

LaRouche: Israeli War Plans Against Gaza Are Insane

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On Jan. 17, Lyndon LaRouche warned Israeli leaders that if they go forward with their reported plans to conduct large-scale military operations inside the Gaza Strip, they will be unleashing chaos throughout the region, and sabotaging any hopes of a regional peace breakthrough. “It would be insane, suicidally insane,” LaRouche commented. “Israel’s own self-destruction would be virtually assured.”

LaRouche issued the warning after *EIR* had received detailed reports from Israeli and U.S. intelligence sources, that a recent meeting of the Israeli security cabinet, following President George Bush’s recent eight-day visit to the region, had approved massive military operations into Gaza, to uproot Hamas command and control, and to assassinate or arrest leading Hamas figures—all in the name of “peace.” Indeed, even before Bush completed his regional tour, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) units launched a series of targeted military operations in Gaza against Hamas, killing dozens of people, including the son of a prominent Hamas leader. The Israeli actions followed on the heels of the U.S. President’s visit to Ramallah, on the West Bank, where he held a meeting and media availability with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. This led the PA leader to threaten to resign on Jan. 18, unless the Israeli military operations were immediately halted. Abbas is reportedly furious at the Americans and the Israelis for what appears to him to have been a setup, giving the impression that he had somehow signed off on the assaults into Gaza.

Barak’s Blind Ambitions

According to both the Israeli and American sources, Labor Party leader and Minister of Defense Ehud Barak has been

a proponent of the Gaza strikes, arguing that no two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict is possible, so long as Hamas remains a strong and popular force among Palestinians, and retains control over Gaza. It is an open secret in Israel that Barak is convinced that military victories in the Gaza campaign can catapult him back into the prime ministership.

According to one well-placed Israeli source, the Olmert cabinet has approved a large-scale military invasion, to occur anytime after April. This, however, is premised on the survival of the Olmert government, which is awaiting the release of the Winograd Commission report on Jan. 30, 2008. The Commission has conducted a thorough review of the disastrous July 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which aimed to crush Hezbollah. After a month of air strikes and ground operations, Israel halted the invasion, having failed to seriously damage Hezbollah’s forces in southern Lebanon.

It was a nightmare defeat for Israel. The Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, Air Force Gen. Dan Haloutz, was forced to resign, and the new Israeli military leadership overhauled their Northern Front war plans, to take into account Hezbollah’s surprisingly effective asymmetric warfare operations. Any new Israeli military operation against Hezbollah would, according to American and Israeli sources, involve massive air and ground conventional attacks by the IDF, and would likely precipitate a war with Syria, and perhaps, even Iran.

If the Winograd report focuses the blame on Prime Minister Olmert, there could be further cabinet resignations, forcing early elections. In that case, Likud leader and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is waiting in the wings. He has been an open advocate of Israeli preventive strikes against Iran’s purported nuclear weapons sites. Recent polls suggest

that Netanyahu would win a snap election for prime minister. A close ally of U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and others in the pro-British war party in Washington, Netanyahu would also likely launch a full-scale invasion of Gaza, but, unlike misguided Labor Party leaders, who believe that peace with the Palestinians can be achieved over the political corpse of Hamas, Netanyahu would see the smashing of Gaza as a guarantee that peace would be off the table for the indefinite future.

Bush's Trip: Promoting War and Peace

During his meetings with regional leaders, on his Jan. 8-16 tour of Southwest Asia, President Bush had attacked Iran as the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, and had made other equally bellicose comments, while ostensibly pursuing a final status peace deal between Olmert and Abbas. In the wacky world of George W. Bush, war is peace, and peace is war—or so it seems.

