

Jordan succession shakeup bodes ill for war on Iraq

by Our Special Correspondent

The moves toward renewed military aggression against Iraq are being carried out according to the strategy outlined by Commander of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Henry Shelton. That strategy is based on the insane calculation that with air superiority and “information warfare” techniques, elite Special Forces units can be infiltrated into the country, seize one or two beachheads, in Basra and northern Iraq, and declare the existence of a puppet regime. Despite the fact that should be obvious to any competent military person, that such a “Contra”-style invasion would trigger only bloody civil war, and chaos throughout the region, the plan is moving ahead, step by step, as if on automatic pilot.

Since mid-January, daily “incidents” have escalated, involving British and American aircraft firing on Iraqi anti-aircraft installations, allegedly in response to Iraqi threatening postures. As the number and frequency of the incidents increased, both in the south around Basra and the north near Mosul, Pentagon officials prevailed upon the beleaguered President Clinton, to grant pilots more maneuvering room. A change in the rules of engagement was the result, whereby American pilots can now attack Iraqi sites at their discretion. What emerges from the sequence of U.K.-U.S. air strikes, is a clear pattern of targeting air defense systems, to clear the way for the second phase of the operation.

Just as significant as the military encounters inside Iraq, is the diplomatic activity in the region, by leaders of the war party, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, his regional hit-man Derek Fatchett, and Defense Secretary George Robertson. Their visits in late January to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the

U.A.E., and Qatar, all had one purpose: to bring the governments on board for the next stage. The Egyptian government hosted a farcical meeting of the foreign ministers of the Arab League on Jan. 24, during which the Iraqi Foreign Minister stormed out, after his colleagues refused to condemn the U.K.-U.S. air strikes. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was immediately visited by Albright, who boxed him into the U.S. position. From there, Albright travelled to Riyadh, where she reportedly openly discussed a change of regime in Baghdad, and expressed support for the gaggle of “opposition” groups that Washington has started financing. Thence she moved to Jordan, where she met with the newly designated Crown Prince Abdallah. Meanwhile, her British colleagues were focussing on twisting the arms of the reluctant emirates, especially the U.A.E. and Qatar, which have balked at support for further military assaults on Iraq. Simultaneously, in New York, constructive proposals for lifting the sanctions against Iraq and finding a political solution to the issue, presented by Russia and France, were cheerfully ignored, and discussion stalled *sine die*.

Change of succession in Jordan

The most ominous development related to the Iraq crisis, occurred in neighboring Jordan. There on Jan. 25, King Hussein, who had just returned home to cheering crowds a week earlier, following six months of chemotherapy treatments in the United States, dropped a political bombshell. In a letter to his brother Prince Hassan, which was made public, the King announced that he was relieving Hassan of the title which he has held for 34 years, and conferring the

crown to his eldest son, Prince Abdallah. Among the reasons given, are that Hassan had interfered unduly in the political affairs of the country, had made changes inside the military, had (with his wife Sarvath) spread rumors against the King's wife Queen Noor, and mistreated his children. Beyond these charges, essentially, that the Prince had usurped the King's power in his absence, were more serious, obscure references in the King's letter, to dangerous events on the horizon.

King Hussein referred in his 14-page letter to the peace process with Israel, reiterating Jordan's commitment to a just peace. Then, without specifically naming Iraq, he wrote:

"We are trying to achieve the objective of all people seeking a just peace in this region. We stand strongly against any tendency towards destruction and death and against the use of weapons of mass destruction. We demand that the whole world stand united against any party seeking destruction or backing terrorism, wherever they might be.

"After a thorough examination, it is clear to me that the situation has become extremely dangerous and is a source of constant concern to the world in view of the capability and ease of developing weapons and the access to expertise to make those weapons and use them" (emphases added).

