

his command. But there was very little official information available on him or his assassination, and the information that I did find was clearly coloured by political preference. Another thing that surprised me and fascinated me at the same time was the fact that there exist relatively few photographs of him, at least in comparison to the high profile media presence of his comrade, Arafat. So a year later, when I had the chance to travel to Tunis, I made it my objective to visit the house where he was murdered.

What did you find?

Well, it was a strange and at same time powerful experience to stand in front of his house in Sidi Bou Said, a small residential area near Tunis. You realize that this is where it happened almost twenty-five years ago, and it also just feels like yesterday. You are in this time warp, where past and present fold into one another. Abu Jihad's murder had a great impact on many people all around the world. Not only did he instantly become a hero and a martyr, his assassination also had far reaching political and ideological ramifications. It was quite an intense experience to stand there and realize the structures and historical lines in which that place and that particular moment is embedded.

Did you find out more about who killed him and why?

Before I came to Tunis, I had come across some information on the assassination, although nothing confirmed by official sources. According to these online media, the attack was executed by a group of Israeli commando's who had come ashore in a number of small boats earlier that night. It all went very quickly and for an outsider (like me) it read like a script for an action-movie. So when I arrived in Tunis I managed to talk to people who knew more about the true story around the event. I heard many different versions as to who was behind the attack and who was responsible. Some sounded quite truthful; others more like a conspiracy.

I visited Tunisia in October 2011, around the first open elections after the Tunisian revolution and people tried to spin the story so that it would suit their political agenda, for instance, they mentioned the just evicted dictator, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, to be a co-conspirator or even Yasser Arafat to be part of it. I also met with a journalist who did tell me a couple of details that I hadn't heard before. According to him, people had seen a woman in the commando team videotape the whole event.

At the end of my trip, I realized that (here too) every version of the story I'd come across was somehow tainted by the political viewpoints or agenda of the person I'd spoken with. In Tunis, the story was adapted to the political reality of that moment. What I realized too, was that the absence of an official account of events created a fertile ground for many possible versions to circulate.

JUUL HONDIUS
Interview by
CHRISTEL VESTERS
on 'Brilliant Punitive Raids'
May 17, 2013

On April 16, 1988, the Palestinian leader and co-founder of the secular nationalist party Fatah, Khalil al-Wazir, also known as Abu Jihad, was assassinated at close range at his home in Tunis. Although it was widely believed that an Israeli commando team was behind the assassination, Israel did not take official responsibility for his killing until November 1, 2012.¹

Christel Vesters: How did you become interested in the person of Khalil al-Wazir, who in a way is the protagonist of your new series of photographic works, Brilliant Punitive Raids?

Juul Hondius:

I first came across Khalil al-Wazir when I was in Paris a couple of years ago to do research on another man who was assassinated. I went through the newspaper archives of the Science-Po, the Paris Institute of Political Studies, which covered events in the 1980s.² The number of assassinations intrigued me as well as the images that documented them in the archives. When I came home I did some more research on al-Wazir and learnt about his past, his political career as founder of Fatah and later on his role as Deputy to Arafat in the PLO, and the many terrorist operations that took place under

¹ Wikipedia, accessed on May 17, 2013

² Whilst going through the archives of this period, it appeared to me that Paris in the 1980s, 1990's had become the locus for many – politically motivated – attacks by different organisations against representatives of other organisations. The IRA, PLO, ANSA, the Basques, they all seemed to travel to Paris and kill their opponents there.

How did you deal with this diversity of accounts, these speculations on history? Were you looking to find the true story?

Well, to be honest this ambiguity just made the event even more intriguing to me. And of course, as an artist it gave me the liberty to imagine and add my own version of the story. So in that sense the absence of an official account gives way for more artistic freedom.

I wasn't particularly interested in finding out the truth in a journalistic way, but Abu Jihad and the sensational way in which the operation was executed, fascinated me. When I was standing in front of Abu Jihad's home, I envisioned how it might have gone down, what it looked like, and in my head I was already imagining the scenario, filling in the blanks, creating my true account of events. But at the same time my mind oscillated between on the one hand this spectacular Hollywood-action-movie-like scenario and on the other the brutal reality and heinous nature of what had actually happened on here; a man killed in front of his wife and son. I guess this ambiguity stayed with me when I started to develop the project in more detail.

Can you tell me a bit how that process evolved? How did you get from standing in front of Abu Jihad's home in Tunis to filming Brilliant Punitive Raids?

When I came home from Tunis in 2011, I didn't really know how to continue with the material I collected, so I let it rest. Until November 2012, when the Israeli government took official responsibility for the killing of Abu Jihad and more information was made public. One newspaper published an interview with Lev Nahum, a relatively young Israeli commando who led the operation on the ground and who described the event in detail. One sentence in an online news item struck me in particular: "It has now been revealed that al-Wazir was shot in his home in Tunis by two Israeli commandos – one dressed as woman – who were pretending to be a holidaying couple."³ An even more extraordinary aspect of the operation was that in order to test their disguise the two soldiers went for a stroll in a shopping mall in Tel Aviv. Apparently, the 'woman' got some attention from men on the street, at which point the senior commander decided the disguise was a success.

This part of the story, the make-believe play of two soldiers in a park in Tel Aviv in preparation of a cold blooded killing, became the angle of the work. And I realised that I was more interested in the story from the perspective of the people involved, how they experienced it all, than in a factual reconstruction of events.

