

TO: HARTFORD COURANT, EDITORIAL PAGE
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TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Anwar al-Sadat was assassinated on October 6, 1981 by Islamic militant group called Jihad. Ayman al Zawahri was rounded up and jailed, and accused of being one of the plotters. The attack on the Israeli tourists on October 7, 2004 is clear to Egyptians. It is a reminder that the peace with Israel is unacceptable, the peace for which the late Egyptian President lost his life.

As an Egyptian, it is obvious to me that Ayman al Zawahri was involved, in some fashion or other. The resorts of the Red Sea where the bombs went off such as Taba are close to Israel, and therefore heavily secured by the Egyptian army and police. It is doubtful whether such a large scale operation did not involve the tacit, if not direct, involvement of army personnel. It is common knowledge that the Egyptian army has been infiltrated by Islamic extremism since the eighties. It was army officer Khaled al Islambouli who, with colleagues, fired at the Sadat reviewing stand in the midst of an army parade.

October 6th is a national holiday in Egypt. It marks the success of the Egyptian army in 1973 when it crossed the Suez Canal and destroyed the Israeli fortification in Sinai, which separated Egypt from the land it once controlled prior to 1967. The Barlev line was destroyed and the Egyptian flag raised in the Sinai peninsula for the first time since 1967. So, although this attack on the Israelis occurred on October 7th, the memory link is clear. Further, the presence of Israel tourists is now, in the light of recent events in Gaza (for the past nine days northern Gaza towns have been bombed and leveled by Israeli air fire and by bulldozers on the ground), not favored in most of Egypt, even though the tourist trade welcomes them.

Thirdly, Ramandan begins in one week, hence this attack is also perceived by militants as an act of jihad, which is meant to remind Egyptians and other Arabs that foreign occupation is unacceptable.

Finally, this attack sends a message not only to Ariel Sharon, the occupier of Sinai in 1973 (Sinai was evacuated and returned to Egypt in 1983), but also to Mubarak and his pro-American regime.

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Khaled al Islambouli
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