

# NEAR EAST REPORT

Washington Biweekly On American Middle East Policy

Vol. XXXIX, No.13, June 5, 1995

## Israeli-Syrian Talks Move Forward

Israeli officials say that Syria's agreement to discuss the future of Golan Heights security arrangements without demanding troop withdrawals of equal distance is an important step in the right direction. While Syria will no longer make this a precondition for conducting these security talks with Israel, Damascus is expected to raise this demand during the talks themselves.

Details of the security framework agreement announced May 24 by the Clinton Administration, are to be worked out later this month by Israeli and Syrian military representatives.

One senior official characterized the agreement as an ex-



In talks with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa (pictured above), American officials said Damascus would help the peace process by ending support for terrorism.

ample of "baby-step diplomacy,"—a reference to the incremental progress in Israeli-Syrian talks.

"This is an important development, but there still are significant gaps between the parties," Secretary of State WARREN CHRISTOPHER said in a written statement. "There is much hard work to be done on the security arrangements, and on all the non-security issues" (*Washington Post*, May 25).

The agreement represents the first time Israel and Syria have concurred on anything since the 1991 Madrid Conference, American and Israeli sources said. Syria had previously demanded that Israel agree to geographic equality in any Golan with-

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## Iran Warns Arab Gulf: Stay Away From The United States

Iran is putting its Arab neighbors on notice: It does not look kindly upon neighboring states who support a Western military presence in the region. The Iranian news agency IRNA reported (May 30) that President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani told a visiting Qatari envoy that Gulf states must reject plans for such a presence.

"We expect friendly states...to stand up against the sinister plan [for a] permanent military presence of foreign forces in the region," Rafsanjani said.

In March, Secretary of Defense WILLIAM

PERRY visited the Gulf. Perry said he had secured an agreement with Qatar to allow prepositioning of hardware for an armoured brigade (*Reuter*, May 30).

Iran's oil minister warned other members of OPEC last month that Tehran will retaliate if they fill the gap created by the U.S. trade embargo on Iran by increasing their own oil production. While the oil minister, Gholamreza Agazadeh, denied he was threatening anyone, the remarks are seen as a warning to Saudi Arabia to keep production down (*New York Times*, May 18).

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## Foreign Aid Package Vital

For nearly fifty years, America carried the burden of leadership in the Free World's struggle with the Soviet Union. This was a burden accepted willingly, if reluctantly. Now that the Cold War is over, many people wish the world would go away.

This may be understandable; it can not be acceptable. The world is still a very dangerous place. The U.S. is now the only global superpower, and if the U.S. does not exert leadership, no one else will. Whether it is challenging Iranian or North Korean nuclear programs, or Iran's support for international terrorism, or ensuring Iraqi compliance with UN Security Council resolutions, only the United States has the will and capability to lead the international community in facing such threats. And, of course, American leadership is absolutely essential in helping to promote peace between Israel and her neighbors.

But to play this crucial role, America must have the necessary resources, of which foreign aid is a significant component. We provide assistance not only because we are a generous people, but because it is in our national interest. U.S. assistance supports our friends and helps prevent nascent conflicts—a far less expensive proposition than sending in U.S. troops during later crises. Moreover, foreign aid represents less than one percent of federal spending, compared with ten percent during the 1950's. Budget-driven cuts in this funding will jeopardize our ability to support Israel as it proceeds with the peace process—and other important U.S. objectives around the world.

That is why we have always fought for as large a foreign aid budget as possible. That is why we supported President Clinton's request to Congress to raise next year's foreign aid level and successfully fought to limit cuts in funding for foreign aid in the House and Senate Budget Resolutions. That is why we have consistently urged members of Congress to support foreign aid bills, even though such support may be politically unpopular back home. That is why we support the House Foreign Aid Authorization, which fully funds aid to Israel. While significantly and unfortunately reduced, it appears to provide the best overall levels Congress is prepared to support in the current budget climate.

Some Americans may wish to turn their backs on the world, but the world won't go away. An engaged America makes the world a safer and more stable place. If America disengages, it will face much graver threats later on at much greater cost. That is why foreign aid is as crucial now as it ever was.

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## Saudis Stiff Washington, Let Hezbollah Terrorist Evade Capture

**S**audi Arabia's refusal to cooperate with American efforts to capture a leading Hezbollah terrorist operative has strained relations with Washington. In April, FBI agents were sent to the Middle East in an attempt to capture Imad Mugniyeh (Hezbollah's security boss during the 1980s, when hundreds of Americans were kidnapped or killed by the group) when his plane stopped in Saudi Arabia.