More than once you referred to this event as a scenario, or a film, rather than a historical event? How important is it for you to position this work in the realm of fiction instead of in the realm of facts or journalistic research?

As I mentioned before, at the time there were many different versions of the same story, all more or less serving a different political agenda, which makes it difficult to speak of this event in terms of the truth, because the truth of one group of people is not necessarily the truth of their opponents. This is what makes the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict so complex. People are very much conditioned by their political beliefs in the way that they speak about Abu Jihad's assassination.

What struck me was that some Israeli newspapers spoke about the attack as a spectacular operation. So also the operation itself, the way that it was orchestrated and executed, served ideological purposes; it was not just about killing a PLO leader and terrorist, it was also about boosting Israeli moral and showing off their military and strategic superiority. The more I found out about the operation, the more it felt I was reading a film script, and this awkward tension between the facts and the ways these lived on in the different stories, or between the make-believe play of the two soldiers and the reality of the terrorist attack, created the context for my own script.

When I arrived in Tel Aviv, where I eventually did all the shooting, people offered me more information about the event. But at that point, that one sentence about the two commando's pretending to be a holidaying couple was enough for me to start writing my scenario. It actually was a conscience decision not to visit any official archives and discover more details.

Let's talk about the people involved, especially the absent protagonist in Brilliant Punitive Raids, Khalil al-Wazir. Why did he fascinate you?

Khalil al-Wazir grew up in Ramla and he and his family were expelled from there during the Israeli-Palestinian War in 1948. This event fuelled his resentments towards the Israeli oppressors for the rest of his life, which he dedicated to the cause or the struggle to liberate Palestine and fight for an independent nation. I guess I somehow could understand where he came from, understand his motive, I even got some sympathy for the man, knowing that he committed atrocious acts. He was very important to the PLO as a military and political strategist, yet there are hardly any images of him, nor does he seem to have cared about his media image, or personal imago. He dedicated himself to the cause, and his assassination instantly made him into a hero and martyr.

Why did you choose not to include an actor playing Abu Jihad in your film? Or include the scene with the murder? In a way you are contributing to the mystification around his person?

It was important for me to include more than one side to the story and I built a narrative not only from different perspectives but from

personal perspectives of people involved. So the film is based on the account of Lev Nahum as well as the testimony of al-Wazir's wife, who witnessed that attack from close-by. And yes, you could say al-Wazir is the absent centre that holds the story together, but the film is not a monument in his remembrance. Also, it was important for me to be engaged, but to be detached at the same time.

For this exhibition and the film you made, you picked the title Brilliant Punitive Raids. Why 'brilliant'?

The title hopefully captures this ambiguity that made this project so compelling to me. Everything about the raid, it's strategic ploy, it's perfect execution, reads like a spectacular operation, and although the objective is horrendous and despicable to most of us, I also felt a sense of admiration the same way you can admire a perfectly plotted bank robbery. It also alludes to the way in which the Israeli media framed the operation, as a brilliant show-off-force.

How did you deal with this 'double' or 'paradoxical' sympathy? It sounds like a moral dilemma to admire something so abject. How do you deal with this conflict?

I discovered that to me they are two separate things; I can understand the thrill of such an operation, as a kid I too liked to play soldiers. There is something adventurous and macho in a James Bond kind of a way, about it. But I could never cross that line and kill someone For God and country, that is something that I do not understand.

In much of your work, your focus is on the status and impact of media images and the ways in which they enter and determine our collective memory. How images can construct an imago or how they sustain or shape our narratives and worldviews, especially documentary images with a claim to truth. In Brilliant Punitive Raids it seems to be the absence of these images or official readings that has sparked your artistic engagement.

I guess it was both: the absence of an official story and the manifold versions all coloured and conditioned. Although there are specific details to al-Wazir's killing, in a way this assassination is one of many. Almost every week some people decide to kill someone else because of their convictions, their beliefs; and every time someone crosses that line between play and the real thing.

In the end, I hope this film makes people wonder a bit about what they see and how they see it; to make them think about the many different perspectives and how we are usually conditioned to only see one. I think that's the moment where this work becomes political.

³ Youtube fragment, Jewish News I with report on the Assassination of Palestinian Leader and Arafat Deputy, al-Wazir

“The Abu Jihad operation may make us feel good, may be good for our egos, but it does not in itself really address the weighty problems this country should be struggling with. The killing of Abu Jihad is a symbolic illustration of what is happening to us. It was an operation made for a nostalgia movie about the good old days of brilliant punitive raids—because it does not advance us one inch towards a solution of the problems that have produced this or that ‘Abu.’

YOEL MARCUS

Haaretz newspaper, April 21, 1988

ABU JIHAD: A LEADER STRUCK DOWN Friday, April 18, 2008

In July 1948, Israeli forces aiming to widen a corridor towards Jerusalem took the Palestinian towns of Lydda and Ramle, gaining the country's main airport in the process but also finding themselves in command of a hostile population, some of whom at Lydda attacked the occupying soldiers.

According to Yitzhak Rabin, who was in command, Prime Minister David Ben Gurion remained silent at a staff conference when they discussed what to do with these 50,000 Palestinian civilians.

"We walked outside, Ben-Gurion accompanying us. Allon repeated his question: 'What is to be done with the population?' B.G. waved his hand in a gesture which said 'Drive them out!'.

