

From Radical Muslim To Israeli Spy

The Green

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Prince

Code-named "The Green Prince," Mosab Hassan Yousef betrayed his father and passed intel from the highest echelons of Hamas to Israel's internal intelligence agency for years. Amazingly, he is still alive to tell his story.

The True Interview

As the eldest son of the influential sheikh who co-founded Hamas, Mosab Hassan Yousef seemed destined to follow in his father's footsteps. Growing disillusioned with the terrorist organization's ideology, which glorified death and taught that jihad was the only path to victory, he eventually agreed to work as a spy for Israel's internal security agency, the Shin Bet. It was a decision that would not only change the course of his life, but save hundreds of innocent civilian lives.

His Shin Bet handler, Gonen Ben-Yitzchak, met with Zman for an in-depth interview, including never-before-revealed details, and provided us with a unique firsthand account of Mosab's riveting story—a story of trust, betrayal and the dark world of secret intelligence.

Shin Bet Captain Loai had just received an intelligence report about a terrorist who was going to set off a bomb in *Yerushalayim*. The only information was that he was around 18 to 21 years old, he was wearing a red shirt and he was going from Nablus (Shechem) to Ramallah. Loai, as Shin Bet supervisor of the Ramallah area, was supposed to intercept him.

But he had nothing to go on!

Loai knew there was only one person who might possibly be able to help—the “Green Prince.” As the Shin Bet’s most valuable mole, there was a chance he could find out something that Loai could not. He called immediately and gave the young man the information.

“We don’t even have his name,” Loai said. “He’s coming to Ramallah to speak with his Hamas handler, get the bomb and go to Jerusalem.”

“Give me five minutes,” the Green Prince said. “Let me think about what to do.”

Five minutes later, he called Loai. “I’ve left my house and I’m on my way to Ramallah. Let’s see what’s going on.” Then he called back 15 minutes later and said, “I see the guy.”

“Come on, my friend,” Loai said in disbelief, “so fast? No way.”

“Have I ever been wrong?”

Loai asked him to explain. He said, “I went to the taxi station near Nablus Square where people get out of cabs coming from Nablus. And I see a young guy in a red shirt get out of a taxi, but he seems like he doesn’t know where to go; he’s not familiar with Ramallah; he’s waiting, pacing back and forth, using a phone and so on.”

It sounded good, but Loai wasn’t convinced. He told the Green Prince to watch him and be careful. After a short time, a car pulled up next to the man. The suspect got into the car and the Shin Bet spy followed him in his own vehicle. The Israelis had drones in the air to watch the car so they could tell him where to go. After a while, the Green Prince saw the man in the red shirt and the car’s driver go into a hotel. Loai told the Green Prince not to go inside.

“Don’t worry, I know my job,” he responded as he walked confidently into the hotel.

Ten minutes later he called Loai back and told him, “The guy is staying in room 120.”

One hour later, a Special Forces unit rushed into the hotel and made the arrest....

Captain Loai maneuvered down the isolated country road in his plain, inconspicuous white car. It was a clear day, and the hot Mediterranean sun beat down on him through the windshield as he scanned the side of the roadway, looking for the meeting point.

It was perhaps dangerous for an Israeli to be traveling solo on a lonely road near Ramallah. This was in mid-2002, when the second intifada raged. Almost daily, terrorists with bombs strapped under their clothes were walking into crowds and leaving trails of blood in their wake.

Exposed and vulnerable in the heart of a heavily Arab area, Loai suppressed any natural nervousness. After all, danger was his job.

The man he was scheduled to meet on the side of the road was one of the most dangerous and best-connected Arab operatives in the West Bank—a young man named Mosab Hassan Yousef. He was the oldest and most trusted son of Sheikh Hassan Yousef, the charismatic and influential spiritual leader and co-founder of Hamas, who had been one of the architects of the intifada and who regularly gave praise and encouragement to terrorist bombers.

As much as Mosab was violating the rules of his culture in the most extreme way by agreeing to meet with a Shin Bet man, Loai was also breaking the rules. According to official protocol, an agent was never allowed to meet with a “source” alone, sans armed bodyguards. Deep down, though, Loai felt he couldn’t be effective gathering intelligence without using innovative methods, even though they might hold great risk, and to him that meant not always sticking to protocol.

Mosab Hassan Yousef was probably the single most important mole ever recruited—and he had to be handled *very* carefully. Loai knew that in breaking the rules he was risking his job, but not meeting him now might cost the Shin Bet the loyalty of this all-important



The “Green Prince”—Mosab Hassan Yousef, son of one of the founders of Hamas.

spy. As long as everything went well, Loai wouldn’t be scrutinized too closely. If the plan backfired, though, it would certainly be the end of his career.

Suspicion that he was walking into a trap and that Mosab was a triple agent for Hamas didn’t even register with Loai. He had worked with Mosab for too long to believe that. If Mosab wanted to betray the Shin Bet, he had had countless opportunities. By now, Loai trusted him. The trick was showing Mosab that.

Code-named “the Green Prince” by the Shin Bet (“green” for the emerald flag of Hamas, and “prince” due to his status), Mosab had already been working with Israel’s shadowy internal security agency for several years. As the anointed son of Hamas’ most beloved cleric, the Green Prince was privy to the terror group’s most closely held secrets. He had constantly proven himself trustworthy. His information had helped the Shin Bet thwart mass bombings and assassination attempts, and arrest terrorist masterminds. By betraying his father’s trust, Mosab had put his life on the line. Yet, even so, he felt that the Israelis still didn’t really trust him—and that was enormously insulting.

On one recent occasion he had been traveling in an unmarked Shin Bet vehicle to a meeting with his handler. A dozen armed guards had been dispatched to escort him. *Why can’t I just walk into the meeting by myself?*

he thought as they rumbled down the road toward a safe house in *Yerushalayim*. Some popular music was playing from the van’s speakers, and Mosab found himself tapping along with the beat. Then one of the guards in the front seat switched off the radio.

“Aw man, you just killed it!” Mosab exclaimed, pointing with his thumb and forefinger toward the radio and making a motion as if he was shooting a gun at it. The officer glared at him.

“Why did you do that?” he asked the Green Prince.

“Do what?” asked Mosab, bewildered.

“Do that with your finger!”

Mosab was incredulous. The guard was bristling over a casual hand motion?!

“I was just *expressing* that you *killed* the song!” he replied sourly.

“Don’t do that again,” the guard said sternly.

The Green Prince knew how valuable he was to the Shin Bet. After all he had done for them, why were they still suspicious of him? He started arguing with the officer, and it turned into a shouting match. He was livid.

Loai, Mosab’s handler, had been told about this incident, as well as similar ones. He knew that the Green Prince’s patience with these extreme security measures was wearing thin. He realized that he could



Ramallah’s busy city center.