

Lavi cancellation: end of the Sharon era

by Joseph Brewda

On Aug. 30, the Israeli cabinet voted 12-11 to abandon the multibillion-dollar development of the Lavi jet, after an intense and bitter struggle. The fierce cabinet battle, which led to the resignation of Minister Without Portfolio Moshe Arens and provoked violent demonstrations in Tel Aviv, was sufficient indication that there was more at issue here than the development of a jet.

The Lavi project was the cornerstone of the strategic policy of Israel's Ariel Sharon faction, the faction which used the likes of Jonathan Jay Pollard to steal U.S. secrets for the Soviets. The Lavi was ostensibly a scheme to transform Israel into the nuclear-equipped military master of the vast region from the Indian subcontinent to Northern Africa. At the same time, and somewhat more publicly, developing the Lavi was to have made Israel the world's third-largest weapons supplier. The vote against the Lavi meant the end of this utopian scheme, the end of the Sharon era.

It was *EIR's* understanding of this hidden agenda in the Lavi's development which prompted us to produce a limited circulation report on the project back in 1982—the reference, over the years, for the forces that finally defeated it.

The public, and stupid American officials, were told that the Lavi was to be a jazzed-up version of the U.S. F-15 jet, which would somehow make Israel “technologically and militarily self-sufficient.” It was claimed that the jet could be produced at a significantly lower cost than comparable aircraft Israel was purchasing abroad, and that it therefore could be used to take over Third World military markets presently dominated by the United States, France, Russia, and Britain. The scheme's Israeli advocates noted that then-U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig prominently endorsed Israel's projected takeover of U.S. weapons markets. Until recently, the proposal was enthusiastically promoted by most major political factions in Israel, and almost the entire Israeli cabinet.

U.S. pressure to drop the Lavi had become increasingly evident over the last year, as it became clear that the cost of the jet's development would vastly outrun the initial projections, that, indeed, the jet could never be competitive. While the U.S. government had agreed to foot the bill for the project

during the first Reagan administration, despite the opposition of U.S. aircraft manufacturers, it was no secret that the White House had been trying to back out of the plan for some time.

But the most important point of pressure against the Lavi were leading figures within the Israeli military command itself, including the new Israeli Air Force chief of staff. The Israeli military began to attack the plane's development as diverting resources from the country's military and industrial capabilities in the service of a utopian fantasy. Israel's military realists, unlike their civilian counterparts, understood that chasing after the dream of “superpower” status, meant, concretely, such a diversion of resources that the destruction of the Israeli Army would follow. The clear result of the Lavi scheme would be Soviet domination of the region, not Israel's—and such a reality would be very close, were the U.S. fleet not now deployed in the Persian Gulf.

Israeli Foreign Minister and Labor Party leader Shimon Peres turned against the project. Peres, who had earlier been one of the plane's most vocal proponents, cast the deciding vote against it. Minister Without Portfolio Moshe Arens, the jet's designer, announced his resignation, while Industry Minister Sharon ranted that the vote was a “surrender to foreigners.” Sharon's designs on the premiership had just gone up in smoke.

The Lewis plan

The strategic plan behind the Lavi development was of one piece with the Carter administration's overthrow of the Shah of Iran and installation of madman Khomeini in 1979. This “Lewis plan,” named after its formulator, Princeton and British intelligence's Bernard Lewis, envisioned the imperial use of Shi'ite fundamentalism and ethnic insurgencies to fragment the nation states of the region stretching from the Indian Subcontinent through the African Maghreb—except Israel—allegedly as a means to contain “communism.” It was then-National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski's adoption of this plan, that gave us Khomeini, as an alleged “threat” to Moscow.

The corollary to the Lewis plan was the designation of Israel as a nuclear-equipped Spartan overlord of the region. Israel, equipped with the Lavi, would loyally control the region for the United States. In some variants of this story, Israel would actually replace NATO. The biggest promoters of the decoupling of the United States from Europe and the dissolution of NATO, were also among the most enthusiastic supporters of the Lavi. The Lavi was thus integral to the “New Yalta” scheme to abandon Europe, as well as the Middle East, to the Soviet Union.

This was the real secret behind Jimmy Carter's Camp David Accords. In fact, Camp David's secret protocols to this effect were negotiated by U.S. Gen. Richard Secord and senior Mossad officer David Kimche. It is by no accident that Secord and Kimche later emerged in the Iran-Contra affair as central to the U.S.-Israeli policy of selling arms to Khomeini.