

Israel's Dress Rehearsal for Lebanon

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"The raw logic of Israel's distorted self-image and racist doctrines is exposed beyond confusion by the now-stark reality: the moonscape rubble of once-lovely Lebanese villages; a million desperate people trying to survive Israeli aerial attacks as they carry children and wheel disabled grandparents down cratered roads; limp bodies of children pulled from the dusty basements of crushed buildings. This is the reality of Israel's national doctrine, the direct outcome of its racist worldview." Virginia Tilley "The Case for Boycotting Israel" in Counterpunch.

The reason the rationale for invading Gaza keeps changing, (from rocket-fire to Hamas infrastructure to strengthening deterrents to weapons smuggling to ceasefire violations etc) is because the real purpose of the operation is to conduct a dress rehearsal for the impending invasion of Lebanon. Israel has never recovered from its defeat at the hands of Hezbollah during the 33 Day war in 2006, so it is preparing for a reprisal. The attack on Gaza is just a "dry run"; a confidence-building exercise to strengthen morale and put the finishing touches on the battle plan. That's why there's such a disparity between the implicit risks of the current operation and its minuscule strategic gains. It's not really Hamas that is in the cross-hairs, but Hezbollah; and this time, Israel hopes to crush them with overwhelming force. The massive week-long aerial bombardment, the pounding by heavy artillery units, and the deployment of elite troops and armored divisions all presage a massive Normandy-type invasion of Lebanon with the probability of high casualties.

Gaza is also the testing ground for new Defence Minister Ehud Barak and Chief of the General Staff Gabi Ashkenazi. Barak and Ashkenazi replace former Defence chief Amir Peretz and Israeli Air Force Commander Dan Halutz, the two main scapegoats for the failed campaign. The new leaders are expected to take what they've learned in Gaza and use it in Lebanon. So far, the Israeli high command seems to like what they see.

Israel's Tonkin Bay?

Two days before Israel began its bombardment of the Gaza Strip, UNIFIL (UN peacekeepers) increased the number of daily patrols along Lebanon's southern border. According to the Jerusalem Post, "The decision to increase UNIFIL's patrols had nothing to do with Israel's military operation... but rather with the international organization's goal to monitor the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701."

Hezbollah has been watching the activity on the border with growing concern suspecting that Israel may be using the invasion of Gaza to divert attention from their real objective, another war in Lebanon. Presently, the Shi'ite militia is on its highest alert and is preparing itself for any sudden conflagration. Israeli warplanes have increased their flights in the last 10 days and the IDF has called up thousands of reserve troops placing some of them along the northern border. Naturally, the tension is steadily rising. Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah has publicly rejected the idea of supporting Hamas militarily, but the Israeli media continues to portray him as a potential threat.

"We are here, ready for every possibility and prepared for any aggression," Nasrallah said on

Monday. "We will not weaken, fear or surrender. I tell Olmert, the loser, the disappointed and defeated in Lebanon, 'You will not be able to eradicate Hamas and you will not be able to eradicate Hezbollah."

THE SMOKING GUN?

According to the Jerusalem Post: "On Monday, Lebanese president Michel Suleiman suggested Israel was responsible for eight rockets that were found in southern Lebanon, saying that he fears "it is an Israeli attack to implicate Lebanon," according to the NOW Lebanon news site."

The eight rockets were on timers and aimed at Israel from Lebanese territory. Was Israel planning to start a war and make it look Hezbollah was to blame? The former President of Lebanon thinks so.

In an exclusive interview with Press TV on Tuesday, former President Emile Lahoud warned that once Israel is finished with Gaza, it would attack Lebanon in reprisal for its failure in the 33-day war.

"I'm sure that Israel is thinking after Gaza would turn towards Lebanon, and after Lebanon it will take every Arab state one by one, and this is what some of the Lebanese as some Arab leaders are not thinking about," said the former Lebanese president....This is while Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was quoted as telling the French president Nicolas Sarkozy on Monday that "today Hamas and Tomorrow Hezbollah," will come under attack. (Press TV)

The Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz reported this comment by Head of Military Intelligence Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin in its January 6 edition: "Yadlin said, 'Hezbollah might carry out a low-profile attack by means of a Palestinian organization that would be limited and not set the border alight.' He added that forces also remained on high alert in light of a possible Hezbollah strike against an Israeli target abroad." (Ha'aretz, 1-6-09)

Who really wants another war; Hezbollah or Israel?

Israel never accepted the outcome of the 33 Day war and will probably use the UN's failure to implement UN Resolution 1701--which requires the disarming of all militias--as an excuse for restarting the conflict. Nicholas Blanford, who authored a report on the 33 Day war, told Press TV:

"Yes, 1701 stopped the war in 2006. It stopped the fighting. I mean it saved the Israelis, the Israelis were obviously in deep trouble as various internal investigations and reports and commissions have elaborated....It was kind of an unfinished war in many respects. Hezbollah, for their part, recognized Israeli unease and unhappiness with the outcome of the war."

Israel considers the war "unfinished" and has been readying itself for two and a half years for a rematch. (Al Jazeera reported "Rockets from Lebanon Hit Israel" hours after this article was written. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/01/20091855216577820.html>)

"Greater Israel"

The upcoming war with Lebanon has less to do with Hezbollah than it does with Israel's geopolitical ambitions. Israel wants to establish a new northern border at the Litani River in southern Lebanon and create an "Israel-friendly" regime in Beirut. The plan to annex the land south of the Litani River dates back to the founding of the Jewish state when Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion described the country's future borders this way: "To the north the Litani River, the southern border will be pushed into the Sinai, and to the east, the Syrian Desert, including the furthest edge of

Transjordan."

