

# Renewed U.S. Gulf actions irk Moscow

by Jeffrey Steinberg

The U.S. Navy's strong response to the April 14 Iranian mining of the USS Samuel B. Roberts in the Persian Gulf has both Secretary of State George Shultz and top Kremlin officials upset and somewhat confused. Just at the moment that Shultz, the Reagan administration's leading proponent of a superpower "New Yalta" condominium, was traveling by train from Helsinki to Moscow in what was thought to be the final preparatory meeting before the May Reagan-Gorbachov summit, a prompt and decisive American military retaliation against Iranian naval and air force targets threatened to blow up Shultz's plans for a replay of Munich 1938.

In the two days of sporadic military engagements, beginning with the April 19 knock-out of two Iranian oil platforms that served as radar tracking stations for attacks against neutral ships passing through the straits, the administration gave new life to a policy initiated by then-Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger last July.

Far more than just an interim escort service for reflagged Kuwaiti oil tankers, that Gulf naval deployment had been the most visible component of an American strategy to reassert its permanent commitments to the security of U.S.-allied states in the Middle East. The Weinberger plan included permanent military installations throughout the Gulf and the development of military co-production industries in Turkey, Egypt, and Israel to arm the pro-Western states of the region. Such co-production efforts were aimed at clarifying the nature of the "enemy threat" in the region by shifting the focus of the conflict away from the Arab-Israeli struggle to Soviet encroachments and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism.

In the aftermath of Weinberger's resignation late last year, and the administration's subsequent emphasis on massive Pentagon budget cuts tantamount to a strategic withdrawal from global commitments, the absence of any clarification regarding the duration of the American naval deployment in the Gulf had prompted a majority of moderate Gulf Arab officials to fear the worst.

According to *EIR*'s Washington sources, it was only strong pressure from Pentagon, defense industry, and intelligence community "institutional" forces that induced the President to give the green light for the retaliatory strikes. That pressure

has given Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci and Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Adm. William Crowe the leverage to press for a broadened allied security deployment into the Persian Gulf. It also emboldened Saudi Arabia. On April 27, King Fahd announced a cut-off of diplomatic relations with Iran.

The same day, Carlucci and Crowe arrived in Brussels to confer with NATO allies over the precise form of an expanded and more coordinated Gulf security deployment. Previously, France, Great Britain, and Italy, who had carried out parallel naval escorts, had shied away from direct coordination with the Americans out of fear of provoking escalated terrorism. Now, those fears appear to have given way to a willingness to join in any action that tends to reverse the Shultz-led policy of American strategic disengagement.

## LaRouche urges clarification of 'gray areas'

In a brief statement released on April 27, Democratic Party presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. congratulated the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf for their "prompt and effective response to the recent series of piratical attacks by military forces of Iran's Khomeini dictatorship," and at the same time, called for a clarification of the "gray areas" in the American Persian Gulf policy.

"Last summer and fall, until the State Department's meddling in U.S. response to the Iranian firing of the Silkworm missiles, I thought Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger's policy was very clear and sound. . . . Later, I, like many other, had worried that Secretary of State George Shultz's regional matters negotiations with Moscow had turned our Gulf policy into a shambles.

"The recent U.S. military response under standard rules of engagement is most reassuring. However, there appear to be gray areas in the Gulf policy overall. Those gray areas should be eliminated."

LaRouche called for a presidential directive to be issued publicly, spelling out the mission and rules of engagement defining military response to any threat to shipping or to American forces in the Gulf, designed to "neutralize armed obstruction to the safe passage of the vessels they are protecting, and, in the case of any attack upon that shipping or U.S. forces themselves, shall act promptly under rules of engagement to neutralize by appropriate means all elements and supporting echelons of those elements engaged in the attack." American forces would then immediately return to the previous "normal" escort function, thereby making it clear that the effort falls below the threshold of war between the United States and Iran.

LaRouche concluded his proposed presidential directive by warning that, short of taking no action whatsoever, the worst thing that the United States could do would be to allow the State Department's crisis management apparatus to step into the middle of the Gulf deployment. That would all but guarantee a degeneration of the situation into a full-scale state of war.