At the last minute, however, Saudi officials refused permission for the plane to land, thwarting the American effort to capture Mugniyeh. The Saudis blocked the landing despite a call from National Security Adviser ANTHONY LAKE to Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar to inform him of the operation. Washington has strongly protested the Saudi refusal to cooperate.

**Mugniyeh—once described by an FBI official as “the single most dangerous terrorist at large today”—is believed to have helped plan the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, in which 241 American servicemen were killed. He also allegedly masterminded the 1985 hijack-**

**ing of TWA Flight 847, during which several Islamic radicals tortured and murdered U.S. Navy diver Robert Stethem.** Also during the 1980's, Hezbollah was responsible for holding American hostages in Lebanon.

Mugniyeh's brother-in-law, Mustafa Badreddin, was among 17 Muslim radicals imprisoned in Kuwait for a series of 1983 bombings in the tiny emirate; targets included the U.S. and French embassies, as well as Kuwaiti oil installations and public buildings. Mugniyeh has said he perpetrated the kidnappings in an effort to free his brother-in-law. Badreddin remained in jail until Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

American officials told the *Los Angeles Times* (April 21) that FBI agents were sent overseas to prepare to take Mugniyeh into custody when his Middle East Airlines flight stopped in Saudi Arabia. (Mugniyeh was flying from Khartoum, Sudan to Beirut.) But, after the Middle East Airlines flight left Khartoum, Saudi officials—raising legal objections—refused to permit the plane to land in their country. The FBI agents, who had flown to a transit point in Europe, were forced to go home empty-handed. □

## Talks...continued

drawal. Israel has been unwilling to do so, in view of Syria's record of hostility; the disparity in size between the two nations; and the fact that the Golan overlooks much of Israel's populated northern heartland.

Syria had also demanded that Israel withdraw from the Golan within one year. It is now willing to give Israel eighteen months to pull out. At the same time, Israel—which earlier had proposed withdrawing over a five to eight-year period—has stated its willingness to shorten the time frame to three years and eight months.

### Rabin's View

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was cautious in his assessment of the framework agreement. “It's a breakthrough in procedure, but not in the substance,” Rabin said. He said the understandings would permit “free negotiations” on security aspects of a peace agreement, adding that other difficult issues remained.

Rabin said he expected that “the first step would be a very limited withdrawal, and, for a period of plus-minus three years, we'd like to see full normalization tested by...embassies in Damascus [and] borders open to the move-

ment of people and trade” (Reuter, May 25).

In a speech to Labor members of the Knesset, Rabin reiterated (and, in fact, appeared to strengthen) his pledge that there would be no Golan withdrawal before an Israeli referendum. “While, in the past, I have said a referendum would be held before any significant withdrawal, today I am talking about a referendum before any withdrawal,” Rabin emphasized.

*Rabin said that, for a peace agreement to be achieved, Israel and Syria would have to agree on the “peace border”; a timetable for withdrawal; some normalization before a limited withdrawal; and security arrangements.*

*“Unless we agree on these four things, there will be no peace agreement, and there is no reason yet to hold a referendum,” Rabin declared. He said Israel would not move “from one centimeter of land” without agreement on those issues (Jerusalem Post, May 30).*

In recent talks with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa, American officials reportedly pressed Damascus on a number of issues, including: The need for Syria to do more to accelerate the peace talks; more Syrian help in finding answers about the fate of Israeli MIAs; and the importance of stopping

## Qaddafi: Arabs Need A-Bomb

**A**ccording to Libyan ruler Muammar Qaddafi, Arabs need a nuclear bomb to defend themselves against the United States and Israel.

“The Arabs should manufacture the nuclear bomb, and then, America will not be able to attack them,” Qaddafi declared. He said that Arabs needed nuclear weapons “to defend themselves...for the sake of peace.”

Qaddafi said it was time for Muslims to wage a *jihad* (holy war) against Israel. “I will be the first to fight, right in the vanguard, to liberate Jerusalem and die as a martyr for the sake of its liberty as an Arab city.” He also accused Washington of plotting to overthrow the Saudi monarchy (Reuter, May 17).

Earlier this year, Qaddafi said he would distribute arms in the streets and launch a *jihad* against NATO if it expanded its influence into northern Africa.

“We will never permit NATO to deploy its wings over North Africa as long as we live,” Qaddafi said. “We will distribute arms in the streets...we will cross the artificial borders, and proclaim the holy war” (Reuter, Feb. 25). □

the spread of “super C-notes”—counterfeit \$100 bills produced in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

The U.S. is also insisting that Syria curb the activities of Hezbollah. On May 5, four Israelis were wounded when Hezbollah fired Katyusha rockets into Israel. On May 31, Hezbollah fired more Katyusha rockets at what it called “Zionist settlements” in the Galilee. No Israelis were reported injured in the second attack (Reuter, May 31).

