

## Bush's Folly May Launch Sharon's New Middle East War

by Dean Andromidas

Calling for the overthrow of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, President George Bush's June 24 Middle East Policy speech has set the stage for a new Middle East war, a war that could include the deployment of nuclear weapons. U.S. Presidential precandidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. said that the speech immediately threatened the physical elimination of Arafat by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's military, by means of which, Israel would put Hamas in control in Palestine. LaRouche identified the causal backdrop to Bush's endorsement of Sharon's drive for war, as the administration's fear of the unfolding economic and financial collapse. With the Rose Garden speech, Bush has unleashed a process that the administration will not be able to control, possibly leading to general war, including Israel's deployment of the nuclear missiles, of which it has lately been boasting, against Iran or Iraq.

Sharon and the rest of the Likud party found it hard to conceal their glee with Bush's presentation. Communications Minister Ruben Rivlin invited Bush to join the Likud's Central Committee, while Avidgor Lieberman of the extreme-right Yisrael Beitenu party, told the London *Financial Times* (June 26), that Bush "has made clear . . . Arafat must be replaced, even if by force."

But in Europe and the Middle East generally, including in the peace camp and among more sober policymakers in Israel itself, Bush's speech was received with shock and disbelief. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, of the Labor Party, for example, after auditing the Rose Garden speech, reportedly said it was a "fatal mistake" and warned: "A bloodbath can be expected."

Veteran Israeli peace activist and editor of the *Israel & Palestine Strategic Update*, Maxim Ghilan, told *EIR* to "prepare for a new *Nqba*," the Arabic term for forcible mass trans-

fer. Ghilan said, "With this speech the Americans have adopted the Sharon line. . . . This is very bad, a worst beginning possible for a new era of wars in the region." It is a clear signal, Ghilan warned, that a war against Iraq is on, even if it includes only the United States and Israel. With this speech the Bush Administration signalled it does not care about the concerns of Arab countries.

Another leading Israeli journalist commented that the problematic nature of the speech was seen in the immediate and aggressive reaction by extremists on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides.

### Europe: Dismay Behind Diplomatic Niceties

Behind diplomatic comments, Western Europe is horrified by Bush's speech, because it clearly demonstrates that the Bush Administration, running away from financial and economic problems, is prepared to lead the West into a catastrophic Middle East war. A British figure active in Atlantic Alliance affairs for years, called the Bush speech "disappointing, hardly even-handed. After all, if he is demanding a change in the Palestinian leadership, why not in the Israeli leadership as well? Meanwhile, there is no real timetable for a solution, and the occupation by the Israeli Army will continue. As for Arafat, if there is an election now, he will win it massively. The real danger now, in my view, is that somebody will kill Arafat; the Bush speech will be seen as a license to kill." The short-term likelihood of a U.S. attack on Iraq is also increased; again, "the White House wants to get this war going, before there is a mood-change on the economy." This source reported that "private briefings . . . have begun, from the British government, to Labour parliamentarians, that war against Iraq is on the agenda."

Another British Middle East analyst warned that with



President Bush giving his June 24 Rose Garden speech on the Mideast, flanked by Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, and Donald Rumsfeld. Bush's demand to get rid of Yasser Arafat "unleashed a process the administration will not be able to control."

Bush's new tack, "Sharon is now really in the driver's seat, facing no pressure from the Bush Administration. Whatever may be his conscious thoughts, the logic of the situation is leading to Palestinian transfer, and he won't be unhappy, if and when it happens. . . . Israeli transfer of the Palestinians will create colossal problems for European governments, and will force these governments, once and for all, to decide between what their own populations think, and the United States. . . . I can assure you, European governments are now very scared about all this."

### Mass Expulsion and Nuclear War

Both the mass expulsion of the Palestinian population, and region-wide war, are now very near-term threats; and Sharon is prepared to use Israel's nuclear arsenal to blackmail the West, and to strike at Iran, Iraq, Syria, or any other potential adversary.

In the June 25 issue of *Israel & Palestine Strategic Update*, Ghilan writes, "We are being thrown back, by Bush and his administration, to direct, bloody and total confrontation between the Palestinians and the Israelis, indeed between all Arabs and the United States, and possibly all the West. . . . Hamas and Islamic Jihad are now reaching out, and Sharon helps them." Ghilan warns that Sharon will move to expel three and a half million Palestinians and Israeli Arabs, while Hamas will hope to lead Muslims worldwide in a "global war against the Jews and the Americans."

"Sharon and Israel's . . . government like this," Ghilan says. "They hope they can drag the West into a worldwide crusade against Islam, one in which Arafat is considered in Washington as equal to bin Laden."