"Allon and I held a consultation. I agreed that it was essential to drive the inhabitants out. We took them on foot towards the Ben Horon Road, assuming that the legion would be obliged to look after them, thereby shouldering logistic difficulties which would burden its fighting capacity, making things easier for us.

"'Driving out' is a term with a harsh ring. Psychologically, this was one of the most difficult actions we undertook. The population of Lod did not leave willingly. There was no way of avoiding the use of force and warning shots in order to make the inhabitants march the 10 to 15 miles to the point where they met up with the legion.

"The inhabitants of Ramle watched and learned the lesson. Their leaders agreed to evacuate voluntarily, on condition that the evacuation was carried out by vehicles. Buses took them to Latrun, and from there, they were evacuated by the Legion".

Among the people who accepted this offer to leave Ramle 'voluntarily' rather than wait to be forced out, was a religious Muslim family with a 13-year old boy named Khalid. They went to Gaza, and six years later young Khalid al Wazir was elected president of the Gaza students union. The Egyptian authorities which controlled the Gaza Strip arrested him. After a short spell in prison young Khalid came out to lead a secret armed group he had set up to fight the State which had usurped his homeland. In a 1955 raid they dynamited a reservoir just across the frontier from Beit Hanoun. The Israeli Army responded to such pinpricks with a massive operation in Gaza, commanded by Ariel Sharon. Many Palestinians and Egyptians were killed. Nasser cut short his discreet peace feelers towards Israel, and turned to the Soviet bloc for arms and aid which the US would not provide.

Khalid al Wazir went to Egypt, registered at the University of Alexandria, and moved into Muslim Brotherhood circles. But after meeting Yasser Arafat he left his studies and moved to the Gulf, becoming editor of *Falastinuna*, *Our Palestine*. Then in 1959, together with Arafat (Abu Amar), Farouk Khaddoumi (Abu Lutf), and Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyyad), Khalid al Wazir, given the nom de guerre Abu Jihad, was a founder of Fatah. A few years later, having watched

Algeria gain its independence from the French colonialists, Abu Jihad went to Algiers to open Fatah's first office in an Arab country. With President Ben Bella's agreement, a training camp was set up for Palestinian guerrillas. (Incidentally, a few years earlier there had been a plan by some Israelis to help train Algerian guerrillas, but Israeli-French intelligence services found out and squashed this. The Israeli Right on the other hand naturally linked up with the fascist settlers' OAS, notwithstanding the colons' traditional antisemitism).

Abu Jihad's next move was to China and Vietnam, seeking practical aid as well as ideas on armed guerrilla struggle. Then on January 1, 1965, Fatah launched its first raid into Israel.

Abu Jihad moved its headquarters to Damascus, and this time he was arrested by the Syrians, as were Arafat and others. Fortunately, his wife Intissar al Wazir, 'Oum Jihad' as she became known, was a Palestinian nationalist in her own right, and managed to keep up the links with the commandos and underground cells while he was in jail.

In 1968, having shown their mettle in the historic battle of Karameh against Israeli forces, Fatah and other groups were able to take over and revitalise the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

One thing the militants had learned was that Palestinians could not entrust their hopes and aims to wider Arab nationalism, even though they had to deal with the existing regimes as best they could. The Black September conflict in Jordan, sparked by hijackings carried out by the rival Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), brought repression down on all Palestinians, and though Abu Jihad organised support for the Palestinian guerrillas, they were forced to move their bases to Lebanon.

Then in 1976 came the civil war in Lebanon pitching the Maronite Christian Falangists and allies against the Palestinians, Lebanese Left and Arab nationalists. Syrian troops invaded Lebanon, and contrary to what might have been expected, backed the Falangists. Syrian tanks joined with them in besieging Tel al Zataar camp, whose surviving defenders were massacred. Abu Jihad is credited with organising the stand at Bhamdoun which halted the Syrian advance. He also reportedly told the Saudi rulers who were bankrolling Assad's Syrian regime at this time: "We were driven from our homeland, then we were driven from Jordan. If we are driven out of Lebanon there will be one place left to us, the Gulf." "What do you want?" asked the alarmed Saudis. "Call off the Syrians," Abu Jihad replied.

The Syrian invasion might have been approved by US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, but Palestinian and left-wing Lebanese resistance, unrest among the Syrian forces (including defection of Saiqa units which were Palestinians), and an Arab League summit (possibly with Abu Jihad's warning in mind) brought the Syrian assault to a halt. The Palestinians remained a force. The next invasion when it came was by Israel itself. Abu Jihad wanted the PLO to pull out of Beirut, but as Arafat and others said no, he continued to command its defence.

The Palestinian forces were forced to leave, and Ariel Sharon unleashed the Falangists on Sabra and Shatila camps. In 1983 there was a renewed Syrian-backed attack on the PLO in Tripoli, north Lebanon. Khalid al Wazir moved with his family to Tunis, where the PLO headquarters were established. Then in 1987 the first Intifada broke out in the Occupied Territories, moving from mass civil disobedience to the rising of the youth, which won worldwide attention as they pitted slingshots and stones against soldiers with tanks. Israel's Mossad intelligence became convinced that Abu Jihad's was the guiding hand.

They also blamed him for the hijack of a bus carrying workers to the Oron nuclear plant in the Negev, which ended with three passengers and three guerrillas killed. This was used to persuade Israeli prime minister Shamir and his cabinet to authorise an operation to kill Khalid al Wazir. (As an ex-Stern group leader and Mossad man Shamir probably did not take much persuading.)

