

Warnings That Sharon's Latest War Schemes Target Syria

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, smarting from a big defeat for himself and President Bush in the May 2 referendum in which his own Likud Party voted down Sharon's proposed Gaza "disengagement plan," is now planning a military action against Syria and possibly other Arab targets, as a means of saving his badly weakened position. Sharon is not only reeling from the "unexpected" defeat in the party referendum, according to Israeli sources, but, with his credibility frayed, Sharon now fears that the Israeli Attorney General will be encouraged to indict him on corruption and theft charges stemming from the financing of Sharon's last election campaign.

Israeli intelligence sources have warned this news service that Sharon is preparing a pretext for a military attack on Syria, possibly based on claims that Syria is helping funnel arms and Hezbollah fighters into the Gaza Strip to facilitate terrorist attacks on Israeli settlers and soldiers.

On May 5, Israeli Defense Force jets bombed targets in southern Lebanon, claiming that they had to take out anti-aircraft batteries manned by the Hezbollah militia. These actions lent further credence to the Israeli sources' reports of a war drive by Sharon. According to the Israeli daily newspaper *Ha'aretz*, the Israeli bombing raids occurred after Israeli Air Force jets had repeatedly violated Lebanese air space until they drew anti-aircraft fire. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan's emissary to southern Lebanon, Staffan de Mistura, charged that there had been "numerous Israeli air violations of the Blue Line and of Lebanese air space," and called for the overflights to stop.

U.S. intelligence sources had told *EIR* that they expect Israeli assassination attempts against Hamas leaders living in Syria, as part of the Israeli provocations. Indeed, on May 3, the *Jerusalem Post* reported that Syrian authorities had arrested five Mossad agents, who had entered the country

in a plot to assassinate Hamas leader Khaled Meshal. The assassination was to have taken place, according to the news account, at a memorial service in honor of Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who was assassinated earlier this year in an Israeli Defense Force attack in the Gaza Strip. Neither Israeli nor Syrian authorities would confirm the arrests or the foiled assassination plot.

Bush Administration Neo-cons Weigh In

The Israeli reports of Sharon's plans for a "war of distraction" against Syria, were further buttressed by the renewed attacks on Syria by Bush Administration neo-cons, including State Department arms control boss John Bolton. In a move reminiscent of Vice President Cheney's propaganda preparations for the invasion of Iraq, Bolton charged that Syria is believed to be in possession of equipment for making nuclear bombs. According to the Israeli daily *Ma'ariv*, Bolton has claimed that Syria was a "client" of Pakistani nuclear weapons scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, who ran an international smuggling ring, providing nuclear weapons technologies to countries like North Korea, Libya, and Iran.

Such dubious reports from a senior Administration neo-conservative could be all the signal Sharon needs to launch his own "wag the dog" war.

Ma'ariv wrote on May 5, "One atomic energy expert . . . said Bolton leads a faction in the [Bush Administration] that believes they have strong evidence" of Syria's nuclear weapons program. However, the same article also noted that "Those who are pushing the idea that Syria has centrifuges, have been held back by other members of the inter-agency community who question the veracity of the claim." Another source added, "Not everyone in the U.S. intelligence community and government is certain Syria has operating centri-

fuges. . . . One source said that not even Syria's arch foe Israel is convinced."

Intelligence community and Pentagon skepticism aside, the bottom line is that Bolton has a direct pipeline into the White House. The leading Syria war-hawk in the Bush Administration is David Wurmser, the former Bolton deputy and Pentagon disinformation specialist, who is now a Middle East policy aide to Vice President Dick Cheney. While at the American Enterprise Institute in 1999, Wurmser wrote a book-length screed against Syria, demanding "regime change." The book was financed by bingo magnate and Temple Mount Zealots funder Irving Moskowitz.

