spot in Israel and can successfully operate behind enemy lines.

Tehran had no choice but to accept the rules of the game imposed on it by the United States and Israel, through the efforts of which terrorism and the assassination of political and important public figures are increasingly becoming the norm.

_Vladimir Platov, an expert on the Middle East, exclusively for the online magazine "New Eastern Outlook"._