Around 1.00 am on April 16, 1988 about three dozen Israeli marine commandos landed by rubber dinghies on a Tunisian beach, and boarded waiting vehicles brought for them by Mossad agents who had arrived in Tunisia earlier, using stolen Lebanese passports. They were driven to Sidi Bou Said where they took up position, while a seven-man killer unit using weapons with silencers killed two guards and a messenger, then smashed their way into Abu Jihad's villa. The Palestinian leader was writing a letter to the fighters in the Occupied Territories when, hearing a commotion, he snatched up his revolver and tried to take cover behind a door, but was soon riddled with bullets. Abu Jihad was killed in front of Intisar and their fourteen year old daughter Hanan.

(The commander of the Israeli force in this operation—for which the Israeli government did not admit responsibility—was later revealed to be Ehud Barak, who went on to head the Israeli Labour Party and become prime minister. Barak's tactics at the 2000 Camp David summit, followed by Ariel Sharon's provocative march to the Temple Mount, ushered in the Second Intifada).

The first Intifada continued for another five years. You cannot kill a nation's will for freedom by eliminating one or more commanders. But the Palestinians had lost an important leader, an organiser respected by the various factions, and a possible successor to Yasser Arafat, who was being left like a lone tree by such attacks. On January 14, 1991, another of Fatah's founders, Salah Khalef (Abu Iyyad) was killed in Tunis, this time by Abu Nidal's gunmen, possibly because he opposed support for Saddam Hussein.

For Israel, the habit of assassinating leaders proved dangerously contagious. On November 4, 1995, the man who had commanded the seizure of Ramleh, and went on to succeed Shamir as Prime Minister, signing the Oslo accords and winning a Nobel Peace Prize, Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated. His killer, a right-winger accusing Rabin of "giving our country away to the Arabs", did not need a cabinet decision, believing he had a Higher Authority.

ANOTHER MIDEAST POLITICAL MINDFUCK

The Making of the Man.

Abu Jihad, like most of the early leaders of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and members of his doomed nation, was a refugee. That part of his character would remain a constant. He wandered most of the Middle East in his life, an ambitious emigrant in Cairo and Kuwait City to a frequent flyer on a revolutionary's grand tour, seeing the inside of safehouses and not much else in Libya, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Algeria. But he would always be a refugee: launched from the village of Ramlah by the soldiers of the nascent army of the Israeli state after the Jordanian withdrawal and scattered, at the age of 13, to wherever he might land. He first settled in the Burayj refugee camp in Gaza in 1948, and then in Cairo, where he befriended a young engineering student named Yassir Arafat. After attending what is now called Cairo University, Abu Jihad received a bit of military training courtesy the Egyptian army (as had Arafat). Egypt was then a hothouse of revolutionary currents, from the embryonic and conservative fundamentalism of the Muslim Brotherhood to the messianic pan-Arab nationalism of Nasser. Depending on who is telling the story, young Khalil was influenced by one or the other. His consciousness of Islam, however, was always sublimated to the more narrow aim of a free Palestine. Like all proper demagogues, he would freely let drop appeals to Almighty Allah as the righteous auditor of his cause, but the cause was first and foremost the constitution of Palestinian statehood rather than some wacky desire to decimate wickedness and resurrect a state of meek believers. Arafat and several other Palestinians had moved from Egypt to Kuwait in the mid-1950s, mostly as grim economic migrants seeking to get a piece of the oil boom in the tiny Gulf State country. In the late 1950s, Abu Jihad joined them, working as a teacher. Arafat had already networked with a group of other Palestinians in Kuwait and would claim his organization began as early as 1956, but it wasn't until Abu Jihad joined them that Fatah (a reverse acronym for Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastin, or Palestinian National Liberation Movement, though the simple word would be repeatedly reverse engineered over the years) was born.

The Making of a Robot.

Abu Jihad's whereabouts for the next several years are unknown. Like Arafat, he was constantly on the move, establishing Fatah cells in Algeria and elsewhere in the north of Africa. By 1965, the nucleus was reunited in Damascus at the invitation of the Syrian government. Relations quickly soured, however, and in 1966 the entire top echelon of Fatah was rounded up by Syrian security agents. Abu Jihad's young

wife, Intisar, actually led the organization for a few months while the men were all in jail. A chilling anecdote about Abu Jihad can be traced from this time in Damascus. Supposedly, while searching Abu Jihad's apartment, a Syrian security agent knocked his infant son off the balcony in the direct presence of his father. Abu Jihad did not even flinch. This anecdote—often retold over the years, though it could not be found in PLO literature—is entirely false. But the veracity is less important than the fact that there was something about Abu Jihad which led people to believe it. Unlike Arafat, Abu Jihad or most of the PLO leaders beneath them, Abu Jihad was endowed with an almost robotic sense of selfcontrol. When others would retaliate against Israeli attacks with a temper tantrum and a fusillade of mortar shells over the border, Abu Jihad would calmly calculate the logic of the response. Was a counterattack purely for the sake of revenge, a hasty decision born of anger and frustration? Would the PLO appear to be weak or strong by such a response? Arafat was prone to flying off the handle at the most vulgar provocation. Abu Jihad would sometimes talk him out of it, sometimes not. His steely demeanor and willingness to compromise when the end result would leave the PLO in a stronger position was noted by diplomats and spies who eavesdropped on him, leading to the birth of the legend of Abu Jihad as a would-be “moderate” within the PLO leadership.