Also, an Israeli soldier died, and three others were wounded, in a May 17 clash with Hezbollah. At least five IDF soldiers have been killed in southern Lebanon this year (Reuter, May 17).

Syria is also being pressed to rein in Palestinian terrorist groups based in Damascus. On May 23, leaders of two such groups—the DFLP and Islamic Jihad—held a meeting in Damascus, where they vowed to work together to destroy the Israel-PLO accord.

Islamic Jihad boss Fathi Shukaki told reporters that Palestinians “have the right to use all means at our disposal, especially the *jihad* against Israel, to liberate our lands and to crush Israel” (Reuter, May 23). Shukaki's organization was responsible for the January suicide bombing at Beit Lid, in which 22

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HEARD ON THE HILL**House Debates Foreign Aid Authorization**

As we went to press, the House GOP leadership had postponed a vote on the Foreign Aid Authorization. The bill fully earmarks \$3 billion in aid to Israel, in addition to several other pro-Israel provisions. These include new provisions that would lower the cost of weapons systems Israel purchases from the United States.

The legislation cuts approximately \$1.5 billion from current foreign aid levels and consolidates foreign affairs agencies into the State Department. The Clinton Administration threatened to veto the bill, claiming such measures "represent nothing less than a frontal assault on the authority of the President to conduct foreign policy." Because of the veto threat and reduced funding for other programs, several Black and Jewish members of Congress declared their opposition to the overall bill.

During Floor consideration of the bill, members offered amendments for additional reductions in foreign aid. Rep. SAM BROWNBACK (R-KS) offered a successful amendment to cut \$478 million from the FY96 foreign affairs budget to bring spending levels into accordance with budget limits. Rep. JAMES TRAFICANT (D-OH) may offer two amendments calling for five or ten percent across-the-board cuts in foreign aid.

While foreign assistance programs were under scrutiny, aid to Israel received bipartisan support. Rep. GEORGE GEKAS (R-PA) said: "When we invest in foreign aid...to the people of the Middle East...we are creating or helping to create a stable part of the world."

The chairman of the House International Relations Committee, Rep. BEN GILMAN (R-NY), emphasized the importance of maintaining aid to Israel and Egypt: "By maintaining support for the Camp David accords, we are signaling the opponents of peace in the Middle East, as well as radical fundamentalists working to undermine other countries in the Middle East that are friendly to the United States."

"I am also deeply concerned about the future of aid to Israel. Israel has taken great risks by undertaking the peace process," said Rep. GARY ACKERMAN (D-NY). "Yet we are rapidly moving towards isolating Israel, Egypt and the Middle East peace allocations...This is a dangerous precedent, which will leave the Middle East peace process hanging out, almost alone, vulnerable to future cuts, when the peace process may require larger, rather than smaller, allocations."

**House Committee Fully Funds U.S-Israel R&D Programs**

Members of the House National Security

Committee praised U.S.-Israel defense programs during the committee's consideration of the FY1996 Defense Authorization bill, May 25. Led by Chairman FLOYD SPENCE (R-SC) and Ranking Member RONALD DELLUMS (D-CA), the committee approved a bill that includes funding for a number of U.S.-Israel defense programs.

The chairman of the subcommittee that funds research and development programs, Rep. CURT WELDON (R-PA), played a critical role in securing funding for the Arrow program. During his opening remarks to the committee, Weldon said: "We fully funded the Arrow, a program jointly with Israel, that was in the interest of a lot of members and has the strong support of our subcommittee."

A day earlier, during his subcommittee markup, Weldon said that the panel is committed "to making sure [the Arrow program] is full and robust." Rep. JOHN SPRATT (D-SC), who serves as the Ranking Member of the subcommittee, was also instrumental in assuring funding for the Arrow.

Rep. JANE HARMAN (D-CA), sought assurances that the committee would fund the Arrow, the U.S.-Israel Boost Phase Intercept program, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV). Noting that the \$56.6 million needed for the Arrow is not specifically earmarked in the bill, Harman stressed the program's importance to both the U.S. and Israel.

Harman asked whether U.S.-Israel missile defense programs would be affected by a cut from the section of the bill that funds the program. She was assured that funding for these programs would be maintained.

Weldon also announced that the committee doubled the Administration's request for Defense Department work on counterterrorism. The program includes funding for joint counterterrorism research-and-development between the U.S. and Israel.

