

Field of Thorns: Sharon To Expel Palestinians

by Dean Andromidas

Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his generals are poised to expel the Palestinian population from the “Land of Israel.” Sharon’s latest actions are not a “reaction” to the suicide bombings of Sept. 18-19, but part of his war plan which he has systematically implemented since coming to power. A U.S.-launched war on Iraq has been considered necessary for the final implementation of these plans. Yet, the imprisonment of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat in his Ramallah headquarters is a dramatic confirmation that Sharon might not be able to wait for the American assault.

An Europe-based Israeli intelligence source warned that the generals dominating the upper command levels of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) could push Sharon to launch the “transfer” sooner than expected. Among the most dangerous of these generals is IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya’alon. In 1996, as chief of Israeli military intelligence, Ya’alon drafted a war plan called “Field of Thorns.” Since Sharon’s Sept. 28, 2000 march on to Jerusalem’s al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, the Field of Thorns has been systematically implemented to crush Palestinian resistance.

Only two steps remain to be carried out. The first is the final destruction of the Palestinian National Authority with the arrest and/or killing of the entire Palestinian political leadership. This has already been partially implemented. The second is the deportation of Palestinians from “sensitive areas”—the entire West Bank.

According to these sources, the generals hoped to implement this policy amidst a major Middle East war, for which an attack on Iraq is crucial. They have three options. First, implement it in the wake of a U.S. attack on Iraq—already begun in the past weeks with attacks on Iraqi radar and other sites, to provoke a reaction from Iraq that can be used as a pretext for the war. Second, a Palestinian mega-terror attack inside Israel. Third, an Israeli attack on Syria and Lebanon. The sources located the “water dispute” between Lebanon and Israel, as simply an Israeli pretext to launch such an attack.

Hawks and Chicken-Hawks

The Field of Thorns war plan is not simply a product of the warhawk generals who have been carefully placed by Sharon at all levels of the Israeli military-security establishment. It is a plan drafted in full coordination with the American “Chicken-hawks” who have been equally carefully

placed by Vice President Dick Cheney within the U.S. military-security establishment, particularly in his own office and that of the U.S. Defense and State Departments. These include Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz; Chairman of the Defense Policy Board Richard Perle; Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith; and David Wurmser, special assistant to State Department chief arms control negotiator John Bolton.

It is this group that, for over a decade, since Cheney was Secretary of Defense in the administration of George Bush “41,” have been mobilizing for a new Middle East war to overthrow virtually all the Arab and Muslim regimes in the region. Yet not until the events of Sept. 11, 2001 have they been able to fully implement it.

Despite the 1991 Gulf War, this policy was never fully realized under the elder Bush. Nor was it welcomed by the Clinton Administration. Most significantly, the strategic decision by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to sign the Oslo Accords in September 1993 put Israel on the road to peace with its neighbors. But Rabin’s assassination at the hands of a Israeli right-wing extremist in November 1995 sounded the death knell for the Oslo Accords, and enabled a full mobilization of this network, from outside and inside the Clinton Administration, to reintroduce their plans for a new Middle East war.

On July 8, 1996, Richard Perle presented then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with a strategic war plan called, “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm” co-authored by nearly all the Chicken-hawks in the current Bush Administration. The policy rejected the “land for peace” principle of the Oslo Accords, and targetted Syria, Iran and Iraq as the enemies of peace. Netanyahu enthusiastically accepted the policy and presented its outlines in a speech he made before both houses of the U.S. Congress on July 11, 1996.

As soon as Netanyahu became Prime Minister in June 1996, General Ya’alon, then chief of Israeli military intelligence, led the team that drafted a military operational counterpart to the “Clean Break” policy, code-named “Field of Thorns.” The plan’s mission was to crush the Palestinian Authority and expel the Palestinians from the West Bank, and put the Israeli defense forces in a position to launch a new Middle East war against Lebanon and Syria in particular. Within months, both plans were implemented, in a scenario that parallels exactly what could be expected if the current Bush Administration attacks Iraq.

In September 1996, less than two months after the Clean Break policy was announced, the Clinton Administration was manipulated into launching major air raids on Iraq. Despite the fact that Clinton could not stomach Netanyahu, warhawk Vice President Al Gore maintained a warm relationship with the Likud party’s Prime Minister. Within days of these attacks Netanyahu provoked a major confrontation with the Palestinian Authority by opening a “tourist tunnel” under the al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, one of Islam’s most holy sites.



The “Field of Thorns” plan to destroy the Oslo Accords and expel the Palestinians from the West Bank, was already policy of the Israeli military warhawk faction within a year after Oslo. Now in full swing, the plan specified destruction of the Palestinian Authority (here, its radio-television headquarters is destroyed), and closure and levelling of Palestinian cities and enclaves by provoking street warfare.

As was expected, this led to mass Palestinian demonstrations, and was the pretext for the IDF to launch operation Field of Thorns. Gun battles between Palestinian police and Israeli troops led to hundreds of deaths and casualties. A deterioration into a wider Middle East war was averted only after President Clinton de-escalated by pulling back his bombers from Iraq, and pressured Netanyahu to suspend the Field of Thorns operation, and eventually forcing him to accept the Wye Agreement with Arafat.

