

Netanyahu Must Go Now, If Israel Is To Survive Latest Gaza Atrocity

by Jeffrey Steinberg

June 5—A careful review of Israeli and other media coverage *prior* to the May 31 pre-dawn Israeli commando assault on the Gaza aid flotilla, confirms, beyond a doubt, that the operation, carried out in international waters, in clear violation of anti-piracy laws, at minimum, was not a bungled mistake, but a carefully planned, politically calibrated full-scale military operation, involving one of Israel's top special operations units, Unit 13. All of the elements of the attack were prepared in advance, and a detention facility, with emergency medical capabilities, was set up in the Israeli port of Ashdod near Gaza.

Israeli journalists were given a tour of the detention/medical facility several days prior to the commando assault, and at least one daily newspaper, the Hebrew-language *Ma'ariv*, was given a summary of the military plans, which they published on May 28—nearly 72 hours before the assault on the flotilla began. And, written into the Israeli plan, was a military propaganda program, labeling the protesters, in advance, as armed terrorists.

The Ma'ariv Report

Ma'ariv reported, "The sea encounter that will occur at the end of the weekend is already planned detail by detail. From the moment that the ships will pass the 'red line' on their way to Gaza, the fighters of Unit 13 will take control and transfer 800 passengers from their boats back to where they came from. And special arrest units were set up.

"This operation was approved by Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Barak and will be led by the commander of the Navy, Lt. Col. Eliezer Maron, who is nicknamed 'Cheney.' If the people aboard the boats will not agree to turn around, the operation will transfer to the stage of force. 'We are afraid that there will be a terror attack by the boats,' said a high ranking officer. 'If terrorists have gotten on the boats or if there is an intention to use hot weapons against our forces,

we will use full seriousness and caution. We want to avoid using force but as soon as there will be danger to the life of our forces we will be forced to use live fire as a last resort. . . . After our fighters take over the boats, OKETZ unit dogs and forces of the IHLM unit corps of engineers will inspect them looking for sabotage materials and fighting tools.'"

And the coverage of the looming Israeli military assault on the aid flotilla was not restricted to the Israeli media.

Broadcast Internationally

On May 28, *Al Jazeera's* coverage was headlined, "Israel to stop Gaza aid ships," quoting from the *Ma'ariv* account, and reporting that, "The Israeli army also took journalists on a tour of a detention centre being prepared at Ashdod port for holding the aid activists."

"Israel says it will prevent, if necessary by force, a nine-ship flotilla of peace activists and humanitarian aid from reaching the Gaza strip."

The London *Guardian*, the same day, reported: "The Israeli military has declared its intentions to block the flotilla's progress as soon as it attempts to cross from international waters into the 20-mile exclusion zone Israel maintains off Gaza's coast. The military declined to confirm a report in the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* detailing a five-point plan for the confrontation, including warnings, takeover by force, and the detention and deportation of the activists on board. . . .

"The activists were braced for a violent confrontation, said [Greta] Berlin [of the Free Gaza Movement], pointing to a previous incident in December 2008 when a similar attempt to reach Gaza by sea ended in the activists' boat being rammed by the Israeli navy. She claimed the navy was attempting to stop the eight boats converging into a flotilla by threatening to attack one of their number, a Turkish passenger ship carrying around 650 people. . . . Israel had jammed satellite phones and radars on board the ships, she claimed. . . .



Unless Israel dumps Netanyahu, and returns to the peace policy of the martyred Rabin, Israel will cease to exist as a nation. Shown: video coverage of Netanyahu's press conference defending the attack, and the Israeli military assault on the aid flotilla.

The *Ma'ariv* report said the military feared that there could be 'terror activists,' explosives and weapons on board the ships."

The Age of Australia, on May 29, reported, "Thousands of Israeli troops were preparing last night to prevent a flotilla of 10 ships carrying 800 international protesters and tonnes of supplies from breaking Israel's blockage of Gaza Strip... After leading a series of meetings of Israel's security establishment, which also included calls on several foreign ministers of countries whose citizens are on board the flotilla, Mr Barak authorised an action plan. When the ships reach what Israel has determined to be a 'red line,' navy missile boats and other warships will surround them and warn the people on board that going any further will be in contravention of Israeli law. If the ships ignore the request to turn around, navy commandos wearing black masks to prevent identification will board the ships and redirect them to Israeli waters... 'We wish to avoid using force, but the moment that there is danger to the lives of the troops, we will be forced to use live fire as a last resort,' [an Israeli] officer said."

The *Al Jazeera* coverage of the Israeli commando assault plans revealed a further dimension to the premeditated nature of the Israeli attack. Yigal Palmor, a spokesman for the Israeli foreign ministry, admitted to *Al Jazeera*, "We can't win on this one in terms of PR. If

we let them throw egg at us, we appear stupid with egg on our face. If we try to prevent them by force, we appear as brutes."