This was followed by a digression on biological weapons, and how smallpox can be spread artificially. The letter insinuated the existence of plots and plotters, intent on eliminating the King, and creating strife within the royal family and the nation's leadership. Due to this emergency situation, wrote the King, he deemed it necessary to interrupt his treatment, fly back to Jordan and make the changes in the succession. He was rushed back to the Mayo Clinic shortly thereafter.

Two particularly disturbing aspects

There are two aspects to the King's letter which are particularly disturbing, when considered in the light of related events. These are his references to the threat of use of weapons of mass destruction, particularly biological weapons, and to the threat of terrorism.

Just days earlier, on Jan. 21, President Clinton had given an interview to the *New York Times*, in which he focussed primarily on the same area, the danger of chemical and biological weapons. Clinton went so far as to state that he considered it "highly likely" that a biological or chemical attack could be launched inside the United States. Saying that he wanted to "raise public awareness of this . . . without throwing people into unnecessary panic," he added that such an attack would trigger "at least a proportionate if not a disproportionate response." Clinton said, "A chemical attack would be horrible, but it would be finite," whereas, a biological attack would not be so, and could spread.

The fact that the President dedicated such attention to this theme, and called for \$2.8 billion to be allocated for defense against them, reflects the fact that this discussion is taking place among the Principals Committee, the political

agents pushing for a major offensive against Iraq.

To close the circle, on Jan. 28, the mouthpiece of the British Foreign Office, the London *Times*, carried an article retailing not-better-identified "reports" that "Abu Nidal, one of the world's most feared terrorists, has been in Baghdad since early December and enjoys Saddam's protection." The paper argues that the Iraqi leader, out of despair, "might help the Palestinian renegade, responsible for killing hundreds of people in the 1970s and 1980s, to revitalize his terrorist network to strike at Baghdad's enemies." To drive the point home, the article adds, "His presence in Iraq, if confirmed, would add yet another dangerous element to the increasingly unstable situation in the Gulf."

In light of the madness reigning in the minds of those carrying out the escalating drive against Iraq, the hypothesis must be seriously considered, that a major terrorist incident, in the United States or against American targets, could be in preparation. Such an atrocity, if attributed to Abu Nidal, could then be tracked to Baghdad, creating the situation in which Israel could follow through on its official threat, that it would respond to such an event with nuclear weapons.

Whether such a scenario was presented to King Hussein during his prolonged stay at the Mayo Clinic in the United States, where he was reportedly "kept up to date" by Albright, is not documented. Nor is it clear what the King discussed with British government representatives Blair and Cook, during his stay in London, en route to Amman.

What is undeniable, is that King Hussein has been given reason to believe that such a threat is real, and perhaps imminent. Furthermore, there are factors in the personalities of the succession change, which must be taken into consideration, above and beyond any issues of infighting within the royal family.

The new Crown Prince

First and foremost, is the person of the new Crown Prince. Unlike Prince Hassan, a seasoned diplomat, known as an intellectual with expertise in economics, among other things, the young Crown Prince Abdallah is a military man from A to Z. The son of King Hussein's second wife, Princess Muna al-Hussein, the British-born Toni Avril Gardiner, Prince Abdallah, 37, is married to a Palestinian woman from the West Bank. He was educated in England, at St. Edmund's school in Surrey, then at Deerfield Academy in the United States, and then at Oxford, for a one-year program in International Politics. He studied one year at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service.

Prince Abdallah received his military training at Sandhurst Royal Academy (as did his father), then at Fort Knox Armor School (Company Commanders Course). Following that, he was in the All Arms Tactics Course, at the British School of Infantry, then the British Command and Staff College in Camberley.

After years of military service, from 1981 to the present,

he has become an army major general. In 1994, the year Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel, he was promoted to brigadier, and was appointed Commander of the Jordanian Special Forces. The Special Forces were reorganized in 1996 as the Special Operations Command, to include the Special Forces Brigade and the Royal Guard. The missions of this unit, according to the British publication *Jane's Intelligence Review*, include unconventional warfare missions, counterinsurgency, internal security, counterterrorism, counter-sabotage, etc. It is stressed, that these forces carry out assignments in counter-sabotage both inside Jordan and abroad. They are tasked to carry out military operations "beyond the scope and abilities of the conventional Jordanian army," and are responsible for riot control.

