

Turkey threatens to use water as weapon

by Joseph Brewda

Turkish Interior Minister Ismet Sezgin will be traveling to Damascus, Syria in April to deliver an ultimatum: Unless Syria agrees to end its alleged support of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), which Turkey claims is fostering rebellion in Turkey, Turkey will cut off the flow of the Euphrates River, which supplies Syria with almost all of its water. Turkey claims that the rivers which rise in its territory are as much its property as the oil that is found under Arab lands. In 1987, Turkey and Syria signed an agreement in which Turkey pledged not to restrict the flow of the Euphrates into Syria, and Syria pledged not to support the PKK. Now, Sezgin is threatening to invoke that agreement, with the Turkish press exclaiming that "now is the time to finish Syria off."

In Israel, meanwhile, politicians of every stripe are claiming that the "Teheran-Damascus axis" is behind the March bombing of the Israeli embassy in Argentina, a claim that prompted the Syrian-run Lebanese military to go on combat alert later that month. Turkey has increasingly allied itself with Israel since 1983, when Turgut Özal, now the President of Turkey, became its prime minister. A coordinated Turkish-Israeli war on Syria this year, under the pretext of a war against terrorism, is increasingly possible.

Whether or not this war occurs, the threat to use water as a geopolitical weapon is making its dramatic debut. Who is behind this? According to Arab and Turkish sources, it is Joyce Starr, who advises Özal on water issues. The Mideast expert at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Starr runs the Global Water and Technology Summits, which is composed of former CIA and Pentagon officers with longstanding ties to both Turkey and Israel.

Stealing water from Arab mouths

The basis for the use of water as a weapon is that the Arab countries currently only have 44% of the water they need, according to the estimates of an Egyptian parliamentary study, and 85% of this water flows from eight non-Arab states. Both the Euphrates and Tigris rivers rise in Turkey. Syria is dependent on the Euphrates. Iraq is dependent on the Euphrates, which reaches it via Syria, and on the Tigris, which flows directly into Iraq from Turkey. As for the Nile,

upon which Egypt and Sudan are dependent, it arises in Ethiopia and Uganda—both non-Arab, non-Islamic states that have long been targets of Israeli infiltration. The Nile and Tigris-Euphrates river basins have always been key to the region.

Who controls this water controls the region, it is thought, including by Israeli strategic planners. Israel, which is desperately short of water itself, is conspiring with Turkey to control the region—and get access for itself to the waters now flowing to the Arabs. "If the shortage of water in Israel becomes stronger and we can't solve it by peaceful means, then it will have to be solved by war," Israel water authority official Zvi Ortenberg recently said.

One way that Turkey and Israel are putting the region's war under their central control is by means of the Southeast Anatolia development project, GAP, which Özal initiated in 1983. GAP is a series of 13 sub-projects comprising irrigation and hydroelectric dams, of which the most important is the Ataturk Dam, which was completed in 1989. The project, which will increase Turkish agricultural production by some 300%, is exactly what the region would need for its development—if it were not now being perverted to geopolitical use. The Ataturk Dam can hold back 50 billion cubic meters of water taken from the Euphrates, enough to make Syria die of thirst.

Starr's water wars

Since at least 1986, Joyce Starr has spent her time arguing that the main threat to the Mideast is competition over dwindling supplies of water. Her Global Water and Technology Summits (GWTS), which is funded by British Zionist financier Edmond de Rothschild and Canadian Zionist financier Charles Bronfman, are devoted to this theme.

Starr is the longtime head of the CSIS Mideast division. The founder of the CSIS research department, Ray Cline, also chairs the Global Strategy Council, the parent organization of Starr's water group. Cline is the former director of State Department intelligence and of the intelligence division of the CIA. Joining Cline and Starr on their ten-man Global Strategy Council is Gen. Richard Stilwell, the former head of Pentagon intelligence in the Reagan-Bush administrations; former U.N. ambassador and Zionist mouthpiece Jeane Kirkpatrick; and Morris Leibman, a top Chicago-based figure in the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Research for the group is led by James Scaminaci, the former CIA station chief for Japan, and Yonah Alexander, an Israeli anti-terror expert on loan to CSIS, where he directs the research department which Cline had formed and led for 25 years.

Starr's GWTS sub-division advisers include Egypt's Boutros Boutros Ghali, the former official who negotiated the Egyptian-Israeli Camp David peace treaty and who is now U.N. secretary general; and Joseph Sisco, the former Kissinger hand who was deeply involved in the Lebanese civil war.