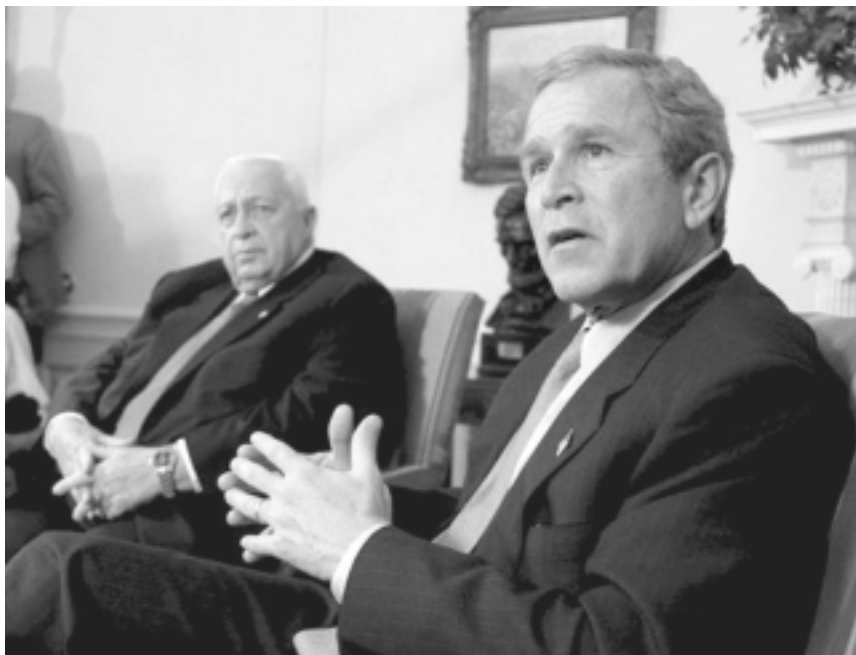
Whether Israeli intelligence is convinced or not about Syria's nascent nuclear weapons program, Israeli sources close to the Likud insist that Sharon is seriously considering the option of a military strike against Syria, to distract attention away from his domestic political problems. He is pressing the Bush Administration for a green light to take action against Syria as early as June.

This Syrian war scheme, the sources add, is one of the main purposes of a mooted Sharon visit to Washington, perhaps as early as mid-May, to confer again with President Bush and his top Cabinet aides.

In their meeting in April, when President Bush issued the signed letter—abandoning 50 years of American policy on the issues of the Palestinian right of return, and the sanctity of the 1949 Israel-Palestine border until a final status agreement is reached—the two leaders reportedly "spoke candidly" about their plunging political support. Bush confided that his re-election in November is hardly certain; and Sharon admitted that he was worried that the Israeli Attorney General, a close ally of his in the past, might be forced to indict the prime minister on the campaign finance fraud charges. U.S. intelligence sources report that the book of evidence against Sharon is so overwhelming, that it would be an act of sheer political corruption for the Attorney General to let the Prime Minister off the hook.

LaRouche: Beware of Berserker Moves

Democratic Party Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche, whose "LaRouche Doctrine" for achieving peace and security throughout Southwest Asia is circulating widely among both Arab and Israeli political elites, had warned in late April of the danger of a "berserker" move by the Cheney neo-con gang in Washington and/or their Israeli



Sources in Israel were warning at the beginning of May that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon—his government at its shakiest, his April 14 Washington agreement sunk by his own Likud party, and his Attorney General perhaps about to indict him—wants to start a war of distraction on Syria. Events of May 3-5 sharpened those warnings.

thug-ally, Sharon.

LaRouche pointed to the April 24 statements by the United States' Iraq proconsul Paul Bremer, announcing plans to "re-Ba'athify" the Iraqi state and military institutions, as a sign that the Bush Administration is now split, politically, over how to get out of the Iraq quagmire. Some Administration factions, LaRouche suggested, had responded to his "LaRouche Doctrine," and were now looking seriously at an exit strategy, based on the key points he developed in the document, and in a subsequent interview with *EIR*'s Middle East correspondent Hussein Askary (see *EIR*, May 7).

But, LaRouche warned, any move, however tentative, towards a sane approach to the Southwest Asian zone of instability, would likely cause a violent reaction from Cheney, Sharon, and others, hell-bent on blowing up the entire region in chaos and perpetual war.

LaRouche singled out Sharon, and the reported presence of Israeli commandos on the ground inside Iraq, as one possible source of staged provocations in that country. He argued that a Syria war option, however, would also fit into the Sharon/Cheney schemes for provoking an explosion of regional violence.

Any attempt to implement the "LaRouche Doctrine" without direct visible involvement of LaRouche, the candidate warned, would just serve to provoke the ever-more-desperate Cheney and Sharon into a flight forward.

The immediate days and weeks ahead are fraught with great danger, LaRouche concluded.