The Netanyahu government made a calculated decision to take the brutish path.

Prelude to Attack on Iran?

The so-far weak-kneed response from the Obama Administration to Israel's act of international piracy and premeditated murder comes as no surprise. But some leading U.S. intelligence veterans have warned that Netanyahu and company could take this as a long-sought green light for an Israeli attack against Iran. The fact that the Israeli Defense Force conducted a military attack on a ship under Turkish flag was tantamount to an act of war against a NATO member state, a complicating factor that the Obama Administration has assiduously

avoided.

In a June 1 commentary, retired CIA officer Ray McGovern, who is the co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), warned that "A chief lesson learned from President Barack Obama's recent unwillingness to stand up to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud Lobby is that such timidity can get people killed."

McGovern wrote, "Seldom has an act of aggression been so well advertised in advance. Israel had made clear that it would use force to prevent the ships from reaching Gaza and heard no stern protest from President Obama, who apparently could not overcome his fear of Israel's legendary political clout."

Indeed, other senior U.S. intelligence sources reported to *EIR* that Netanyahu had mobilized a group of leading Democratic Senators and Congressmen, including Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Steve Israel (D-N.Y.), to read the riot act to White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel: Get the President to back off of his conflict with Bibi, or face defeat on some of his top legislative priorities. Emanuel dutifully pushed for a "kiss and make up" meeting between President Obama and the Israeli Prime Minister at the White House—which was scheduled to have taken place on June 1st—less than 48 hours after the commando assault.

Netanyahu, who was in Canada when the sea attack



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There were numerous reports in the media warning of Israel's planned commando attack on the Mavi Marmara, but President Obama refused to intervene. Here, Israeli peace activists rally in support of the aid flotilla, on May 31.

occurred, raced back to Israel to handle the crisis, postponing his White House tête-à-tête. Instead, the President called the Israeli leader, to express his “regrets” about the violence aboard the ship, and then turned around and ordered Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to water down an emergency United Nations Security Council resolution, that would have mandated an independent international investigation into the incident.

McGovern concluded his assessment of the flotilla massacre with a forecast: More Americans will die in Iraq and Afghanistan, as the result of the failure to censure Israel for the flotilla attack; terrorists will be further driven to attack targets inside the United States; and Israel will take the American acquiescence as an OK to attack Iran.

“It is no secret that this goal enjoys high priority on Netanyahu’s agenda. It could be stopped in its tracks by a public warning from President Obama. But all signs point to his bending to neocon advice to shy away from a showdown, and, rather, leave everything, including another war of aggression, ‘on the table.’”

British Royal war propagandist Rupert Murdoch has been fueling the climate for just such an Israel “breakaway ally” attack on Iran in the pages of his *Times of London*. On May 30, hours before the Israeli commando raid was launched, the *Sunday Times* reported under banner headlines, “Israel Stations Nuclear Missile Subs Off Iran,” that Israel has three submarines armed with nuclear warhead cruise missiles on perma-

nent rotation in the Persian Gulf. *Times* correspondent Uzi Mahnaimi, stationed in Tel Aviv, wrote that the decision to deploy the subs was taken after Israel learned that Hezbollah has received new rockets from Iran and Syria, able to reach all major population centers inside Israel. The U.S. State Department initially corroborated the Israeli claims about the Hezbollah rockets, but then backtracked from the story, after U.S. intelligence was unable to confirm the story.

A Matter of Survival: Dump Bibi

Lyndon LaRouche warned on June 1 that Israel will not survive long, if Bibi Netanyahu remains in office. LaRouche called for Netanyahu’s ouster. “Bring a Labor Party government back

into power, reach an immediate agreement with the Palestinians, for a legitimate two-state solution.”

“Israel,” LaRouche concluded, “has lost touch with reality. They are no longer the pivot of the British Sykes-Picot system of control. They are no longer of use as a Cold War ally of the United States and NATO in the Middle East. For London, Israel under Netanyahu could be set up for one final mission—a suicide mission against Iran, to set fire to the entire region. No one in his right mind in Israel benefits from such a suicide mission, but many nations, in the past, have died tragic deaths, because they were unable to escape from their own ideological blinders. Israel, under Bibi, is headed down that path—as the flotilla attack clearly shows.”

Indeed, a similar warning message was delivered to Israel’s leadership by Dr. Anthony Cordesman, a retired Marine and a leading Middle East scholar at the Washington, D.C. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Cordesman, who frequently speaks for the military establishment, posed the question: “Israel as a Strategic Liability?” His answer was blunt: “The United States does not need unnecessary problems in one of the most troubled parts of the world, particularly when Israeli actions take a form that does not serve Israel’s own strategic interests. This Israeli government in particular needs to realize that as strong as U.S.-Israeli ties may be, it is time to return to the kind of strategic realism exemplified by leaders like Yitzhak Rabin.”