In 1978, the IDF launched Operation Litani with the intention of annexing the southern part of Lebanon and setting up a Christian client-regime in Beirut that would take orders from Tel Aviv. Israel said that it needed a "buffer zone" for its security, the same excuse that it uses today. The 1982 invasion devolved into an 18-year onslaught which ravaged the Lebanese economy and killed more than 20,000 civilians. In 2000, Israel was driven from Lebanon by the region's newest guerrilla militia, Hezbollah.

Israel's territorial objectives have not changed. They want to seize more land consistent with their vision of "Greater Israel" and reduce adjacent Arab countries to a "permanent state of colonial dependency".

This explains why Lebanon's civilian infrastructure and communications network were intentionally targeted. Israel requires its neighbors to languish in abject poverty and hopelessness. By destroying Lebanon's life-support systems, Israel figured it would eliminate a potential rival while establishing itself as the dominant power in the Middle East. This same template for "total war" is being used in Gaza where mosques, schools, media offices, sea ports, girl's dormitories, ambulances and vital infrastructure have been destroyed while international media, doctors and the Red Crescent have been refused entry. The rules of war have been abandoned altogether.

BLUEPRINT FOR REBUILDING ZIONISM

"A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm" provides the neocon blueprint for "rebuilding Zionism in the 21st century" and redrawing the map of the Middle East in a way that promotes Israeli interests. The document states:

"Securing the Northern Border: Syria challenges Israel on Lebanese soil. An effective approach, and one with which America can sympathize, would be if Israel seized the strategic initiative along its northern borders by engaging Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran, as the principle agents of aggression in Lebanon, including by: paralleling Syria's behavior by establishing the precedent that Syria is not immune to attacks emanating from Lebanon by Israeli proxy forces striking Syrian military targets in Lebanon, and should that prove to be insufficient, striking at select targets in Syria proper." (A Clean Break; Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, David Wurmser)

Eventually, Syria will be dragged into the war so that Israel can move forward with its plans to build a oil pipeline from Mosul to Haifa. Israel wants to be a major player in the global oil trade. In Michel Chossudovsky's article "Triple Alliance: US, Turkey, Israel and the War on Lebanon", the author says:

"We are not dealing with a limited conflict between the Israeli Armed Forces and Hezbollah as conveyed by the Western media. The Lebanese War Theatre is part of a broader US military agenda, which encompasses a region extending from the Eastern Mediterranean into the heartland of Central Asia. The war on Lebanon must be viewed as 'a stage' in this broader 'military road map'".

Chossudovsky shows how the recently completed Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline has strengthened the Israel-Turkey alliance creating an opportunity to establish "military control over a coastal corridor extending from the Israeli-Lebanese border to the East Mediterranean border between Syria and Turkey." Lebanese sovereignty is likely to be one of the casualties of this Israel-Turkey strategy.

Most of the oil from the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline will be transported to Western markets, but a

percentage of the oil will be diverted through a "proposed" Ceyhan-Ashkelon pipeline which will connect Israel directly to rich deposits in the Caspian. This will allow Israel to supply markets in the Far East from its port at Eilat on the Red Sea. It is an ambitious plan that ensures that Israel will be a critical part of the global energy distribution system. (See Michel Chossudovsky, *The War on Lebanon and the Battle for Oil*, July 2006)

Oil is the main reason the US and Israel want regime change in Syria. An article in the UK Observer, "Israel Seeks Pipeline for Iraqi Oil", notes that Washington and Tel Aviv are hammering out the details for a pipeline that will run through Syria and "create an endless and easily accessible source of cheap oil for the US guaranteed by reliable allies other than Saudi Arabia." The pipeline "would transform economic power in the region, bringing revenue to the new US-dominated Iraq, cutting out Syria, and solving Israel's energy crisis at a stroke."

The Israeli Mossad is operating in northern Iraq where the pipeline will originate and their agents have developed good relations with the Kurds. The Observer quotes a CIA official who said, "It has long been a dream of a powerful section of the people now driving this administration and the war in Iraq to safeguard Israel's energy supply as well as that of the US. The Haifa pipeline was something that existed, was resurrected as a dream, and is now a viable project — albeit with a lot of building to do."

NATURAL GAS OFF THE COAST OF GAZA

Ironically, the invasion of Gaza was in part motivated by vital energy resources, too. According to an article by Jake Bower, "Why It Rains: Hamas holding Israeli gas reserves hostage":

"GAZA: Plans for proposed \$400,000,000 offshore natural gas field development project....The deposit reportedly contains an estimated 50 to 60 billion cubic meters of natural gas. The field... is considered to be the largest in the area north of Egypt....

Estimated at 100 billion cubic meters of proven reserves, these discoveries potentially offer enough gas to meet Israel's goal of supplying 25% of its energy needs for more than 20 years - even without further imports. The discovery has also raised realistic expectations of locating oil deposits beneath the gas fields.

Unfortunately for Israel, 60% of these reserves are in waters controlled by the Palestinian Authority, which has signed a 25-year contract with British Gas for further exploration in the area.... Keen to secure the gas for its domestic market but unwilling to submit its sensitive energy supplies (and their profits) into the hands of the Palestinians, Israel has for the past 6 years pursued a policy of non-commitment, stalling and obstruction." (Jake Bower, "Why It Rains: Hamas holding "Israeli" gas reserves hostage") <http://tinyurl.com/7y2bcf>

The natural gas deposits are just one more reason why Israel plans to remove Hamas and replace them with Mahmoud Abbas and the corrupt Palestinian Authority (PA).

The Middle East is being reshaped according to the ideological aspirations of Zionists and the exigencies of a viciously-competitive energy market. That's a combo that makes peace nearly impossible.

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