Intifada Alone.

From Tunis, Abu Jihad attempted to guide the rudder of the PLO through yet another transition. Terrorist squads continued to worm through Western Europe and the Communist Bloc. Relations with Syria and even Jordan were papered over. But more than ever before, the PLO drifted aimlessly, directionless. The most prominent PLO dissident and Arafat's real nemesis, Abu Nidal, scored far more headlines with brazen attacks from his base in Baghdad (it had been a Nidal attack, ironically, which provided Israel with the final pretext to attack PLO bases in Lebanon, as Begin blamed the assassination attempt on Arafat rather than Nidal). The 1980s steamed on but the Palestinian cause seemed to have lost its momentum. From all accounts (outside of its own), the PLO had little to do with the outbreak of the Intifada, the spontaneous and seemingly infectious uprising of stone-throwing youths and steely-eyed bombers in the occupied territories. The Israeli Defense Forces were caught in a hell of repression and retaliation as the long-awaited uprising prophesized by hundreds of slain martyrs finally arrived. New leaders were created on the spot, and in the tumult, PLO cells either went rogue and disregarded orders from abroad or dissolved from indecision and inactivity.

On the Road Again.

The PLO plan to elbow their way into Lebanon's crowded lobby worked only too well. Aside from the hostility of Israel, which was suffering the barrage of Abu Jihad's Clouds of Hell, the PLO had also earned the enmity of practically every political entity in Lebanon aside from the small Sunni Arab community (and even

some of them hated Arafat's guts). The Shi'ites in the south were often coming to blows with the PLO garrisons which had set up camp in their towns, evicting residents and exposing them to Israeli airstrikes and retaliatory incursions. The Druze chieftain in the Shouf, Walid Jumblatt, became annoyed when Leftist groups which had been allied in a coalition presided over by his late father had thrown their lot with the PLO (who were after all fighting the classic communist “war of national liberation”—or so they said). But most of all, the presence of the PLO in Lebanon aroused the ire of the Maronite Christians under the banner of the most politically sophisticated movement in Lebanon, the Phalange. The ambition of Bashir Gemayel (like all the other national leaders, the son of a clan chieftain, Pierre Gemayel) to unite Lebanon under his control, ideologically and militarily, dovetailed nicely with the Israelis' new-found interest in the goings-on north of Galilee. Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his brawny Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon, thus committed the IDF to its first foreign adventure on behalf of the Maronites, and the sinister presence of Arafat and the PLO made it all possible. Despite all of their preparations, the PLO were utterly crushed in the early hours of the Israeli attack across the northern frontier. The Syrian “peacekeepers” became involved, and the West panicked in an attempt to stanche the bleeding and avoid a conflict in the Middle East teasing the world once again with a superpower confrontation. Abu Jihad was everywhere during the war, attempting to hold the patchwork PLO units together amid appalling losses and staggering rates of desertion. The greatest losses inflicted on the Israelis by Palestinian gunmen came not from the PLO “battalions” facing the Israeli border but wildcat gunmen (often members of criminal syndicates) from within Palestinian refugee camps that lined the roads leading to West Beirut. Unknown to the Israelis (or even the members of the US embassy in Beirut), the Americans had some time earlier established a covert line of communication directly to Abu Jihad through Reagan administration aide Robert Ames. The intelligence link was so secretive that no one outside of Arafat and Abu Jihad knew about it. As the Americans desperately attempted to figure out a way to get the PLO out of Beirut before the IDF occupied the entire country or another Arab state became involved, the link proved to be invaluable to dodge Arafat altogether and deal directly with his subordinate. Despite his sinister reputation, the Americans surprisingly found him easier to deal with than the aging boy wonder of Palestinian politics. Things said to Abu Jihad didn't show up in the papers the next day. He was also less mysterious about his intentions. With surprising indifference to the mystique of Arab unity, Abu Jihad revealed that the PLO would never commit the majority of their forces to Syria, where the leadership would once again live or die (and probably die) at the pleasure of Hafez Assad. Abu Jihad's candor allowed negotiators to abandon a Syrian solution and save precious time in the circuitous

and byzantine negotiations that usually take place among Middle Eastern nations, where things unsaid are often more important than any item on the agenda. In the end, only a fraction of the PLO forces took the highway east to Damascus. Abu Jihad instead invited Tunisia, hitherto a minor player, to the table in the Middle East poker game. The majority of PLO troops evacuated by sea, leaving Lebanon in its final death agony. But the snub to Syria didn't come without cost: Assad, humiliated by Syria's poor showing in the war, condemned Arafat at a meeting of the Syrian parliament and backed Abu Musa, formerly a loyal and storied PLO commander, in a revolt from his base in Tripoli. PLO units, despite the agreement for withdrawal, remained active in northern Lebanon for some time, but exhausted their strength in this internecine civil war.

The Unmaking of a Martyr.

