

Cheney, Sharon Plan War on Iran and Syria

by Dean Andromidas and Michele Steinberg

The same two corrupt intelligence units that foisted phony intelligence about Iraq on the U.S. Congress and the United Nations—the Office of Special Plans (OSP) in the Pentagon, and the parallel special unit under Ariel Sharon—are spreading false intelligence reports to set the basis for new U.S. attacks on Syria and Iran.

And there are clear indications, as *EIR* reported in our Aug. 8 issue, that the still-secret meeting between Sharon and Cheney in Washington on July 30 centered on laying the groundwork with a massive propaganda campaign, combined with covert operations, for a U.S. strike against Iran and Syria. Sharon also reportedly presented Bush, in their July 29 meeting, with aerial photographs and other alleged evidence of Iranian efforts to enrich uranium for use in weapons development, as well as evidence claiming that Iran was supporting militant Palestinian groups, including Hamas and Hezbollah, and that Iran was trying to undermine the cease-fire. Sharon also told Bush that Iran was offering \$50,000 to would-be suicide bombers.

Then, on Aug. 4, a report appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, entitled “Iran Closes in on Ability To Build a Nuclear Bomb,” by Douglas Frantz. Among the Iranian sources Frantz quotes is the terrorist Mujahideen el Khalq (MEK), which, despite the fact that it is on the U.S. State Department’s list of terrorist organizations, has now become useful to Cheney’s “chicken-hawks” in their campaign against Iran.

Frantz cites what he claims is a French government report, claiming that Iran is close to producing weapons-grade plutonium. Citing “a foreign intelligence officer and an American diplomat,” Frantz says UN inspectors have found samples of enriched uranium during their inspections in Iran. Iran, he claims, is concealing weapons research laboratories, including one in a watch factory near Tehran.

Accompanying the article is a map with all the sites where Iran allegedly has nuclear weapons facilities, and detailed explanations of each. Frantz claims that Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan has been helping Iran for years—although he quotes Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf denying it. Allegations of North Korean, Russian, and Chinese roles are also detailed.

Frantz writes: “Foreign intelligence officials told the *Times* that the Central Intelligence Agency, which has long

contended that Iran is building a bomb, has briefed them on a contingency plan for U.S. air and missile attacks against Iranian nuclear installations. ‘It would be foolish not to present the Commander in Chief with all the options, including that one,’ said one of the officials.” Of course, the CIA refused to officially comment on such an assertion. Nonetheless Frantz wrote that a pre-emptive strike would have a precedent in the 1981 Israeli strike against Iraq’s nuclear reactor.

As soon as the *Times* story hit the streets, it became big news on Israeli Army Radio, where it was the lead news item every hour. The same day, a senior Israeli military officer was briefing a closed-door session of the Knesset’s (parliament) Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, claiming that Iran will have the material needed to make a nuclear bomb by 2004 and will have an operative nuclear weapons program by 2005. Prime Minister Sharon told the committee: “It is clearer than ever that the Iranians are making every effort to acquire weapons of mass destruction.”

Getting into the act, the right-wing Japanese daily *Sankei Shimbun* (Aug. 5) claimed that the North Koreans are holding talks with Iran, about exporting the Korean Taepodong 2 long-range ballistic missile and jointly developing nuclear warheads. The paper said that this missile is claimed to have a range of 6,000 kilometers.

This anti-Iranian hysteria is building up just as the International Atomic Energy Agency had a delegation in Tehran on Aug. 5 to negotiate a new inspections arrangement. The two sides termed the talks “positive and constructive.”

In response to this propaganda assault, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, speaking before a meeting of senior Iranian officials, declared that Iran has no interest in producing nuclear weapons. “I emphasize that Iran is totally against any form of weapons of mass destruction and denounce as false and groundless the claims that Iran is producing nuclear weapons.” But, he added, “Iran will not renounce the development of nuclear technology, one of the pillars of the power of the people.”