The Israeli sources, with close ties to the Olmert government, warned that the Israeli war plans against Hamas's presence in the Gaza Strip, could easily careen out of control, and spread to a second northern front, if Hezbollah carries out rocket attacks against Israel, in sympathy with Hamas. Under those circumstances, the sources warned, Israel could be drawn into a simultaneous war against the Palestinians, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Syria. According to some Israeli contingency plans, Iran could also be a target, if evidence were to surface of further Iranian military support for Hamas or Hezbollah, or if Iran were to take some kind of direct action against Israel.

This is the kind of regional chaos and war, advocated by Bush Administration figures like Vice President Dick Cheney.

LaRouche has identified such an all-out destabilization as fundamentally "Made-in-London," in pursuit of the British policy of using "managed chaos" to create a post-nation-state, "post-Westphalian" world system. LaRouche has warned Israeli leaders that they are considered to be throwaways by this hard-core British crowd. While Israel, with its arsenal of an estimated 200 nuclear weapons, was a key Cold War "wild-card" asset, with the fall of the Soviet Union, and the recent spike in oil prices, Israel's net worth to the geo-strategists in London, has greatly declined. Some Israeli leaders, like President Shimon Peres, seem to recognize this reality, and they, therefore, see a peace deal with Syria and the Palestinians as in their near-term vital interest. In this broader strategic context, any impulse to launch major military operations into the Gaza Strip, which would serve as a trigger for the larger permanent conflict, must be dropped, immediately. Such folly would almost certainly lead to the destruction of Israel, LaRouche concluded.

Instead of this Gaza folly, LaRouche urged Israeli leaders to pursue a bilateral peace deal with Syria as soon as possible. Such an agreement, which would pose no strategic threat to

Israel, would build upon the small measure of momentum towards peace, that was established with the Nov. 27, 2007 Annapolis, Md. conference—but set back by Bush's disastrous regional tour. Syria attended the Annapolis conference, breaking nearly seven years of isolation by the United States and much of the rest of the world. On two prior occasions, in 1994 and 2000, Syria and Israel came within inches of a comprehensive agreement, that would have returned the Golan Heights to Syria, in return for verifiable security guarantees, including billions of dollars of American high-tech "eyes in the sky" technology, and the deployment of an American peacekeeping force on the Golan Heights.

Bush's War Mission

President Bush's war mission against Iran fared about as well as his peace mission to the region, according to a wide range of Washington sources contacted by *EIR*. At a Middle East Policy Council (MEPC) forum on Capitol Hill on Jan. 18, the former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Chas Freeman, cited a stunning editorial attack on Bush in Saudi Arabia's English-language daily newspaper, *Arab News*, on the eve of the American President's arrival in Riyadh. The editorial signaled a Saudi rejection of Bush's demands that Sunni Arab states join Washington and Tel Aviv in a military alliance against Tehran. It came in the context of direct Arab diplomatic talks with Iranian officials, led by both Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the two countries that Vice President Cheney and other Administration warhawks had counted on, to be the drivers of the new "coalition of the willing" that would carry out "regime change" in Iran before Team Bush leaves office.

The Jan. 12 *Arab News* editorial, titled "Cynicism With Reason," contained a very undiplomatic assault on President Bush himself: "He has proved a disaster of a president—for the US, for the Middle East, for the world. Everything he touches turns to dust and ashes. Iraq, Afghanistan, maybe now even Iran. And not just in the Middle East. The American recession—it is already happening—can be laid directly at his door. Thanks to a financially disastrous combination of massive military spending hikes and tax cuts, he will bequeath to his successor a record national debt of a minimum of \$9 trillion and possibly far more if the Democrats are to be believed. He will surely go down in American history as the most incompetent president ever and the deathly 'Bush Touch' will go into the English language as his only lasting legacy to the world."

With such uncharacteristically harsh words in the Kingdom's leading English-language daily, it is no surprise that the Saudi government virtually laughed at Bush's demands to increase oil production.

One can only hope at this point that the Israeli government wakes up to the fact that if they proceed ahead with the planned Gaza invasion, they will only be contributing to the advancement of the Bush folly. Preventive war is never the route to peace.