**House, Senate Approve Budget Resolutions**

The Senate and House passed separate budget proposals, both of which outlined cuts necessary to reach a balanced budget by 2002. The Senate version calls for cuts of nearly \$1 trillion in spending over seven years, reducing the account that funds international affairs by \$17.2 billion over five years.

The House version, which cuts an additional \$400 billion below the Senate proposal and provides \$350 billion in tax cuts, trims foreign aid spending by \$29 billion over the same period.

Rep. Traficant attacked the House budget resolution for maintaining aid to Israel and Egypt: "We have a budget in America...that

will not touch Israel, will not touch Egypt...but no one in America is free from the axe."

The House and Senate were expected to meet in conference after the Memorial Day recess to work out the differences in their budget proposals.

**Christopher, McConnell Criticize Foreign Aid Cuts**

"Eliminating foreign aid will restrict the President from carrying out policies which secure our interests," Sen. MITCH MCCONNELL (R-KY) told the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations. McConnell spoke at a hearing on the impact of budget cuts on foreign aid. Opposing cuts to international affairs programs, McConnell stated: "We must decide on our priorities, including what can and cannot be dismantled."

Secretary of State WARREN CHRISTOPHER, who testified at the hearing, supported McConnell's position. He said: "We cannot protect our interests as the world's most powerful nation if we do not marshal the resources to stand by our commitments. We cannot lead if we are deprived of the tools of leadership."

The Ranking Member of the subcommittee, Sen. PATRICK LEAHY (D-VT), characterized foreign aid cuts as a "lose-lose-lose situation."

"We have to do better as far as the budget goes for the future with foreign aid," asserted Sen. JIM JEFFORDS (R-VT), indicating his resistance to aid cuts.

**Air Force General Praises Have-Nap Program**

Rep. HENRY BONILLA (R-TX), a member of the subcommittee which appropriates funding for the Pentagon, asked Air Force General John Loh about the Have-Nap missile during a congressional hearing. The Have-Nap is manufactured by a joint U.S.-Israel team and has been purchased in small quantities by the U.S. Air Force in recent years.

Loh, who commands the military organization with jurisdiction over U.S. strategic bombers and tactical aircraft, said that purchasing more Have-Naps would fulfill a "major deficiency" by equipping B-52s with a standoff capability. He said that the Have-Naps are "effective weapons...available immediately" to satisfy a current "gap" in stand-off (long range) capability. Loh added that the Air Force is seeking "an interim buy...in the near term." □

## Rabin: There Cannot Be Two Jerusalems

In an address commemorating Jerusalem Day, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said that sovereignty over Jerusalem could not be divided.

As Israelis marched through Jerusalem to commemorate the reunification of the city 28 years ago, Rabin said Jerusalem must remain united.

"There aren't and won't be two Jerusalems," Rabin said at a memorial ceremony for soldiers who died in the historic 1967 battle for Jerusalem. "It was ours, and it will remain ours. All those who question the destiny of this city won't succeed."

The Israeli Cabinet reaffirmed Israeli sovereignty over a united Jerusalem, approving a resolution stating that Israel "will act to reinforce the status of united Jerusalem as the capital of Israel only, and will fight any attempt to hurt this status." □

## Iran...continued

### Russia, China Remain Uncooperative

While the Clinton Administration has fought hard to persuade other countries not to aid Iran's weapons development efforts, it has made little headway with two of Iran's top collaborators: Russia and China.

If anything, Russian-Iranian ties are expanding. A senior Russian official told the pan-Arab *Al-Hayat* (May 30) that President Boris Yeltsin has an official invitation to visit Iran, and Rafsanjani had one to visit Moscow.

"We are working with the Iranians on preparing such documents, including a 'declaration of principles' on bilateral relations, that would underline the essential areas of our cooperation. We are also working on other documents, including economic and cultural accords," the Russian official said. He appeared to suggest that Washington was using the Iran situation as a pretext "to expand [the] U.S. military presence in the Gulf" (*Mideast Mirror*, May 30).

China remains equally uncooperative. Chinese nuclear industry officials told the *Washington Post* (May 18) that they see no reason to stop nuclear dealings with Iran.

On Capitol Hill, there is growing concern about Chinese and Russian cooperation with Iran. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman JESSE HELMS (R-NC) said that the Clinton Administration should push Moscow and Beijing to sever ties with radical states. Helms said he was pleased with the Administration's tougher stance toward Iran. "What must come next is an Administration push to force China and Russia to sever their relations with terrorist regimes," Helms added (Reuter, May 26).

