

# Netanyahu pushes Taliban war

by Joseph Brewda

As we go to press on Sept. 25, some 270,000 Iranian troops are massed on the Afghan border, officially to take part in maneuvers that Iran announced after the Taliban regime of Afghanistan admitted that ten Iranian diplomats who had been kidnapped there, had been murdered. Iran has demanded that the murderers be extradited, and other imprisoned Iranians released. The Taliban, which accuse Iran of arming the former Afghan government forces still fighting its rule, have refused both demands, and have threatened to attack Iranian cities if invaded. At last report, the Taliban (Sunni adherents who are violently anti-Shiite) have even called for "holy war" against Shiite Iran.

Such prospects please Israel's backers in Washington. "This is two scorpions in a bottle fighting each other," crowed Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs director Tom Neumann, one of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's top U.S. mouthpieces, to the Sept. 18 edition of the Jewish *Forward*. "You've got to let them fight it out." Similarly, Dan Pipes, a Netanyahu crony and editor of the *Middle East Quarterly*, said, "I wouldn't waste a whole lot of time thinking about it."

Israel knows that war would set into motion a series of escalating crises. For one, it would provide the basis for conflict between Iran and neighboring Pakistan, which Iran accuses of arming and commanding the Taliban. It would also seriously increase tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, a bastion of Sunni orthodoxy, which has bankrolled the Taliban from its inception. This too, has the strong approval of Britain and Israel, which hope to spark global Sunni-Shia sectarian conflict.

Moreover, the Taliban are ethnic Pushtun chauvinists, who seek to impose their dictates over Afghanistan's ethnic minorities, particularly the Afghan Tajiks and Uzbeks, who in turn look to their cousins across the border for help. The Taliban are also preparing to support Kashmiri insurgency in nearby India, a flashpoint for an Indian-Pakistani war, and reportedly are also pushing ethnic Turkic conflict in neighboring China.

All these threatened conflicts conveniently come at a time when Netanyahu is preparing to crush the Palestinians, and launch a new war with Israel's Arab neighbors.

The Taliban were created in the early 1990s by a top British intelligence official, the late Sir Jimmy Goldsmith,

and British Ambassador to Pakistan Sir Nicholas Barrington, among others, out of the shards of unemployed former Afghan mujahideen gathered around Saudi-funded Islamic schools in Pakistan. Britain's purpose was to use the Taliban as part of its geopolitical objective of blowing up the region. Goldsmith et al. also wanted to prepare the conditions for British mining cartels to grab Central Asia's vast mineral wealth, or prevent anyone else from doing so.

Goldsmith, a long-standing British intelligence handler of the Israeli Mossad, and of British- and Israeli-allied forces in official Washington, was among those who ensured that Israel was directly brought into the project.

Israel has long had a significant capability in Central Asia and the South Asian subcontinent, based largely on its covert training, under U.S. and British sponsorship, of the Afghan mujahideen for its 1980s war with Soviet invaders. Israel also inherited considerable Soviet-era capabilities through the 1990s immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel, which included Soviet Jewish intelligence operatives, including from former Soviet Central Asia.

## Israeli games

That Israel has been actively involved in promoting the Afghan-pivoted destruction of the region, publicly emerged on June 18, when the director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Eytan Bentsur, told the London *Times* that Israel has been in contact with the "Islamic fundamentalist" Taliban regime in Afghanistan, as well as with the former, largely ethnic-Tajik and -Uzbek, Afghan government forces active in the northern third of the country. He said that the contact not only involved separate meetings with Afghan diplomats from both camps, in Europe, the United States, and Israel, but also the transfer of hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Taliban regime for "humanitarian purposes." Bentsur said that Israel wants good relations with whoever is running the country.

Bentsur's confession followed a mid-June exposé in the *Foreign Report* of London, which said that Israel became involved in Afghanistan in 1991 with the intent of setting up intelligence bases along Afghanistan's border with Iran, to aid in launching a strike against Iran's nuclear installations. On behalf of that war plan, the report says, "Israel opened up two secret channels: the first with the previous Afghan government and the second with the present Taliban regime in Kabul," and that Israel "hopes that its Afghan ties will enable it to install listening devices and advanced spying equipment adjacent to the Iranian border."

The report came at a time that Netanyahu's Israel, and the Newt Gingrich crowd, were condemning President Clinton for seeking improved U.S. relations with Iran, which it screamed was "only months away" from acquiring an "Islamic bomb." Since that time, Pakistan, another top Israeli target, which it accuses of being the "center of Islamic terrorism," conducted its own nuclear test.