

Hersh Exposé: Israel Out To Blow Up Southwest Asia

by Jeffrey Steinberg

If *New Yorker* magazine writer Seymour Hersh has it right—and an impressive number of Washington and Tel Aviv sources interviewed by *EIR* say he does—then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the top Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) generals have embarked on a wild provocation, which could very shortly result in a total explosion of warfare and chaos in Southwest Asia. *EIR* has further learned that Prime Minister Tony Blair's inner circle of British geopolitical pranksters appears to be in on the action, for their own geopolitical objectives.

Hersh played a pivotal role in revealing the torture scandals at Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, with a series of *New Yorker* stories which leaked the details of the torture investigation by Gen. Anthony Taguba, and revealed a top-secret Defense Department "black" counterterror program. Now he has penned a June 28 story, "Plan B," which exposes Israeli clandestine operations in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq.

According to Hersh, beginning in the Summer of 2003, Israeli intelligence assets on the ground in "liberated" Iraq began feeding back warnings of a planned major insurgency, targeting the U.S.-led occupation. The Israeli assets warned of strong Iranian backing for the irregular warfare program. Hersh quoted former CIA Southwest Asia specialist Flynt Leverett, who recounted the Bush Administration's rejection of a multilateral approach to the counterinsurgency requirements, choosing instead to continue with the neo-con insistence that the United States could "go it alone." Furthermore, Leverett noted, the Bush White House chose to "deploy the Guantanamo model in Iraq," abandoning international law and unleashing the torture techniques that have now engulfed the Administration in scandal, amid well-founded accusa-

tions of Hitlerian war crimes.

According to the Hersh chronology, in November 2003, the CIA station chief in Baghdad filed a confidential country assessment, referred to as an "Aardwolf," warning that Iraq was on the verge of chaos, and that the Interim Governing Council and the Coalition Provisional Authority were incapable of governing.

Meanwhile, in Tel Aviv, Israeli military and intelligence assessments of the deterioration of the situation on the ground in Iraq were even more dismal. According to Hersh, in late 2003, former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, a onetime legendary head of the Israeli special forces, personally contacted Vice President Cheney, to warn of the imminent humiliation of the Americans in Iraq. Cheney reportedly ignored Barak's warnings. By the end of 2003, the Sharon government and Israel's General Staff decided to "go it alone."

The Turkey-Israel Split-up

Sources in Israel and the United States have emphasized that, by late 2003, ties between Turkey and Israel, which had formerly been extremely close, were near the breaking point. Israeli military training missions and pre-positioning of equipment in Turkey were cancelled by the Erdogan government, with at least the tacit backing of the Turkish military establishment.

Back to Hersh's account: "By the end of last year Israel had concluded that the Bush Administration would not be able to bring stability or democracy to Iraq, and that Israel needed other options. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government decided, I was told, to minimize the damage that the war was causing to Israel's strategic position by expanding its

long-standing relationship with Iraq's Kurds and establishing a significant presence on the ground in the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan. Several officials depicted Sharon's decision, which involves a heavy financial commitment, as a potentially reckless move that could create even more chaos and violence as the insurgency in Iraq continues to grow.

"Israeli intelligence and military operatives are now quietly at work in Kurdistan, providing training for Kurdish commando units and, most important in Israel's view, running covert operations inside Kurdish areas of Iran and Syria. . . . The Israeli operatives include members of the Mossad, Israel's clandestine foreign-intelligence service, who work undercover in Kurdistan as businessmen and, in some cases, do not carry Israeli passports."

Hersh identified the Kurdish insurrection inside Syria in March 2004, as one such Israeli-run destabilization of the Bashar Assad government. He also reported that Israeli commandos joined Kurdish counterparts in penetrating Iran recently, to install sensors to monitor activity at suspected Iranian nuclear weapons facilities.

One U.S.-based Israeli source, with access to the Sharon government, confirmed the essentials of the Hersh account to *EIR*, adding several other features:

1. There are more than 1,000 Israeli commandos currently operating, under Israeli and American private-sector cover, inside the Kurdish region of Iraq. The American-based companies involved are actually Israeli-owned front companies, registered in Delaware.

2. Sharon is hell-bent on conducting a major military operation against Syria before the end of the Summer. Originally, Sharon had hoped to stage part of the planned actions out of Turkey. When military-to-military cooperation between the two Southwest Asian powers soured over the Iraq War and other regional issues, Sharon opted for the Kurdish basing instead.

3. Sharon's original timeline for a major military assault on Syria was in June or early July 2004. This posed a serious problem for President Bush, who is attempting to salvage his re-election campaign by turning to NATO and Arab allies for help in restabilizing Iraq, after one year of neocon-led incompetence, fantasy, and failure. According to the source, in a recent phone conversation with Sharon and Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice gave the green light, in President Bush's name, for an early assault on Syria. Sharon and Mofaz had promised to "discover" Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, hidden inside Syria, near the Iraq border, in the course of military operations. But President Bush had given no such authorization, and when the corrected U.S. position was reported back to Sharon, it led to a heated telephone exchange between the two heads of state. This deepened Sharon's determination that Israel must "go it alone." According to the source, Israel is no longer keeping the Bush

Administration informed on its plans to strike at the Iranian nuclear facilities before they go on line.

4. As ties between Tel Aviv and Washington have frayed in recent weeks, Sharon has turned to Britain's Tony Blair, as a newly upgraded strategic ally. Recent secret British-Israeli military-to-military deals have been struck, involving the passing of British satellite surveillance data to the IDF, to fine-tune an Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear facilities. Blair is operating on behalf of a British Fabian "liberal imperialist" scheme to dominate a "New Europe" which will replace the Bush-Cheney United States as the dominant strategic power in Eurasia. To the extent that an Israeli-triggered Southwest Asian descent into chaos causes irreparable harm to the U.S. presence in the area, Blair's geopolitical svengalis are prepared to lead the "New Europe" to fill the strategic vacuum.

A Coming Explosion

Key to the renewed Israeli-Kurdish cooperation is an agreement that Israel will provide material support to a Kurdish move to establish an independent state, on the Kurdish-populated regions of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria, according to both American and Israeli sources, who spoke to *EIR* after the publication of the Hersh story.

As Hersh reported, the Israeli commando training of the Kurdish Peshmerga militia is, in part, aimed at conducting clandestine counterinsurgency operations against both Sunni and Shi'ite insurgents inside Iraq. But the effort will contribute mightily to the near-term breakup of Iraq. And that is where the nightmare begins:

1. Any move by the Kurds to establish an autonomous Kurdistan—particularly one that includes the oil-rich region around Kirkuk—will be met by a harsh military response from Turkey, triggering a regional war that could involve Israel.

2. Any breakup of Iraq—as envisioned by Sharon, and by the likes of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Council on Foreign Relations figure Leslie Gelb, fiction writer Ralph Peters, and British Fabian Christopher Hitchens—will spread chaos throughout the area. It is the consensus of a half-dozen regional specialists interviewed by *EIR*, that the emergence of a separate Shi'ite entity in the south of Iraq will inspire a revolt of the Shi'ites in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, the area that holds all of the Kingdom's oil reserves. Such a Shi'ite revolt would spread to other vulnerable Gulf states, including Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

3. Such an outbreak of bloody chaos in the Persian Gulf this Summer, sending petroleum prices soaring toward \$80 per barrel, would trigger the kind of financial and economic meltdown that Lyndon LaRouche has been warning of for months. Nevertheless, desperate Washington fools, typified by a Vice President Cheney who faces a growing demand for his ouster from office, now see such war and chaos as their only means of clinging to power.