J.H. □

## PLO Continues Challenge Over Jerusalem

In the wake of the Israeli Government's May 22 announcement that it was suspending its plan to build housing for Jews in Jerusalem, PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat reiterated his determination to take control of eastern Jerusalem. Arafat told Reuter (May 23) that he had "no doubt" that he would realize his goal of making that part of Jerusalem the capital of a Palestinian "state."

The PLO has stepped up its criticism of Israeli policies in Jerusalem in recent months. Faisal Husseini, who handles Jerusalem matters for the Palestinian Authority, had warned that Arabs would react violently if Israel failed to change its policies.

"There will be an intifada. And I say the intifada will not be only in Jerusalem, not only in the occupied lands, but in all of the Middle East," Husseini told Israel Radio. A Fatah leaflet, distributed in the West Bank, accused Israel of "assassinat[ing]" the peace process by trying to "Judaize" land in Jerusalem (Reuter, May 21).

Meanwhile, the United States vetoed a resolution, supported by the other 14 members of the UN Security Council, condemning Israeli policies in Jerusalem. Botswana, Honduras, Indonesia, Nigeria, Oman and Rwanda sponsored the resolution.

Following the American veto, a senior European Union (EU) official denounced the American decision as "outrageous....We are furious with both the Israelis and the Americans." He suggested the American veto could delay the signing of a trade agreement between the EU and Israel (Reuter, May 18). □

## Talks...continued

Israelis were killed.

### A More Moderate Tone From Damascus?

Since Israel and Syria reached agreement on a framework for security talks, Syrian officials have been sounding relatively upbeat. Foreign Minister al-Sharaa, for example, said that a breakthrough in Israeli-Syrian talks would lead to a resumption of negotiations between Israel and Lebanon (Reuter, May 29).

"Positive, encouraging signs have appeared on the horizon, that allow the observer to be more optimistic that reasonable achievements can be realized in the peace process," *al-Thawra* stated May 30.

This does not necessarily mean, however, that Damascus has decided to jettison its more strident rhetoric. When a deranged Israeli soldier fired on Arab worshippers in Jaffa late last month (no one was killed or injured in the attack), *al-Baath* (May 24) cited the crime as evidence that "Israel's terrorist system is headquartered in the Israeli military establishment."

*Tishreen* (May 23) accused Israel of ar-

## Les Aspin

Supporters of the U.S.-Israel relationship mourn the passing of a great friend—former Defense Secretary LES ASPIN—who died May 21. Aspin most recently served as head of President Clinton's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. From 1970 until 1993, Aspin, a Democrat, was a U.S. Representative from Wisconsin. From 1985 until 1993 (when he retired from Congress to become Secretary of Defense), he served as Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. An unwavering champion of closer U.S.-Israel ties, Aspin believed that a strong, secure Israel is a critical foundation of American policy.

"Les Aspin did a lot of work to keep us safe through a turbulent time," President Clinton said. "We are all very, very much in his debt."

Prime Minister Rabin also expressed his sorrow: "Israel has lost one of its greatest friends in the United States. Israel owes Les Aspin a great deal."

In Congress and at the Pentagon, Les Aspin played a leadership role in developing closer U.S.-Israel strategic ties. He was a strong and persuasive advocate of U.S.-Israel missile defense cooperation, and other joint research and development projects.

During his years in the House, Aspin also worked tirelessly in support of freedom for Soviet Jewry, and was a vigorous supporter of loan guarantees to help Israel resettle *olim*.

Les Aspin also believed deeply in the notion of bipartisanship in American foreign policy. In January 1991, he played a lead role in mobilizing congressional support for President Bush's firm stance against Iraqi aggression.

In a March 1993 speech to a Washington dinner honoring Rabin, Secretary of Defense Aspin observed that the U.S.-Israel strategic relationship "has been of great benefit to both countries. It has helped us pursue common security interests....We intend to continue a security assistance program designed to enhance Israel's defense capability and preserve its qualitative edge over any likely combination of aggressors. We're committed to maintaining a strong friendship with Israel."

To the pro-Israel community, Les Aspin will always be remembered as a dear friend. He will be sorely missed.

ranging the 1988 terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, in which 270 people were killed. The paper said that Israel had conspired to frame Libya for the crime. *Al-Baath* (May 24) included a column which declared that "racist Zionist forces" are "dominant in the information field. There are no media of global reach in the world today that are not being manipulated by... the centers of anti-Arab and anti-Islamic power, that are striving...to destroy the superior values of Islam" (*Mideast Mirror* May 30). J.H. □