The reaction to the killing of Abu Jihad was swift. Not just Tunisia but all of the Arab states as well as the United States, the Soviet Union—indeed, nearly the entire world—condemned the assassination before the United Nations. Israel, the US envoy stated, had acted beyond its borders in direct violation of international law. Ezer Weizman, the noted Israeli “dove” politician, condemned it outright. “We are trying to find Palestinians to talk to us,” he said. “I don't think the assassination contributes to this. Liquidating individuals will not advance the peace process.” Yitzhak Shamir shrugged. “I heard about it on the radio,” he told reporters. Of course, the assassination of Abu Jihad—the “father of holy war”—did nothing to beat down the fires of the Intifada. Terrorism continued unabated. It was only a decade later, when a new Intifada was unleashed and Arafat appeared to have totally lost control of the situation as well as what shreds of his credibility he still had left, that observers began a reappraisal. The Palestinian cause, it seems, has always lacked that rare creature which has often characterized the peaceful kind of revolutions foreign powers are comfortable with: the moderating figure who has the power to fight his enemies, but can control his allies and zealous followers as well. Moderate Palestinian leaders are without power, the powerful without respect, both at home and abroad. No one has managed to inspire the same fear and respect, to combine self-discipline with camaraderie, fanaticism with pragmatism, since the death of Abu Jihad. Abu Jihad was as much of a fanatic as anyone in Hamas or the splintered pieces of al-Qaeda, but unlike most fanatics, he understood when a painful compromise is still better than defeat. He was less Gandhi than a swarthy Timothy McVeigh, but this is hardly a damning indictment in a neighborhood where missionaries of non-violence are in short supply, and where the passive leader of a peace movement would be mowed down without remorse. The funeral procession of Abu Jihad, took place in Syria. President Hafez Assad, who had imprisoned the entire PLO leadership and tried to kill Abu Jihad at least twice, gracefully accepted his body on behalf of Syria's sacred soil in yet another Mideast political mindfuck.

The assassination of Palestinian leader, Fatah co-founder and military commander Khalil Al Wazir, or Abu Jihad—"Father of the Holy War"—at his home in Tunis on April 16, 1988, was one of the most spectacular hit jobs by Mossad in the Israeli secret service's history. As Ian Black and Benny Morris described it in *Israel's Secret Wars*, "It was a ruthless operation of unsurpassed technical brilliance that combined thorough intelligence with flawless execution." It was also a pre-meditated murder indistinguishable in intent, if not quite in execution, from similar Palestinian operations on Israeli individuals

For all that, the driving factor behind Abu Jihad's assassination was another operation he'd masterminded—one that struck at the heart of Israeli pride and presumption: the ultra-secret nuclear-weapons installation at Dimona in the Negev desert. On March 7, 1988, three guerillas managed to hijack a passenger bus in the Negev that was transporting high-security-clearance employees to the Dimona complex. An anti-terrorist unit of the Israeli police assaulted the bus, killing the three hijackers and three Israeli employees, though the PLO declared the raid a victory.

Defense Minister Yizhak Rabin was enraged and ordered Mossad chief Nahum Admoni immediately to prepare an assassination, which would have two aims: To retaliate for the attack on Dimona, and to boost Israeli morale after four months of a violent Palestinian uprising in the Occupied Territories, against which Israel seemed powerless. Israeli Prime Minister Yizhak Shamir and 10 other ministers were briefed on the operation, which would be led by Army Gen. Ehud Barak. Rabin gave the go-ahead for the operation on April 13.

The Mossad, Shin Bet and Aman—Israel's spy trinity—had been tracking Abu Jihad for years. On April 15, 1988, the Israeli navy's "Fleet 13" frogmen delivered 30 commando members of the Sayeret Matkal reconnaissance unit to a beach on the Tunisian shore aboard rubber dinghies. They linked up with seven Mossad agents who, traveling on fake Lebanese passports and speaking good Lebanese Arabic, had formed the advance party. They organized three transports to link up with the commandos and drive to Abu Jihad's neighborhood, which they had studied and rehearsed through in mock-ups back in Israel.

Barak coordinated the operation with Israeli army chief of staff Dan Shomron from a Boeing 707 flying, officially, in international air space above the Mediterranean. The 707 was modified to be like the American AWACS, giving the operation overwhelming technological superiority. On the ground, the team was able to jam all telephone communications in Abu Jihad's Sidi Boussaid neighborhood.

One team of commandos was responsible for controlling the outside of Abu Jihad's villa. That team shot and killed Abu Jihad's driver. The other team assaulted the house by breaking down the front door and immediately killing a Tunisian guard (they used silencers). Abu Jihad was at the top of a set of stairs, a small pistol in

his hand. According to London's *Sunday Times*, "He knew an Israeli hit team was in the country and was on the point of fleeing. But he made the fatal mistake of lingering in his home, watching a video of clashes on the West Bank, while the Israelis moved in for the kill."

GAMEPLAY

Right at Sunset, attacking force will come from the Central LZ area (coastal marshes) after being dropped by submarine in rubber boats. attacking force objective is to eliminate at least one coast outlook in order to exfil successfully later on. Next objective for attacking force is to breach villa and eliminate Abu Jihad and his body guards inside and around the villa.

POINT SYSTEM

This game has a scoring system of 1 point for each side objective and 2 points for the main objective, the elimination of Abu Jihad in his villa.

HERE IS THE POINT SYSTEM

- A. coastal outlook posts pillboxes, there are 3, N,S,C=1 point each
- B. Abu Jihad villa AND his elimination=2 points
- C. Villa generator shutdown=1 point
- D. Radar installation=1 point

Every 45 minute session will be tallied and points will be counted.