Syria in the Sights

Syria is being given the same treatment as Iran, with Israel leading the propaganda assault. Writing in the daily *Ha’aretz* on Aug. 5, military commentator Reuven Pedatzur warned that the Israeli military is playing up a nonexistent Syrian missile threat. Pedatzur cites a recent report in *Foreign Report*, published by *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, which quotes Israeli sources claiming that “100 Syria missiles are aimed at Israel,” equipped with payloads of VX nerve gas. Why is this reported now? he asked. After all, Israel has known this since 1988. Furthermore the Israeli military knows it has a powerful deterrent, and knows “the Syrians would not dare launch ballistic missiles topped with chemical warheads at Israel because it was clear to them that the price they’d pay would be so high, with painful Israeli De-



Just as in the September 2002 White House website posting of maps and photos of “confirmed Iraq WMD sites” which all turned out to be concoctions; now U.S. media are picking up maps of “confirmed Iran nuclear weapons sites”—including this nuclear power reactor at Bushehr—from the same kind of discredited sources, in preparation for Dick Cheney’s and Ariel Sharon’s next war.

fense Forces attacks on the Syrian rear, that it would not justify the first strike at Israel.”

The author writes that this anti-Syria campaign is a repeat of the one against Iraq, which is no longer a threat. It is now building up the phony Syrian threat in order to justify massive investments in the “Home Front” command, including the billions wasted on gas masks for every Israeli, and on building an antiballistic-missile system for a threat that doesn’t exist. He writes that the United States has done the same thing, with its think-tanks pumping out studies about “the new ballistic missile threats from Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. It didn’t matter to anyone that the threat didn’t really exist, because those three countries don’t have missiles with the range to reach the U.S. . . . The probability that those countries would fire a missile capable of hitting American territory was nil, even if it managed to develop missiles capable of hitting the U.S. With an impressive fear campaign, the American defense establishment managed to enlist enough politicians and public opinion to neutralize the serious threat—of budget cuts.”

Sharon is also heating up the situation along the Israeli-Lebanese border, in an effort to provoke the militant Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon to attack Israeli targets. This also constitutes an effort to lay the groundwork for attacks on

Iran and Syria, the main backers of Hezbollah. Despite the fact that the border has been quiet for over a year, Israel continues to conduct totally illegal overflights, with its bombers creating sonic booms over Lebanese territory as far north as Beirut.

On Aug. 3 there was the mysterious assassination of Hezbollah operative Ali Hussein Saleh. Israel has been accused by Hezbollah and Lebanese government ministers of being behind the assassination. It has been noted that the method of using a powerful car bomb in the assassination is the trademark of Mossad chief Gen. Meir Dagan. A longtime crony of Sharon, Dagan promised, when Sharon named him to the position, that he would restore the Mossad’s “proactive” operations, including assassinations.

U.S.-Syrian Cooperation Broken Off

This campaign against Syria is a major point of dispute between the chicken-hawks and the U.S. military-intelligence establishment. This was documented by Seymour Hersh in the *New Yorker* on July 28. Hirsch describes how Syria had become the CIA’s most important source on al-Qaeda since the Sept. 11 attacks. This was coordinated directly between Syrian President Bashar Assad and CIA Director George Tenet.

Syrian intelligence proved to be extremely valuable, because many al-Qaeda operatives belong to the terrorist wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has been engaged in undermining the Damascus regime for 20 years. The U.S.-Syrian cooperation yielded information that prevented at least one terrorist attack on American forces based in the Persian Gulf. Because Syria hoped to use this contact in an effort to establish a direct channel to the Bush Administration, to restart serious peace negotiations with Israel, the cooperation flourished, despite the persistent attacks on Syria by the chicken-hawks and Israel.

Hersh reports that the chicken-hawks did everything possible to undermine this cooperation, even though it was yielding highly useful intelligence. When Syria, like most other countries on the planet, refused to support the Iraq war, the chicken-hawks escalated their attacks and false allegations. This came to a head on June 28, when special U.S. Army units crossed deep into Syrian territory to destroy a convoy of vehicles they claimed were transporting Saddam Hussein and other high Ba’ath Party officials. The attack left 80 people dead, including many Syrian civilians. The convoy turned out to be a group of smugglers trying to transport Iraqi oil into Syrian territory.

Although Syria was willing to maintain the cooperation, the hard-liners in the Bush Administration forced a break-off of the ties. Hersh reports that the CIA is “pissed.” But the big losers are likely to be American citizens who could become the victims of the next Sept. 11-style terror attack—an attack from which Vice President Dick Cheney and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon would both greatly benefit.