

Military Sources: We Are On the Edge of Nuclear War

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Dec. 12—Qualified U.S. military and intelligence sources have provided a series of devastating updates on the looming danger of a larger war in the Middle East, triggered by an Israeli strike against Iran. The picture, taken as a whole, underscores that the planet is now on the very edge of a general war that would all but certainly lead to the use of thermonuclear weapons, and the extinction of much, if not all, of humanity.

1. Active Measures

Both Iran and Israel are taking active measures to prepare for a war. Israel is now moving around some of its tactical nuclear weapons on trucks, to avert a feared Iranian strike in retaliation for an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear facilities. The Israelis have an inflated estimate of the number of Iranian missiles that are capable of reaching targets in Israel, and there is a lack of solid intelligence on improvements in the guidance systems on Iran's new solid-fuel missiles. Despite this, Israel is operating on an assumption that Iran has as many as 4,000 solid-fuel missiles capable of striking targets in Israel. Any Iranian retaliatory missile strike on Israel, according to a senior U.S. military in-



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An Israeli strike against Iran would trigger a larger war in the Middle East, and potentially, a global thermonuclear war, according to qualified U.S. military and intelligence sources. Shown: The Israeli Defense Force in action.

telligence source, would trigger an Israeli nuclear retaliation against Iran.

Iran is also moving those missiles out of their fixed locations, out of fear of Israeli attacks using the new bunker-buster bombs provided by the United States. Tehran has created a backup command/control system, using land lines, and has set up backup command posts outside of the known facilities. All of this indi-



Digital Globe

Should Israel attack Iran's nuclear sites, provoking a retaliation by Iran against a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the U.S. would be obliged by treaty to step in. Shown: Iran's Esfahan nuclear site, in a satellite photo from 2004.

cates that there is a serious expectation of a conflict in the near term.

2. Israeli Hair-Trigger

For now, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak do not appear to have a majority of support for war from within the inner Cabinet. However, there is a serious worry at the Pentagon that Netanyahu may order a strike even without such approval. Since there is no known precedent for such an action by an Israeli prime minister, there is no basis for anticipating the response from the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) command. What happens at that point is a big question mark.

Right now, as the result of the splits in the opposition Kadima party, and Barak's successful destruction of the Labor Party, there is no possible political combination that could likely remove Netanyahu from power. He is, in fact, calling for a Likud convention soon, to reelect him as party head, so that he can call snap elections at any point he chooses after that. So, the opposition to Netanyahu is largely restricted to the Mossad, IDF, Shin Bet, and Military Intelligence veterans, who know that Iran is still far off from having a nuclear bomb. There is much opposition, but there is no guarantee that this is sufficient.

Netanyahu is the heir to the Revisionist Zionist Movement of notorious British agent and self-professed fascist Vladimir Jabotinsky. Jabotinsky led a Jewish Brigade of the British Army during World War I, and was a collaborator of the infamous Alexander Helphand Parvus who, under the control of British Intelligence's Frederick

Engels, devised the doctrine of permanent revolution/permanent war otherwise attributed to the Bolshevik Leon Trotsky. The simple fact that an Israeli attack on Iran would all but assure the destruction of the Israeli state is of no consequence to Netanyahu.

This is why the remnants of the original secular Zionist movement, largely centered in the old military and intelligence establishment, have been waging an

unprecedented public campaign of war avoidance, targeted against the Netanyahu-Barak madness.

3. U.S. Lowers the Threshold

Under National Security Council pressure, led by Tom Donilon, the Obama Administration has recently changed the criterion for action against Iran. No longer is the U.S. "red line" set at the point that Iran has all of the elements to assemble a nuclear bomb and delivery system. The new "red line" is when Iran has all of the technological capacity for a weapon. This clearly lowers the threshold for U.S. military action against Iran, but it is still far off in the future.

This shift is significant, according to one senior U.S. intelligence source, who equated it with the difference between a loaded and an unloaded gun. "The Joint Chiefs, Panetta, and Hillary are, fortunately, not trigger happy," he said.

Nevertheless, the U.S. position, in the past few weeks, has moved closer to the Israeli position. All relevant U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded, for the time being, that the factional situation at the top of the Iranian power structure is so intense, going into the early 2012 Majlis (legislative council) elections, that no faction will be able or willing to negotiate a deal with the UN Security Council Permanent Five-plus-one that would be truly binding. For now, the U.S. "best option" is continued sanctions and sabotage—not overt military strikes. But an Israeli attack could, in the judgment of one senior intelligence official, come at any moment.

As long as the U.S. is pursuing a program of covert warfare—along with Israel, Great Britain, and others—

the danger is that the Iranian leadership will come under intense popular pressure to retaliate. Already, senior U.S. intelligence sources are confirming that the populations of Tehran and other cities are becoming restive over the pattern of bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations that are becoming an ever-more frequent occurrence. At what point are the political leaders in Iran compelled to launch asymmetric retaliations? And how will the U.S. and its allies respond? Is this a trajectory to general war?

These questions are disturbing, to say the least. In the past three weeks, Shi'a riots have erupted in three cities in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, and in Kuwait. This already poses the question of whether the Al Quds Brigade of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps has begun to retaliate against the low-intensity attacks being carried out on Iranian soil.

4. Can the Military Contain Obama?

Recently Generals Martin Dempsey and James Mattis, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the commander of the Central Command, respectively, delivered a strong message to President Obama

personally, according to Pentagon sources: Netanyahu, they demanded, must be told, in no uncertain terms, that this is not the time for a preemptive attack on Iran. The consequences of such an action would be catastrophic. The generals indicated that the United States would require between 45 and 90 days to establish force protection of all of the U.S. military assets in the region.

The President rejected the demands from the generals. He refused to pressure Netanyahu, arguing that he has no right to interfere in Israeli decision-making, and adding that he would prefer it if the Israelis attacked without the U.S. knowing in advance. This was greatly alarming to the generals, needless to say.

In effect, the remaining U.S. military forces (and 17,000 contractors) in Iraq, the 100,000-plus U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, and the U.S. military assets throughout the Persian Gulf, are all immediately vulnerable, in the event of an Israeli strike against nuclear sites in Iran. While there is intense debate inside the U.S. national security establishment over what U.S. policy should be, in the event of an Israeli preventive strike on Iran, one thing is clear: If Iran retaliates against any member of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the United States will be obliged, under a series of bilateral defense treaties, to step in. According to a senior active-duty military source, the worst nightmare for the Pentagon, is being drawn into a big war without choice, and without adequate time to secure forward-based American military personnel and resources.

The reason that an Israeli strike on Iran, triggering a much larger war, has not already taken place, is that top circles in the U.S. military and intelligence community have taken extraordinary steps to prevent it. War avoidance is now the top priority of the Pentagon and the CIA, a senior U.S. intelligence official recently told *EIR*. The problem, the source acknowledged, is that President Obama is the Commander-in-Chief, and there is no confidence that he will listen to the sage advice of his generals and intelligence chiefs. The war avoidance effort is, thus, fragile at best.

As Lyndon LaRouche has repeatedly warned, the only durable war avoidance option is the removal of President Barack Obama from office, via impeachment, or the invoking of Section 4 of the 25th Amendment. Until and unless both Obama and Netanyahu are removed from office, the specter of a thermonuclear World War III will stalk the planet.

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