

Bush Gets Tough With Sharon . . . Finally

by Jeffrey Steinberg

In the wake of the assault on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, the Bush Administration has apparently decided to put some serious pressure on the Sharon government in Israel, to force it to engage in genuine peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. Naturally, of course, Richard Perle and the Defense Department's Paul Wolfowitz are typical of those intensifying their demands for the directly contrary policy, of a blind "snipe hunt" bombing-attack against any of all nations on lists of targets proposed by Henry Kissinger, Perle's crowd, and numerous others of that faction.

The shift in administration policy was largely driven by the fact, that no credible appearance of an international coalition against the currently alleged authors of the Sept. 11 attack would be possible, unless the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in the process of being settled. The Bush Administration needs the active backing of Arab and Islamic governments, no matter what kind of action is taken against what some have alleged to have been the Islamic authors of these terror attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. To secure that support, Bush would have to reverse his administration's de facto endorsement of the Israeli IDF command's war of extermination against the Palestinian Authority.

A Blunder By Sharon

On Sept. 14, President Bush held a telephone discussion with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, in which the President asked Israel to resume cease-fire and peace talks with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. According to several government sources, Sharon responded to the President's request by launching into a diatribe against Arafat, branding him "Israel's Osama bin Laden," a reference to the "Iran-Contra"-created financier of the Afghansi mujahideen being touted in the world media as the architect of the Sept. 11 attacks. Sharon followed his attack on Arafat by cancelling a meeting between Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Arafat that had been scheduled to take place on Sept. 16.

Sharon's crass response to President Bush's call for cooperation provoked an angry reaction from the President and from other Cabinet officials, according to sources. Over the weekend of Sept. 15-16, with apparent encouragement from the Bush Administration, Arafat announced a unilateral cease-fire, and ordered the Palestinian Authority police to crack down on all networks engaging in paramilitary actions against Israel. He went so far as to order the police to refrain

from returning fire, even if they were attacked by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

Within hours of the Arafat move, on Sept. 16, Israeli Defense Minister Bimjamin Ben-Eliezer officially announced that Israel would withdraw all IDF units from the territories under Palestinian Authority control. Sharon announced that if the Palestinian cease-fire held for 48 hours, he would permit Peres to meet Arafat.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell commended Arafat for the initiative, and spoke to the Palestinian leader, as well as Peres and Sharon, on Sept. 16. He later announced that the security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, directed by U.S. CIA officers, would recommence.

In a Qatar radio interview that day, Powell announced that Israel would not be allowed to participate in any military operations against the apparatus behind the Sept. 11 assaults.

Sharon later claimed that, in a late-night call on Sept. 17, Powell had invited Israel to participate in the coalition, a claim that has not been confirmed by any U.S. official. Through his official press spokesman, Raanan Gissin, Sharon also fired off a warning at Washington: Israel will not sit back, as it did during the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War. Gissin was quoted in the Sept. 18 London *Guardian* as warning, "We are not going to lay back and play dead. Israel will not pay with more blood just to ensure there is a fledgling coalition."

International Pressure

Other governments have also put pressure to force the Israelis to halt their "preemptive assassination" campaign against the Palestinian Authority leadership. Shortly before the Sept. 16 announcements by Arafat and Sharon, the Norwegian Ambassador to Israel had convened a meeting at his home, to coordinate pressure for the cease-fire. In addition to the Ambassador, the meeting was attended by her husband Terje Larsen, who is the United Nations Coordinator for the Middle East and was a major player in the secret Oslo talks; U.S. Ambassador Dan Kurtzur; European Union Special Envoy Miguel Moratinos; and Russian Special Envoy Andrei Vdovin. According to a report in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* on Sept. 20, it was Special UN Envoy Larsen who drafted the wording of Arafat's unilateral cease-fire order, and got Peres' approval of the wording, before it was announced.