IT TAKES A TOTAL OF 3 POINTS FOR ATTACKING FORCE (Israelis) TO WIN.

If they don't get their 3 points they lost the round. For the defending force a all that means is that to win a round they have to prevent the attackers from getting their positive points. For the attacking force a positive point will mean having their people IN their respective objective. That means that u don't just need to take a position. u need to hold it until the session is over.

There are no spawns. One hit, your out for the session. If you die you are dead until the end of the 45 min session. If you get killed you can:

1. Stay put with your red light on and blinking.
2. Head back to LZ and wait for the end of the session.

We want everyone to be careful in this game and think twice bc if you are get shot, youre out. So it is for realism sake that we do a "no spawn" game.

Another obj that will be useful for attacking force but is not a must to win the game is finding the generator light source around the perimeter and shutting it off, by doing so eliminating the light source and utilizing darkness for their favor.

The generator will be placed some distance away from villa so this is possible.

Game will run on 45 minute sessions and go all night. Each game won by a team is 1 point. At the end of the night the team with most points WINS.

You must bring a red glow kill light in order to participate. Players with out one cannot play.

WHEN? sat, Feb 6, 545 pm.

WHERE? FireZone. anyone who doesnt know where it is can come to my house first, 7741 pointview cir. orlando fl 32836

HOW MUCH? \$5.00

EDUCATE YOURSELF ABOUT THE SCENARIO

? yes, you should. right below.

THE ASSASSINATION OF ABU JIHAD
—A TRUE LIFE SCENARIO AS IT HAPPEND
BACK AT 1988

Intissar, who had known Khalil for so many years, since their childhood, asked him: “Did you send the ship to Gaza? Tell me, are you hiding something?”

Abu Jihad turned to his daughter Hanan, asking her to translate a English news item, about the intention of the international actor Anthony Quinn, to star in a film about the Palestinian issue, where he would play the role of Yassar Arafat.

Everyone went to sleep, while Abu Jihad went to his office to work. He wanted to watch the latest videotape about the Intifada.

Shortly before his assassination he made a telephone call to a representative of the PLO in Czechoslovakia, in which he said that he would be travelling to Prague the next morning.

Intissar heard him hurriedly moving around, leaving his office carrying his revolver as he walked to the door. She caught up with him and blocked his way, but he asked her to move away.

Intissar said, “I was standing in another corner. I saw someone standing at one meter distance, about twenty-two years old, wearing over his face something that looked like a surgeon’s mask, not saying a word. Abu Jihad fired a shot at him from his revolver, the other responded by emptying an entire machine gun at him. Abu Jihad fell to the floor. The assassin went away and another came. I thought he was going to kill me, but he went back and fired shots into the body of Khalil al-Wazir. A third came in and did the same. I had placed my hands above my head. I thought they were going to kill me. I had to turn my face to the wall when a fourth man came in and did the same. I screamed at the top of my voice ‘enough!’, but he too just emptied his machine gun into the body.”

Intissar continued: “Then they all made for the bedroom, where my son, Nidhal, a child of two and a half, was sleeping. I thought of him and was petrified. Instinctively, I tried to move towards him but one of the assassins blocked my way and threatened to shoot me. So that I couldn’t move. Then the others entered the bedroom and fired a hail of shots. By that time I was sure Nidhal had been killed, but he screamed and his screaming reassured me. They withdrew from the bedroom. Hanan had left her bedroom to see what was happening and was surprised to see strangers in front of her. I was surprised when one of them said to her in Arabic, ‘Go to your mother’.”

The killers went out of the house, leaving behind seventy bullets in the body of ‘Abu Jihad’ seventy bullets in the heart of international freedom movements, bullets in the heart of public opinion which Abu Jihad had sought so eagerly to win.

It hadn’t been easy for Abu Jihad to forget the image of Zionists killing the children of his people in the streets of Ramallah. Nor has it been easy for Hanan, Nidhal, or Abu Jihad’s other children of the Fathhawi family, or the children of the Intifada.

Although Abu Jihad is physically dead, he has survived as a revolutionary phenomenon in Palestine, the Arabic homeland and for all free people all over the world.

THE BODY FALLS

Eleven o’clock at night was not the usual time for Abu Jihad to be returning home.

To him, home didn’t mean family. It merely meant continuation of work that usually started as soon as he awakened from his short sleep.

Yet it was precisely at that time that he came back on that night—at exactly eleven o’clock. The intifada being the usual subject at home, he started telling Intissar and Hanan about the latest news that reached Gaza. It was about a collision of two ships off the Gaza coast. One containing tins of butter which had washed up on the Gaza shore. On hearing the news, the people rushed there to gather as many as they could. Abu Jihad remarked, quoting the people of Gaza that this was a gift from Allah Almighty, a sign for the Intifada.