Within 36 hours of Bush's speech, Israeli media began an

open discussion of Israel's nuclear strike capabilities and the need to use them, to force Iran, Iraq, and other countries away from acquiring nuclear weapons. On June 26, the lead article in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* was headlined, "Israel Can Now Launch Missiles to Any Location on Earth." The piece reports the strategic significance of Israel's recent launching of its Ofek 5 spy satellite, (see *EIR*, June 28, 2002). Prof. Moshe Gelman, the director of the Asher Institute at Technion-Israel Institute of Technology is quoted: "From the moment the State of Israel has the capability to launch a satellite into orbit around the Earth at a height of hundreds of kilometers, it established capability to launch, by means of missile, a payload to any location on the face of the Earth." Avi Har-Even, the director of the Israel Space Agency, confirmed that

the launching of the Ofek 5 has two strategic aspects: the ability to monitor activities in hostile states; and Israel's launch capabilities for missile strikes.

These two organizations are government-backed, making these statements a warning from the Sharon government to the rest of the world.

Gelman explains, "There is no difference between the path of a ballistic missile and a rocket used to launch a satellite into orbit. The only difference is the target." He cited the example of the 1957 launching of Sputnik 1 by the Soviet Union. Gelman says that the United States became "frantic" because "the White House and the Pentagon realized the U.S.S.R. had the ability to launch a warhead at any location in America or any point on the face of the planet."

As *EIR* reported on June 28, the Shavit rocket, which launched Ofek 5 into orbit, is a derivative of the Israeli ballistic missiles Jericho II and III, and can reach a range of at least 7,200 kilometers (4,500 miles) when carrying a warhead.

### Target Iran and Iraq

*The Foreign Report*, a sister publication of the British *Jane's Defence Weekly*, published a claim that on June 24, Israeli authorities had arrested six Palestinians who were en route to a suicide attack against the military facilities where Israel's nuclear bombs and Jericho surface-to-surface missiles are stored. Although Israeli Army Radio reported that Israeli defense officials were "denying this morning that security information of this nature was indeed received," the report feeds into a campaign by the Israeli security establishment warning of a "mega" terrorist attack, perpetrated by Palestinians backed by Iran or Iraq, which would force a draconian military response—and all-out war.

On June 25, speaking before the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency, Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, while praising Bush's speech, lashed out at Iran as posing an existential threat to Israel. "The whole world is sleeping while Iran builds a core nuclear infrastructure that is going to do something bad to the interests of the world."

*Ha'aretz* reported on June 27 that Ben-Eliezer's comment reflects the intensifying debate within Israel's security establishment on how to respond to Iran's attempts to acquire nuclear weapons. Senior political correspondent Aluf Benn wrote, "A nuclear-empowered Iran is perceived as the main strategic risk to Israel, because it would end [Israel's] presumed [nuclear weapons] monopoly in the region. Most elements in Israel believe that everything should be done, including, if necessary, using force, to prevent Tehran from achieving nuclear weapon capabilities." Benn revealed that Israel's National Security Council is drafting a study on the country's policy toward Iran.

This same threat was further elaborated by Mossad director Ephraim Halevy, who on June 26 briefed a closed-door session of NATO's North Atlantic Council in Brussels, attacking Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Libya, alleging they are conspiring to acquire nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. Among the participants were NATO's highest officials, including Secretary General Lord George Robertson and the chairman of NATO's Military Committee, Italian Adm. Guido Venturi. U.S. Ambassador to NATO Nicholas Burns was at Halevy's side, and made comments in which he quoted extensively from Bush's speech.

Halevy charged that Iran is developing "weapon-grade nuclear capabilities" and missile systems for their delivery. He said Iran's adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention is nothing more than "a cover for construction of a dual-purpose civilian infrastructure which could be converted very speedily into production capabilities of large quantities of VX gas." He also attacked Iraq, claiming it is now doing everything possible to produce weapons of mass destruction. "We have clear indications that this has been and is their unswerving desire. . . . We have partial evidence that they have renewed their production of VX and anthrax."

Halevy then lashed out at Syria—also singled out in President Bush's June 24 speech, thus tightening the trigger for an Israeli military attack—for its possession of Scud missiles and capabilities to produce sarin nerve gas agents.

Halevy threatened that the international community "will have no option but to force" all these countries "to be accountable."

Commenting on this series of leaked reports on Israel nuclear capabilities and intentions, a senior Israeli political analyst told *EIR* that after Bush's speech, the Israeli government feels that it can "defy the whole world." It will all lead, the analyst said, to a disaster: "It is like a Greek drama: You know disaster awaits, but you can't do anything about it."