The leading international contacts of the Crown Prince are with military: in the United States, with the Pentagon, where he has lobbied for American military assistance to Jordan, and in Israel, with the top brass. He is credited with having promoted normalization, particularly between the two countries' militaries.

One of the considerations made in King Hussein's letter, in motivating his decision to appoint Prince Abdallah, was related to the role of the Army, which has always been central in Jordanian history. The King charged Prince Hassan with having made personnel and other changes. "I have intervened from my sickbed to prevent meddling in the affairs of the Arab Army," he wrote. "This meddling seemed to be meant to settle scores, and included retiring efficient officers known for their allegiance and whose history and bright records are beyond reproach. At the forefront were the Field Marshal and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. . . . I was asking myself, why is there insistence on change in the Army since we know the need for reform and development and the Chairman and myself were busy all the time providing our army with all available experience, local and international. I have used my authority as Supreme Commander of the armed forces to stop any action that would have led to the fragmentation and politicization of the Army. We have ensured that service in the Army would achieve all our ambitions in its continuous development on the strongest basis as a shield for the country and as our pride."

Clearly, in the event of a sustained U.K.-U.S. intervention into Iraq, with or without an act of biological terrorism to "justify" it, the political-social situation inside the Hashemite Kingdom is bound to be explosive, including in the army. Given the evident power struggle which occasioned the King's dramatic actions, the succession process itself may not be smooth. Such factors must have played a role in the decision to give the crown to a man of Prince Abdallah's very special military training and capabilities.

On Jan. 27, the London *Times*, endorsed the selection of the new Crown Prince, saying that King Hussein had "tackled a dynastic challenge that was threatening Jordan's stability."

PKK heroin cartel threatens Europe

by Joseph Brewda

The November 1998 arrest of Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan in Rome, his subsequent release from prison, and his Jan. 16, 1999 flight to parts unknown, has again focussed attention on the scandalous role that western Europe has played in fomenting the Kurdish insurrection in southeast Turkey, in which 30,000 have died since 1984. Among the imperious responses to the arrest was the European Union announcement that it intends to convene a conference on the "Kurdish question," in which Turkey's borders would be subject to proposed revision.

But while the European Union condemns Turkey's war against the PKK as a violation of "human rights," the reality is that western Europe has itself become a primary victim of the war, because the PKK and Kurdish mafia are major traffickers of heroin into Europe.

The evidence compiled by western European, Turkish, and U.S. law enforcement agencies documenting the PKK role, is dramatic. According to published reports by these agencies, Turkey serves as the land-bridge for three-quarters of the heroin transported for use in western Europe, some 60 tons a year, from its origin in Afghanistan. According to several reports, the PKK and its allied Kurdish clan mafia is one of the main groups bringing that heroin into Europe. The PKK's proceeds from this smuggling, and its control of street-level distribution networks throughout western Europe, fund the PKK's war.

Heroin also provides the basis for the PKK's alliances with other separatist armies operating in the war-zones of Afghanistan-Tajikistan, the Caucasus, eastern Turkey, and the Balkans, which constitute the highway through which the heroin reaches western Europe. Control of the heroin trade has become a primary objective in many of these conflicts.

Here we summarize some of the evidence compiled by U.S., western European, and Turkish law enforcement sources which documents this criminal role, supplemented by interviews with their investigators.

The Kurdish and PKK narcotics role

Turkey's role as the main highway used to transport opium and heroin from the "Golden Crescent" opium poppy cultivation zone in Afghanistan and Central Asia, into western Europe, has long been reported. According to the U.S. State Department's most recent annual *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, released in March 1998, "Turkey's position astride the main overland trade route between