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# Planted bomb, remote control and AI: How the Mossad killed Hamas' leader in Iran



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A truck carrying the coffins containing the bodies of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and his bodyguard Abu Shaaban during a funeral ceremony in Tehran, Iran, on Aug. 1, 2024. Photo: Morteza Nikoubazi/NurPhoto via Getty Images

The Israeli Mossad [assassinated Hamas political leader](#) Ismail Haniyeh by detonating an explosive device planted in advance in his

**Why it matters:** The fact that the Mossad managed to plant the explosive device in a high-security facility shows not only the deep penetration of Israeli intelligence services inside Iran but also the vulnerabilities of the Iranian intelligence and security apparatus.

- The details about the planted explosive device were [first reported](#) by the New York Times and confirmed to Axios by two sources.

**Driving the news:** The explosion that killed Haniyeh took place on Tuesday night, but the official announcement of his assassination was published several hours later on Wednesday morning.

- The initial statement from Hamas said Haniyeh was killed in an Israeli airstrike.
- Iranian media first reported three missiles were launched by a drone and later that the missile was launched from outside of Iran.

**Behind the scenes:** The sources said Israeli intelligence learned which facility — and which exact room — Haniyeh stayed in during his visits to Tehran.

- The bomb was planted in the room in advance, the sources said.
- They added that the bomb was a high-tech device that used artificial intelligence.
- It was detonated remotely by Mossad operatives who were on Iranian soil after receiving intelligence that Haniyeh was indeed in the room.
- The IRGC said it has opened an investigation around the incident.

- But the sources said that on Wednesday evening Israeli officials briefed their U.S. counterparts about the details of the operation.

**What they're saying:** Israel Defense Forces spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said in a press briefing on Thursday that there was no Israeli airstrike or missile attack anywhere in the Middle East on Tuesday night other than the one in Beirut.

- He claimed that in the last year Iran worked on smuggling sophisticated explosive devices to terrorist groups in the West Bank.

**The big picture:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is directly in charge of the Mossad, made the decision to assassinate Haniyeh.

- The sources said the negotiations to reach a deal to release hostages held by Hamas in Gaza and establish a ceasefire were a consideration in the decision-making process.
- One of the sources said the Mossad position was that Haniyeh's assassination would bring justice to the Oct. 7 attack victims and remove an obstacle to the hostage deal. The source claimed Haniyeh held a more hardline view on the deal than Hamas leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar and was making it more difficult to get a deal.
- "Haniyeh presented a pragmatic face to the mediators but internally inside Hamas led a hard line," the source said.

*Editor's note: This story has been updated with comments from Hagari.*