Christian Zionists Pushed ‘Field of Thorns’

But Field of Thorns became the operational war plan of the IDF, intensified as the “pro-Oslo” generals were replaced, one by one, with hardliners, during the government of Netanyahu. The ultra-hawk Gen. Shaul Mofaz was elevated to Chief of Staff, and Gen. Dan Halutz became head of the air force. This year, “Bomber” Halutz was responsible for dropping a one-ton bomb in Gaza that killed 11 children along with one targetted Hamas commander. By 1998, Ya’alon became head of the Central Command, where he prepared his troops for implementing Field of Thorns by training them in the same operational tactics that Nazi SS Gen. Jürgen Stroop used to crush the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

On Sept. 4, 1997, the *Jerusalem Report* wrote that the policy “is the scenario for a bloodbath: Israeli tanks roll into Palestinian cities, and are confronted by youths armed with stones, Molotov cocktails, and guns. Israeli soldiers and Palestinian police fight it out in house-to-house battles; Israeli attack helicopters make pinpoint strikes on strategic Palestinian targets. Casualties are immense. . . .”

While Israeli media were denouncing the policy, it received the praise of the American “Christian Zionist” right wing. In September 1997, the newsletter of the International

Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, run by Jerry Falwell, wrote: “They called it ‘Field of Thorns’—a recent exercise to determine the cost of re-taking areas given to Arafat’s PLO. . . . Retaking the Yesha areas [on the West Bank] from Arafat could be the one issue Israel has to deal with ruthlessly. . . . Our congressmen and parliamentarians must be informed, challenged, and reminded again and again that . . . the failure of Oslo . . . is the failure of the PLO.”

The policy was also endorsed by Anthony Cordesman, Middle East expert at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), in a study entitled “Peace and War versus the Palestinians: A Second Intifada,” released in December 2002. Cordesman detailed the plan in full, warning that the Palestinians should accede to Israeli demands, or suffer the consequences.

By September 2000, the Oslo Accords were driven into the ground after the diplomatic sabotage by Prime Minister Ehud Barak, whose chief military adviser was General Ya’alon. The imminent departure of Bill Clinton from the White House paved the way for implementing Field of Thorns in full force. Sharon’s march onto the al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount in September 2000 provided the match to ignite the powderkeg of Palestinian rage.

Plan Almost Fully Implemented

The attacks on Sept. 11, 2001 brought the “Clean Break” policy back to Washington in the form of President Bush’s “axis of evil” and pre-emptive strike national security strategy, with “regime change” in Iraq at the center. Since that date, the IDF military operations have escalated tremendously, with Palestinian casualties doubling. According to the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, 1,203 Palestinians were killed and 41,000 were wounded between

September 2001 and September 2002—double the figure of last year.

The brutal events of the last months parallel everything that is laid out in the Field of Thorns plan. These include operation Defensive Shield of this Spring—better known as “Operation Warsaw Ghetto”—and the ongoing daily military operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which feature the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and economy, targeted assassinations, closures, curfews, and sieges of Palestinian cities.

The only two elements remaining to be implemented are the final destruction of the Palestinian Authority, with the arrest and/or murder of its leaders, and the forced evacuations of Palestinians from the entire territory of the “Greater Land of Israel.”

But there is one last element that has not been made public about Operation Field of Thorns, and that is the deployment of nuclear weapons, about which American statesman Lyndon H. LaRouche has warned.

Nuclear Hysteria Targets Israelis

Sharon has prepared the ground for this as well. For weeks, his government has warned that Israel will retaliate if Iraq launches missiles, especially weapons of mass destruction, against Israel. Sharon claims this is necessary for Israel to regain the “deterrence” it lost when it did not respond to Iraq’s 39 Scud missiles launched toward Israel in the 1991 Gulf War. While an Iraqi strike on Israel is seen, even by Israeli security experts, as unlikely, the Sharon government and the Israeli media have been creating mass hysteria in the population over it.

Senior military commentator Reuvan Pedatzur, writing in the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz* on Sept. 26, warned that Sharon is leading Israel to the deployment of nuclear weapons. Pedatzur wrote that according to Sharon’s logic of deterrence, “the central problem that will face Israel if it is attacked by Iraq is the choice of means and targets for the response. An Israeli response using conventional weapons will be a drop in the ocean of destruction that the U.S. Army is planning for the Iraqis. Therefore, a response that is meant to transmit the Israeli message has to be unconventional. From here it’s a short distance to the many hints by politicians and senior officers about the need to use strategic weapons.

“To remove any doubt about the policy to be followed by Israel when the American war against Iraq breaks out, Sharon made it clear to senior administration officials that Israel’s decision not to react in 1991 undermined its ability to deter an enemy attack. In addition, he emphasized that the Israeli public will demand a reaction if Iraq attacks. Thus Sharon completes an interesting circle.

“First you frighten the public, inflate improbable threats, emphasize the continuing damage to deterrence, hint at the need to use strategic weapons, and finally you tell the Americans that we have to respond, since the public demands it.”