

Special Report

Rove's White House 'Murder, Inc.'

By Wayne Madsen

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May 21, 2004—On September 15, 2001, just four days after the 9-11 attacks, CIA Director George Tenet provided President [sic] Bush with a Top Secret "Worldwide Attack Matrix"—a virtual license to kill targets deemed to be a threat to the United States in some 80 countries around the world. The Tenet plan, which was subsequently approved by Bush, essentially reversed the executive orders of four previous U.S. administrations that expressly prohibited political assassinations.

According to high level European intelligence officials, Bush's counselor, Karl Rove, used the new presidential authority to silence a popular Lebanese Christian politician who was planning to offer irrefutable evidence that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon authorized the massacre of hundreds of Palestinian men, women, and children in the Beirut refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla in 1982. In addition, Sharon provided the Lebanese forces who carried out the grisly task. At the time of the massacres, Elie Hobeika was intelligence chief of Lebanese Christian forces in Lebanon who were battling Palestinians and other Muslim groups in a bloody civil war. He was also the chief liaison to Israeli Defense Force (IDF) personnel in Lebanon. An official Israeli inquiry into the massacre at the camps, the Kahan Commission, merely found Sharon "indirectly" responsible for the slaughter and fingered Hobeika as the chief instigator.

The Kahan Commission never called on Hobeika to offer testimony in his defense. However, in response to charges brought against Sharon before a special war crimes court in Belgium, Hobeika was urged to testify against Sharon, according to well-informed Lebanese sources. Hobeika was prepared to offer a different version of events than what was contained in the Kahan report. A 1993 Belgian law permitting human rights prosecutions was unusual in that non-Belgians could be tried for violations against other non-Belgians in a Belgian court. Under pressure from the Bush administration, the law was severely amended and the extraterritoriality provisions were curtailed.

Hobeika headed the Lebanese forces intelligence agency since the mid- 1970s and he soon developed close ties to the CIA. He was a frequent visitor to the CIA's headquarters at Langley, Virginia. After the Syrian invasion of Lebanon in 1990, Hobeika held a number of cabinet positions in the Lebanese government, a proxy for the Syrian occupation authorities. He also served in the parliament. In July 2001, Hobeika called a press conference and announced he was prepared to testify against Sharon in Belgium and revealed that he had evidence of what actually occurred in Sabra and Shatilla. Hobeika also indicated that Israel had flown members of the South Lebanon Army (SLA) into Beirut International Airport in an Israeli Air Force C130 transport plane. In full view of dozens of witnesses, including members of the Lebanese army and others, SLA troops under the command of Major Saad Haddad were slipped into the camps to commit the massacres. The SLA troops were under the direct command of Ariel Sharon and an Israeli Mossad agent provocateur named Rafi Eitan. Hobeika offered evidence that a former U.S. ambassador to Lebanon was aware of the Israeli plot. In addition, the IDF had placed a camera in a strategic position to film the Sabra and Shatilla massacres. Hobeika was going to ask that the footage be released as part of the investigation of Sharon.

After announcing he was willing to testify against Sharon, Hobeika became fearful for his safety and began moves to leave Lebanon. Hobeika was not aware that his threats to testify against Sharon had triggered a series of fateful events that reached well into the White House and Sharon's office.

On January 24, 2002, Hobeika's car was blown up by a remote controlled bomb placed in a parked Mercedes along a street in the Hazmieh section of Beirut. The bomb exploded when Hobeika and his three associates, Fares Souweidan, Mitri Ajram, and Waleed Zein, were driving their Range Rover past the TNT-laden Mercedes at 9:40 am Beirut time. The Range Rover's four passengers were killed in the explosion. In case Hobeika's car had taken another route through the neighborhood, two additional parked cars, located at two other choke points, were also rigged with TNT. The powerful bomb wounded a number of other people on the street. Other parked cars were destroyed and buildings and homes were damaged. The Lebanese president, prime minister, and interior minister all claimed that Israeli agents were behind the attack.

It is noteworthy that the State Department's list of global terrorist incidents for 2002 worldwide failed to list the car bombing attack on Hobeika and his party. The White House wanted to ensure the attack was censored from the report. The reason was simple: the attack ultimately had Washington's fingerprints on it.

High level European intelligence sources now report that Karl Rove personally coordinated Hobeika's assassination. The hit on Hobeika employed Syrian intelligence agents. Syrian President Bashar Assad was trying to curry favor with the Bush administration in the aftermath of 9-11 and was more than willing to help the White House. In addition, Assad's father, Hafez Assad, had been an ally of Bush's father during Desert Storm, a period that saw Washington give a "wink and a nod" to Syria's occupation of Lebanon. Rove wanted to help Sharon avoid any political embarrassment from an in absentia trial in Brussels where Hobeika would be a star witness. Rove and Sharon agreed on the plan to use Syrian Military Intelligence agents to assassinate Hobeika. Rove saw Sharon as an indispensable ally of Bush in ensuring the loyalty of the Christian evangelical and Jewish voting blocs in the United States. Sharon saw the plan to have the United States coordinate the hit as a way to mask all connections to Jerusalem.

The Syrian hit team was ordered by Assef Shawkat, the number two man in Syrian military intelligence and a good friend and brother in law of Syrian President Bashar Assad. Assad's intelligence services had already cooperated with U.S. intelligence in resorting to unconventional methods to extract information from al Qaeda detainees deported to Syria from the United States and other countries in the wake of 9-11. The order to take out Hobeika was transmitted by Shawkat to Roustom Ghazali, the head of Syrian military intelligence in Beirut. Ghazali arranged for the three remote controlled cars to be parked along Hobeika's route in Hamzieh.

The plan to kill Hobeika had all the necessary caveats and built-in denial mechanisms. If the Syrians were discovered beforehand or afterwards, Karl Rove and his associates in the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans would be ensured plausible deniability.

Hobeika's CIA intermediary in Beirut, a man only referred to as "Jason" by Hobeika, was a frequent companion of the Lebanese politician during official and off-duty hours. During Hobeika's election campaigns for his parliamentary seat, Jason was often in Hobeika's office offering support and advice. After Hobeika's assassination, Jason became despondent over the death of his colleague. Eventually, Jason disappeared abruptly from Lebanon and reportedly later emerged in Pakistan.

Karl Rove's involvement in the assassination of Hobeika may not have been the last "hit" he ordered to help out Sharon. In March 2002, a few months after Hobeika's assassination, another Lebanese Christian with knowledge of Sharon's involvement in the Sabra and Shatilla massacres was gunned down along with his wife in Sao Paulo, Brazil. A bullet fired at Michael Nassar's car flattened one of his tires. Nassar pulled into a gasoline station for repairs. A professional assassin, firing a gun with a silencer, shot Nassar and his wife in the head, killing them both instantly. The assailant fled and was never captured. Nassar was also involved with the Phalange militia at Sabra and Shatilla. Nassar was also reportedly willing to testify against Sharon in Belgium and, as a nephew of SLA Commander General Antoine Lahd, may have

had important evidence to bolster Hobeika's charge that Sharon ordered SLA forces into the camps to wipe out the Palestinians.

Based on what European intelligence claims is concrete intelligence on Rove's involvement in the assassination of Hobeika, the Bush administration can now add political assassination to its laundry list of other misdeeds, from lying about the reasons to go to war to the torture tactics in violation of the Geneva Conventions that have been employed by the Pentagon and "third country" nationals at prisons in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay.

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