

Sharon Sends a Missile Into the White House

by Dean Andromidas

When three Israeli helicopter gunships, flying low over Gaza City on June 10, fired seven missiles at a car carrying Abdel Aziz Rantisi, reputedly the number-two leader in the Islamic militant Hamas organization, the true target was President George W. Bush, who only the week before put the prestige of the U.S. Presidency behind the Road Map for a Middle East peace. U.S. Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche noted that if Bush is going to save his initiative, he will have to confront Sharon's defiance with concrete steps, including the threat to cut off American economic and military aid to Israel.

"Sharon is doing what he is best known for," commented a senior Israeli intelligence source. "When under domestic and international pressure, he runs wildly forward. He is dealing in a contemptuous way with President Bush. . . . The question is how long will Bush continue to support Sharon now that he is obstructing his policy?"

The day after the failed assassination against Rantisi, a Palestinian suicide bomber killed 16 people in Jerusalem. Almost within minutes, Israeli helicopter gunships strafed the Gaza Strip, killing ten Palestinians and wounding dozens. *EIR* has been told by Israeli and American intelligence sources that Sharon, in collusion with elements of Hamas, is scheming to sabotage the Road Map through precisely the type of terror/counterterror attacks now unfolding.

President Bush expressed his outrage directly after the attempt on Rantisi. "I am troubled by the recent Israeli helicopter gunship attacks," he said during a June 11 appearance with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. "I regret the loss of innocent life. I'm concerned that the attacks will make it more difficult for the Palestinian leadership to fight off terrorist attacks. I am determined to keep the process on the road to peace. . . . And I emphasize all parties must behave responsibly to achieve that objective."

Later, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer made it doubly clear that the President's remarks were aimed at Israel: "But this attack deeply troubles the President, particularly as a result of the new environment that has been created in the post-Aqaba era, that means both parties agree that the best way to dismantle terror, and therefore, enhance Israel's security and the livelihoods of the Palestinian people, is through the actions laid out in the Road Map. Both parties said they would follow the Road Map. And the President

wants to remind all parties about their responsibilities. Today, he reminds Israel."

Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Assistant Secretary of State William Burns, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer, and Elliott Abrams of the National Security Council were deployed to call Israeli and Palestinian officials to drive home the President's message.

'We Have a Problem With Sharon'

Just before Sharon ordered the assassination of Rantisi, an article appeared in the daily *Ha'aretz* on June 10, reporting details of the three-way summit chaired by Bush and including Sharon and Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) held at Aqaba, Jordan on June 2. Senior *Ha'aretz* political correspondent Akiva Eldar recounted that after the summit, Bush informed Rice, "We have a problem with Sharon." The exchange is worth reporting in detail, since it makes clear that Bush was putting pressure on a Sharon who showed no inclination of becoming a "team player."

Eldar said his report came from a participant at the meeting, who told him that at the request of the Israelis, security was put at the top of the agenda. "The first thing Bush was required to talk about was security," the participant said, adding, "It was a request of the Israelis. so [Bush] asked [Palestinian Security Minister Mohamed] Dahlan to give a briefing."

Dahlan then gave a five-minute briefing and told Bush "There are some things we can do and some things we cannot. We will do our best. But we will need help." But Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz burst in, "Well, they won't be getting any help from us; they have their own security services." Eldar wrote, "you could see that Bush was irritated," and that Bush retorted, "Their own security service? But you have destroyed their security service." Mofaz repeated, "I do not think that we can help them, Mr. President." To which Bush replied, "Oh, but I think you can. And I think that you will."

Bush then, according to Eldar's source, turned to Abu Mazen and asked for a briefing on the situation in the West Bank and Gaza. After outlining the rather dismal situation, Abu Mazen said that new funding was necessary. Sharon interrupted, "The insertion of new funding must be dependent on your good behavior." A "visibly irritated" Bush told Sharon, "You should release the money as soon as possible. This will help the situation." Bush was referring to the customs duties that Israel has been collecting from imports destined for the Palestinian National Authority, that must transit Israel, as well as income taxes owed the P.N.A. by Palestinians who work in Israel. This has amounted to nearly \$1 billion.

Sharon allegedly repeated, "We have to deal with security first, and we will condition the release of their monies on this alone." Bush "peered at Sharon" and said, "But it is their

money.” Sharon’s “Nevertheless, Mr. President. . .” was interrupted with, “It’s their money, give it to them.”

It was after this meeting that Bush reportedly told Rice, “We have a problem with Sharon, I can see; but I like that young man [Dahlan] and I think their Prime Minister [Abu Mazen] is incapable of lying. I hope they will be successful. We can work with them.”

This exchange is yet another confirmation that Bush is not only serious about implementing the Road Map, but serious about putting pressure on Sharon. It also explains Sharon’s contemptuous treatment of Bush.

