

Sharon's Generals Plan a New Six-Day War with Egypt

by Dean Andromidas

The hawks on the General Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces may be planning a new Six-Day War, while Israeli politicians and the world dither over Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's so-called Gaza disengagement plan. This was revealed in a signal piece by Israeli military commentator Amir Oren, in the daily *Ha'aretz* on June 5. Oren said such a war would have Egypt as its primary target. Such a war would fit into the pre-emptive nuclear war policies of Vice President Dick Cheney and his neo-con cabal that seeks war with the entire Islamic and Arab world. One Israeli intelligence source questioned by *EIR* about the likelihood of war, said, "The only question is whether it will begin before the U.S. elections or after."

Since the U.S.-brokered 1978 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, the latter has been the United States' key Arab ally, receiving over \$1 billion in American economic and military aid. Overthrowing U.S. support for Egypt would virtually end any remaining American credibility or influence in the region, making it totally dependent on Israel as its crusader state. This has been the dream of Israeli hawks for decades.

In addition, Egypt serves as a bridge between West Asia and Africa, and as such, has stood in the way of Anglo-American networks who plan to dismember Sudan to steal its oil provinces and control the rich water resources of the Upper Nile that stretch into the war-torn Great Lakes region of Central Africa. Right-wing Israeli networks of arms dealers and mercenaries have been full partners of these Anglo-Americans. Egypt would never abide by a dismembering of Sudan, which lies astride the waters of the upper Nile, the lifeline of Egypt's existence as a nation.

The same week the Oren article appeared, Israeli military commentator Rueven Pedatzur revealed that the Israeli mili-

tary censor failed to block the publication by an Israeli think-tank, of a new study proposing Israel adopt a pre-emptive war doctrine against all Arab states and Iran, to prevent their acquiring weapons of mass destruction. This pre-emptive doctrine would be backed by an Israeli nuclear deterrent that could destroy between "10 and 20" major population centers. (See accompanying article)

U.S. Command Shift Involved

Oren revealed that this past March, Syria and Lebanon were quietly withdrawn from the area of responsibility of the U.S. Army's European Command (EUCOM) and turned over to Central Command, which includes Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. This leaves Israel as the only country in the region under EUCOM's responsibility. Israel is considered a full American ally. Oren wrote, "The true meaning of leaving Israel in the Army's European Command has nothing to do with relations between Israel and Jordan, nor with the possibility of an outbreak of violence on the Northern Syria-Lebanon and Hezbollah front, which the Americans see as part of the ongoing campaign in Iraq and the one that could open in Iran.

"The meaning is that Egypt is not be trusted—not in Rafah, not in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and not in any political initiatives in the region." The Israeli military's "assessment"—a Straussian lie—is that all the talk from Egypt about Mideast peace, and cooperation with Sharon's disengagement plan, covers a deeply anti-Israeli policy. They claim that "Egypt is contending with Israel for leadership of the region." and is not interested in a Palestinian-Israeli peace. Oren continues, "The IDF believes that Egypt wants to position itself as a pro-American regional superpower that shies away from

war with Israel but competes with it for leadership of the region. The Army also believes that the Egyptian army is preparing itself for the possibility of moving into Sinai, in contradiction to the peace agreement.”

Oren claimed these hawks see Egypt moving under conditions where Israel is engaged in a major military conflict with Syria and Lebanon to the north and the West Bank to the east. In that case, unless Israel, “manages to achieve a military victory within a week on the other fronts (Palestine or northern) [it will] choose between ignoring Egypt and focusing on other fronts, or taking up the Egyptian challenge. The Second Alternative is known as the “rendezvous scenario”—while the Egyptian army moves east from Sinai’s demilitarized Zone A, the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) will move west.

“The IDF fears that a war with Egypt, perhaps in a post-Mubarak period, is not a wild hallucination. The Israeli objective that will be presented to the government in the event that such a war breaks out, will be inflicting severe damage on Egyptian military hardware (mostly air force) but not troops, as well as a temporary takeover of the Ras Muhammad/El Arish line, in order to gain the option of returning the western part of Sinai in exchange for reinstating the agreement.”

A Repeat of How 1967 War Started

This is a replay of the scenario that led to outbreak of the 1967 Six-Day War, exactly 37 years before Oren’s article was published. In May 1967, the Soviet Union informed Egypt that Israel was planning to launch a war against Syria, after which President Gamal Abdel Nasser deployed thousands of troops into the Sinai to deter it, thus touching off the crisis that led to the war. Many believed that in reality, Nasser never really intended to invade Israel. Senior Israeli intelligence sources point out that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak is unlikely to make the same mistake and would proceed with utmost caution,

One senior Israeli intelligence source pointed to a split between the hawks on the general staff and Prime Minister Sharon. These hawks see any effort to de-escalate the current conflict as a threat to their power, including budget allocations and the desire to continue to dominate the entire region militarily. This concern could become acute if they lose the influence of their neo-conservative allies in the Bush Administration. They are thinking in the short term.

Sharon, on the other hand, is thinking in a longer term, 10-15 year framework. He is willing tactically to withdraw from Gaza as a means of expanding his grip on the West Bank, so as to assure the ability to attack towards the East through a cantonized West Bank, when he may see conditions more favorable for a broader war.

No sooner did Oren’s signal piece appear, than tensions erupted on the Israel-Lebanon border. On June 7, Israeli jets fired rockets at a unused training camp of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command near Beirut.

Israel accused the group of firing missiles earlier that day towards Israel. Although the missiles did not land on Israeli territory nor were any injuries reported, Israel chose to retaliate. Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said, “This is a clear message to the Lebanese government that we will not accept any attack against our forces from Lebanese territory.”

Israel said it would hold both Lebanon and Syria responsible for further attacks.

The next day, another clash occurred between Israeli forces and the Lebanese militant organization Hezbollah at the disputed Shaba Farms, near where Syria, Lebanon, and Israel come together.

War Considered in October 2000

Another Israeli intelligence source told *EIR* that in October 2000, when the Lebanese Hezbollah kidnapped three Israeli soldiers along the Lebanese border, then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak threatened a major retaliation against Lebanon. But he then held back, because he feared Egypt would, in fact, move into the Sinai.

The reference to October 2000 is significant and bears parallels to today’s developments. It was shortly after then-candidate Ariel Sharon took his infamous march onto the Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount in September of that year, with the intention—which he achieved—of blowing up the peace process, if not starting World War III. This was the match that ignited the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

On the advice of the hawks on the General Staff who falsely claimed that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, not Sharon’s provocation, was responsible for the violence, Barak launched a massive attack on the West Bank. Behind this attack, Barak tried to launch his own “unilateral separation plan,” which bore considerable similarity to Sharon’s own “disengagement plan.”

This attack inflamed the Arab and Islamic world, as pictures of Israeli tanks rumbling into the West Bank to do battle with stone-throwing youths, flashed across the world’s TV screens. The kidnapping of the three Israeli soldiers occurred at this time. In reaction, Barak considered a major attack on Lebanon and had already positioned troops along the northern border for such a move. He also made moves to invite Sharon and the Likud to join his coalition, which would then have become a war cabinet.

After considering the possibility that Egypt might deploy into the Sinai as a means of pressuring Israel, Barak called off any major attack on Lebanon or Syria. But it was only after then-U.S. President William Clinton cautioned Barak that bringing Sharon into the government was unacceptable, and refused to back such an adventure, that the situation began to de-escalate.

Unlike October 2000, the President of the United States today is George W. Bush, Cheney’s puppet, and Sharon is Israel’s Prime Minister. So who will stop Sharon’s generals, if the same scenario unfolds in October 2004?