The below article is from Encyclopedia Of The Palestinians edited by Philip Mattar al-Wazir, Khalil Abu Jihad; PLO leader 1935-1988 Ramla

Khalil al-Wazir was born to a middle-class family in Ramla. He was displaced in 1948 when Zionist forces evicted Palestinians from that region. He settled in the Burayj refugee camp in the GAZA STRIP, where he completed his secondary education. He planned and executed military acts against Israeli targets and in 1954 was punished by the Egyptian authorities for such activities. Al-Wazir met YASIR ARAFAT in Cairo during his military training and remained close to him over the years. He attended classes at the University of Alexandria in 1956 but never completed college education. Al-Wazir found work in Kuwait in 1959 and remained there, working as a teacher, until 1963. His stay in Kuwait put him in touch with his old friend Yasir Arafat, with whom he founded the FATAH movement. His wife, Umm Jihad (Intisar al-Wazir), was also involved in Fatah's political activities. Al-Wazir was one of the early full-time (mutafarrigh) members of Fatah after the Fatah Central Committee instructed him to open an office for the movement in Algeria. He was also one of the founding editors of Filastinuna, the official organ of Fatah. He was in charge of the recruitment and training of Fatah fighters, creating the nucleus of the fighting force of Fatah, later known as AL-ASIFA, The Storm. Al-Wazir settled in Algeria in 1963 and cultivated ties with military leaders in socialist countries. He opened the first office for Fatah in an Arab country and started the first military training camp for his movement. He visited China in 1964 and later preached "a people's liberation war," although he never supported communism as an ideology. In fact, his political sympathies lay with the conservative Muslim Brotherhood, which he had encountered in Gaza. Nevertheless, he also visited North Vietnam and North Korea, although, despite the false claims of PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION (PLO) information brochures, he never received advanced military education there. In 1965, Abu Jihad settled in Damascus, taking advantage of the Syrian Ba'thist regime's support of the doctrine of people's liberation war. He became the major link between underground activist cells inside ISRAEL and the Palestinian national movement. The 1967 defeat propelled him into a key leadership position with the PLO, made possible by his reputation as an expert on people's liberation war, considered the only solution at the time. He assumed major responsibilities in the Central Committee of Fatah, in the command of the forces of al-Asifa, on the PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL, and on the Supreme Military Council of the PLO. He was also put in charge of commando operations in the Occupied Territories and inside Israel. Abu Jihad played an important military role in JORDAN in 1970-71 during the BLACK SEPTEMBER clashes. He also supplied the encircled Palestinian forces in Jarash and Ajlun. Then, like other PLO leaders, he relocated to Beirut, where he kept a low

profile until the eruption of the Lebanese civil war. He advocated a policy of full support for the Lebanese national movement and helped build up the forces of the PLO's Lebanese allies. Meanwhile, his main interest remained with the Occupied Territories; more than any other person inside the PLO and Fatah, Abu Jihad is credited with the development of underground cells in the WEST BANK and Gaza despite Israeli attempts to eradicate all vestiges of opposition to the occupation. Abu Jihad used his contacts with communist countries to augment the military power of the PLO. The resulting arms acquisition changed the PLO's fighting forces into a conventional army, rather than the "people's liberation forces" on which he had earlier insisted. Nevertheless, Abu Jihad remained close to his fighters; avoiding the lure of Beirut, he established his headquarters in Kayfun, near Alayh in Mount Lebanon. Unlike other PLO leaders, Abu Jihad did not allow the Lebanese environment to discredit his role within the movement; he was never tainted by the massive corruption and thuggery that swept the ranks of PLO officials. Although he was less visible than most of his comrades, he commanded the respect and loyalty of most Palestinians, including members of rival organizations. His close relationship with Yasir Arafat was greatly to Arafat's benefit, since Arafat was being constantly challenged from within over his search for a diplomatic solution to the Palestinian problem: Abu Jihad provided the "revolutionary" cover that Arafat needed to continue his diplomatic pursuits. Unfortunately for Arafat, Abu Jihad did not distinguish himself in the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, in which top PLO leaders retreated in the face of massive Israeli force. The subsequent defeat of the PLO in Lebanon forced Abu Jihad, along with other PLO leaders, to relocate farther away from Palestine, this time in Tunisia. There he lived with his family in a villa, a life-style more suited to his closely knit family than his former secretive and austere way of life. The 1982 invasion of Lebanon seemed to have changed Abu Jihad's political and military philosophy; apparently, he lost faith in the PLO's ability to deliver a solution to the Palestinians from outside the Occupied Territories. Instead, he believed in the power of the masses in the West Bank and Gaza. In 1982, he began to sponsor youth committees in the Occupied Territories, committees that became the embryonic organization that later ignited the INTIFADA. However, Abu Jihad did not live long enough to see that uprising; he was assassinated by what is now believed to have been Israeli commandos in April 1988. His Wife was with him when he died, and she quickly emerged as one of the top women within the PLO leadership. In 1996, she was appointed to a cabinet seat in Arafat's government in Gaza. As'ad Abu Khalil BIBLIOGRAPHY Amos, John. Palestinian Resistance. New York: pergamon Press, 1980. Cobban, Helena. The Palestinian Liberation Organization. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Hart, Alan. Arafat. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. Yusuf, Samir. Abu Jihad. Cairo: al-Markaz al-Misri al-Arabi, 1989.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE PALESTINIANS:
BIOGRAPHY OF KHALIL AL-WAZIR
(ABU JIHAD)

Post Your Comment

Vind ik leuk

10 personen vinden dit leuk. Wees de eerste van je vrienden.

Tweet

0

Posted on November 12, 2000

Juul Hondius
'Brilliant Punitive Raids'
Part one of a two-piece publication.

Photography: Juul Hondius
Interview: Christel Vesters
Text & posters layout: Karoline Swiezynski
Intern: Emily IJzerman

May 25 – July 13
Akinci Gallery, Amsterdam, NL