Sharon's tentative bowing to U.S. and international pressure, to pull back IDF forces from Palestinian territories and allow Foreign Minister Peres to resume talks with Arafat, reflects the Prime Minister's tendency to bend to the kind of intensive pressure which he came under from Washington following Sept. 11. However, if Sharon does cooperate—under sustained pressure—with the U.S. effort to forge an alliance against the apparatus alleged to be behind the Sept. 11 attacks, he may also find himself in the cross-hairs of the most extremist elements inside Israel, who are hell-bent on reconquering the territories handed over to the Palestinians, as part of their fanatical drive for Greater Israel. These radical

Egypt's Mubarak Raises Interesting Questions

In an interview with Cable News Network (CNN) on Sept. 15, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak raised several crucial questions regarding the attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The following excerpts are taken from the transcript provided by the Egyptian State Information Service website:

Recalling his own repeated public warnings since 1991, that governments must take terrorism seriously, Mubarak lamented that his warnings had not been heeded. He emphasized the extraordinary nature of the Sept. 11 events: "We take precautions on the grounds, people may hijack planes, do this . . . do that, but we couldn't think any intelligence capability in the world could have the capability to predict they are going to use commercial planes with passengers on board to crash the Towers, to crash the Pen-

tagon. Those who did that should have flown in the area a long time. For example, the Pentagon is not very high, a pilot could come straight into the Pentagon like this to hit, he should have flown a lot in this area to know the obstacles which could meet him when he is flying very low with a big commercial plane in a special place.

"Someone has studied this very long, someone has flown in this area for long."

When asked if he were suggesting it were an inside operation, and who might be behind it, Mubarak criticized the assumptions that it must be Arabs. "You remember Oklahoma, there came immediately that the Arabs did it, and it was not the Arabs, who knows. Let us wait and see the results of the investigations, because something like this done in the United States is not an easy thing." He criticized assumptions about pilot training: "Some pilots had been training in Florida, so many pilots go and train just to fly and have a license, that means you are capable to do such terrorist action? I am speaking as a former pilot, I know that very well, I flew very heavy planes, I flew fighters, I know that very well, this is not an easy thing. So I think we should not jump to conclusions from now."

elements, including religious fanatics pushing the destruction of the Islamic holy sites on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, were identified in a late-July statement by Lyndon LaRouche, as possibly plotting the assassination of Sharon, and the use of his martyrdom to unleash a full-scale Mideast war, possibly involving the use of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction against Persian Gulf and other Islamic targets.

The 'Mega' Factor

On Sept. 17, the day after he authorized the pullback of Israel troops, Sharon was already busy, trying to escape from the pressure from Washington and other world capitals. *Ha'aretz* reported that Sharon held a conference call with leading American Jewish lobby figures, and urged them to support his view that the Palestinians must be included among the targets of the anti-terror alliance. He was quoted as telling the group, "We cannot permit ourselves to distinguish between terror against Israel and terror against the rest of the world. Arafat's terror against Israel is like bin Laden's terror against the United States."

The *Ha'aretz* story did not name any of the prominent Jewish Lobby figures who participated in the call. However, it is likely that there were members of the "Mega Group" on the line. The "Mega Group" was exposed in the Aug. 17, 2001 *EIR* as the Zionist "mega-billionaires club" engaged in an intensive blackmail and pressure campaign against the Bush Administration, to force the President into giving his support

to whatever massacres Sharon cares to unleash, in the name of Greater Israel. The "Mega Group," which met in New York City in early May at the mansion of founder Edgar Bronfman, to launch a \$7 million media and public relations campaign in support of Sharon, represents one of the most serious national security problems in the United States today.

All of these dangers pose a continuing challenge to the Bush Administration, even as it prepares its currently stated form of response to Sept. 11. Meanwhile, the facts of the targetting of New York and Washington pile up, confirming LaRouche's original immediate assessment of the bombings, as attacks which could only be authored as part of a coup d'état prepared chiefly by a powerful rogue element still ready to strike again, from inside the security structures of the U.S.A. itself. We must hope that that line of ongoing investigations identifies some of those rogues in time, to persuade the United States to call off the kind of chaos which would lead, inevitably, to an unstoppable religious war with and among an estimated billion Muslims of the world.

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