Despite Bush’s outraged denunciation of the Jerusalem bus bombing, he is continuing to “peer” at Sharon. Senior military security affairs correspondent Ze’ev Schiff wrote in *Ha’aretz* on June 12, “The American administration is now less interested in Palestinian terrorism and more in the question of why Ariel Sharon broke his promise” to Colin Powell. Schiff then revealed that when Powell visited Israel in May, “Sharon promised him not to carry out targeted assassinations as a punishment, but only in life-threatening situations that could be called ‘ticking bombs.’” But assassination target Rantisi is known to have nothing to do with the military wing of Hamas. Schiff revealed that the Bush Administration’s Middle East envoy, Ambassador John Wolf, would soon be in Israel, to tell Sharon “what is permitted and what is forbidden in the war against terror.”

Sharon on a Flight Forward

Volker Perthes, chief of the Middle East department of the German government-backed Stiftung für Wissenschaft und Politik told Deutsche Press Agentur (DPA) that the assassination attempt on Rantisi was “a decision for war.” Expressing contempt, Sharon told the Israeli press that he “told Bush and Abu Mazen at Aqaba” he would not compromise with terror. In another statement he attacked Abu Mazen, calling the Palestinian leader a “cry-baby” who was “like a chick who hasn’t any feathers.” Sharon declared he would continue the attacks on militants.

Defense Minister top Sharon flunky Mofaz told the Knesset (Parliament), “My opinion in the past was that we should deport [Palestinian President Yasser] Arafat. At this moment, it would not be right to do so, but it is very possible that in the very near future, there will be no choice but to do so.” This is also a threat to Bush, who, despite his dislike for Arafat, knows that if Arafat were killed, Abu Mazen’s life would be forfeit.

Any Sharon promises to Bush are proving a tissue of lies. He has no intention to work with Abu Mazen at all. In fact, Brig. Gen. Eli Yaffe, head of the General Operations Directorate of the Israeli army, told a Knesset committee, that in the 40 days that Abu Mazen has been Palestinian Prime Minister, the Israeli have killed no fewer than 75 militants and arrested 650 Palestinians. He did not count innocent bystanders killed. The rockets shot by Sharon’s helicopters also targeted Bush’s

promises made at the Sharm al-Sheikh summit in Egypt on June 3, where Bush had met Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Jordanian King Abdullah II, King Hamad of Bahrain, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, and Abu Mazen. Bush had given these leaders his word to seriously push through the Road Map in return for their cooperation. This was important for Egypt and Saudi Arabia; in fact, President Mubarak demonstrated a personal commitment to help Abu Mazen reach a cease-fire agreement with Hamas. The day after the Rantisi assassination attempt, Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman travelled to the West Bank to meet Abu Mazen and Arafat in an effort to salvage the cease-fire effort, despite Sharon’s attacks.

In the United States, the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith leaped to Sharon’s defense. In a letter to the President, the ADL attacked Bush’s criticism of Sharon, declaring, “We are troubled by your statement today that Israel’s targeted strike against a known Hamas terrorist ‘does not contribute to the security of Israel.’ Israel, like the U.S. has the right to defend itself from Terrorism. . . .”

Ha’aretz revealed on June 12 that Sharon is most likely to be working directly with Henry Kissinger: “Kissinger and Sharon keep their closeness under wraps—most of their meetings do not come to media attention, however . . . their connection is very tight. Sharon has a profound respect for Kissinger, regarding him as someone who knows how to add historic and international dimensions to Sharon’s own understandings of the events on the ground.”

But Sharon’s real sponsor is Vice President Dick Cheney. To Cheney in particular, and the half-dozen Likudniks who inhabit his office and the Department of Defense, Sharon is their hand grenade to be thrown into the Middle East to ignite a Clash of Civilizations. For Bush to salvage his Road Map, he will have to act hard against Sharon’s backers inside his own Administration. An Israeli policy analyst told *EIR* that the attempt against Rantisi was Sharon’s warning to Bush to “beware,” and Bush must act firmly with Sharon in order to avert the waiting disaster. “Short of Bush doing something, we are in big trouble,” he urged. “Words don’t have an effect on Sharon. Bush has to do something serious, like cutting the loan guarantees or implementing an arms embargo. Sharon and his gang have to be brought down, they have to pay the price.”

He underscored that there is no one in Israel who can stop Sharon. Even if he is brought down within the Israeli system, fellow Likudnik Benjamin Netanyahu will come to power. It is only the U.S. Presidency that has the power and influence not only to bring Sharon to heel, but to bring all of Israel to its senses. Journalist Eldar told *EIR* something has to be done so the “Israeli people understand they cannot have it both ways. They cannot occupy and rule over another people and have prosperity and good relations with the United States and the international community. I feel no country should have it both ways.”