

Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

C'est Lavie

Ariel Sharon's billion-dollar sure thing: an Israeli jet that may signal an alliance between hawks and hoods.

Almost unnoticed in the West, Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and Co. have launched Israel onto a \$1.1 billion development program aimed at producing a new generation of Israeli warplane, the Lavie. The decision to go ahead with the Lavie production, after a number of years of debate, provides a critical insight into the long-range thinking of the ruling clique in Israel.

It is not a hopeful sign.

According to available evidence, the supersecret decision to build the Lavie—which is a major strain on Israel's inflation-ridden economy—represents nothing less than an overt preparation by Israel to “go it alone,” i.e., to break with the United States.

While some Israelis naively view the Lavie project as an Israeli industrial project of importance in itself, there is no question that the circle around General Sharon—who is said to make Prime Minister Begin look like a dove—intend the Lavie project as something far more sinister.

The key Israeli circle around Sharon in this connection is comprised of Minister of Cooperation Yaacov Meridor, Israel's Ambassador to the U.S. Moshe Arens, the Sharon-allied elements of the religious parties, and Meridor aide Arye Genger. Genger, an American, was employed until recently by the Rapid American Corporation. RAC President Meshulam Riklis, a reputed associate of organized

crime, is said by Israeli intelligence sources to be the chief sponsor of Sharon's post-1973 rise to power.

Late last year, Genger was the subject of intense controversy in Israel when he was brought over from New York to become Sharon's aide for military-industrial production, a field that obviously includes the Lavie fighter.

After an unprecedented general strike at the Israeli Defense Ministry against the Genger appointment, Genger was forced to decline the position, instead quietly taking up a position as an aide to Meridor. Meridor, of course, a veteran of the 1940s-era Irgun underground, has long been a backer of Sharon.

And Moshe Arens, who presented his credentials as the new Israeli Ambassador to the United States on Feb. 16, is said to be the “brains behind the Lavie project.” Arens, for many years, was the mover behind the Israeli air force and the Israeli Aircraft Industries (IAI). According to some Israeli sources, Arens is closer to Yuval Neeman, the extremist ex-Mossad official, than to Begin himself, having opposed the Camp David pact as too pro-Arab!

Arens, Sharon, and co. are prepared for an open break with the United States. Mossad-linked sources believe that Sharon and Co., spurred by their Swiss and organized-crime backers, might even contemplate a raid to destroy the Saudi oil fields in a bid to eliminate

the primary source of Arab Power, despite the wrath such an action would provoke from Washington.

The Lavie project is of paramount importance for Israel's future strategy.

Under normal circumstances, it would be insane for Israel to invest huge resources to develop a plane that will not be produced until 1990. The decision to go ahead with Lavie thus presumes that 1) Israel will not reach a peace agreement before then, and 2) the United States cannot be relied upon as a military supplier.

Both assumptions are ominous.

An additional angle on Lavie is that hundreds of the \$9 million planes will be produced not for Israeli use, but for export. A long list of countries in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia is being approached by Israel arms officials to secure preliminary accords on the Lavie export. In Latin America, those sales are being coordinated by Gen. R. Zeevi, known by the misnomer “Gandhi,” who is a kingpin of Israeli crime syndicate affairs.

In mid-February, possibly linked to the Lavie project, Begin held an unpublicized summit meeting with Zeevi and Ehud Olmert, who had previously attacked Zeevi as the head of the Israeli mafia.

Still unsolved is the question of where the funding for the Lavie project will come from. The *Jerusalem Post* says that the funding is “secret,” and four American companies (Pratt and Whitney, McDonnell Douglas, General Dynamics, and Northrop) are involved in partial financing discussions. But gangster Meyer Lansky's billions may prove to be a more practical source of funds.