

HAMAS, IRAN AND THE NEW MIDDLE EAST CRISES

HAMASTINE



THE NEW MIDDLE EAST REALITY

DURING a joint press conference with PLO chief Mahmoud Abbas last May, US President George W. Bush insisted that the militant Islamic movement, Hamas, had no chance of winning in the Palestinian elections. In October, he reiterated his conviction that the “Palestinian” masses would vote for the “party of peace.”

Based on this firm belief, the Bush Administration pressed Israel to drop any planned action to hinder or thwart the election of the new Palestinian parliament, despite the

participation in the elections of recognized terror groups that vowed to destroy Israel.

January 25, 06 proved Bush was dead wrong. Hamas won 76 seats, and captured seats in all major constituencies in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. This landslide victory gave them a solid majority in the 132-member Palestinian parliament.

Palestinian voters rejected the longtime rule of the Fatah Party because of its corruption and failure to ful-fil the Palestinian hope. But the Hamas victory threatens to throw that hope, along with the peace process, into prolonged conflict.

This was the first time Hamas has contested a parliamentary election. And “everyone,” including Israel, expected Hamas would make a strong showing, but not an outright win. What went wrong with the Israeli and the US intelligence services?

Or was it just the unpredictability of elections? No! The Palestinians desperately wanted change.

By all accounts, Palestinians didn’t choose Hamas because they reject peace talks with Israel, but rather because they were fed up with graft in the ruling Fatah Party. Hamas candidates ran on a platform of clean government, largely de-emphasizing their militant credentials.

A POST- ELECTION OPINION POLL ON 31 JAN.

84% of Palestinians want a peace pact with Israel

86% want President Abbas to remain at his post.

75% of Palestinians want Hamas to drop its call for the destruction of Israel.

A 32-year-old policeman in Gaza City said he voted for Hamas because “everyone wants change,” but he said he expected the group to soften its stances once in power.

The Palestinians wanted change and Hamas seemed to be the only alternative.

No one knows better than Palestinians that prolonged conflict brings great economic hardship, frustration, and personal suffering. Many pine for the good old pre-intifada days when they could get on with their jobs and living, and move

throughout the country with ease.

The stunning election results were just as much a shock for moderate Palestinians as it was for Israel and for George Bush, and the rest of us.

The Palestinians have voted for a terrorist organisation, and they have a new reality.

But will they achieve the change they hope for?

HAMAS NOW IN A DILEMMA

WHILE Hamas supporters rejoiced at the news of their victory, the leaders were not as jubilant as winners normally are. They evidently had not expected an outright win. Their minds had been set on achieving a place in parliament as “a junior partner” that would give them a big say in the running of the Palestinian Authority. Their win presents them with a dilemma.

Now the responsibility to lift the Palestinian society out of its impoverished condition, and to fulfil their promises to the people who voted for them, lies squarely on Hamas.

Not only are Hamas inexperienced parliamentarians, but the well-being of the Palestinian Authority depends on them having some type of relationship with Israel. The Palestinian territories are dependent on Israel’s infrastructure for water, electricity, transport and much more.

Their radical charter and agenda, however, means Hamas will have no-one in Israel to talk to. And it means that Hamas’ leaders will not be welcome in the US – the one nation that can pressurize Israel into facilitating the formation of a viable Palestinian state.

For this reason political analysts believe that Hamas will have to change its stripes.

Since the election, Hamas have struggled to persuade Fatah to join them in a coalition — hoping to avoid having to deal with Israel and the West. The top Hamas leader, Khaled Mashaal, told Abbas his group is ready for a political partnership.

But Fatah has so far rejected the offer.



MASHAAL



ABBAS

PA president, Mahmoud Abbas, immediately called on Hamas to form a new government. He then visited Jordan, and Egypt where he also met with Khaled Mashaal.

But throughout the Palestinian territories it became evident that Fatah was not going to surrender to Hamas. It was going to go into a very aggressive opposition.

PROTESTERS DEMAND ABBAS QUIT

JAN 27, 06. A mob of up to 2,000 furious Fatah supporters took to the streets, burning cars, firing guns and demanding the resignation of Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, after the militant group Hamas trounced their party in the parliamentary elections.

Waving yellow Fatah flags in the flickering light of flaming bonfires, protesters swarmed around Abbas' home in Gaza City, where they shot in the air and accused him of being a "collaborator" with Israel.

"We don't want to join the Hamas government!" they chanted. "We don't want corrupt leadership! We want reform, and we want to fire all the corrupt!"

The protesters moved to nearby Palestinian legislative buildings where some set a van on fire and scaled walls, trying to force their way into the compound. Demonstrators outnumbered police on the scene.

VIOLENT CLASHES AS FATAH OPPOSES HAMAS TAKEOVER

JAN 28. Fatah supporters, security officers and members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade protested all over Gaza and the West Bank. Security forces in Gaza demanded Hamas figures responsible for killing policemen should be brought to trial.

Several people were wounded in an exchange of fire between Hamas supporters and members of Fatah in Khan Younis in Gaza. In Ramallah in the West Bank, Fatah supporters staged more protests against their own leadership, which they blame for the election defeat.

Hundreds of Fatah members marched in Ramallah to the grave of Fatah founder, Yasser Arafat, protesting the group's poor showing under Mahmoud Abbas. Abbas' security prevented the armed group from reaching the Fatah chairman's office.

Armed Fatah members took over the parliament buildings in Judea and Gaza, shooting in the air. Cars and tires were also burned outside the parliament building in Gaza. Some demanded the resignation of Fatah politicians, while Al Aksa Brigades terrorists declared publicly that they would kill Fatah members who joined a Hamas government.

JAN 29, 06. The Fatah movement, supported by security forces, has launched an effort to block a Hamas takeover of the Palestinian Authority. Over the weekend, Hamas and PA officers clashed throughout the Gaza Strip. At least one PA officer was killed and seven others were injured.

A GRIM PREDICTION: 'HAMAS WIN WOULD DESTROY PA'

THE JERUSALEM POST published this prediction on Jan. 11, 06 – two weeks before the election:

Israel's Security establishment painted a grim picture of the aftermath of the upcoming Palestinian legislative elections,

warning that a strong Hamas victory would lead to the total destruction of the Palestinian Authority, the only body Israel has been able to negotiate with. Security officials warned that the new situation will have severe repercussions on future dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians.

Describing the “no-win situation” Israel will be forced to reckon with, security officials declared that a significant Hamas win may spur Fatah factions to stir up trouble and resort to violence, perceiving the move as the only way to serve its interests and reach Hamas’ level of popularity. “Everything achieved by Israel and the PA in the past will be lost.”

A Hamas victory means there will be no mutual base for Israel to enter any kind of dialogue, said the officials, adding that no one in Hamas - not even Ismail Haniya, who is considered a pragmatist - would agree to recognize the State of Israel or put terror aside for the sake of entering a dialogue.

“The future looks bleak. It is clear that, whatever the outcome, Israel will be faced with an upsurge in violence and a breakdown in the situation,” an official said.

“No matter how you look at it, nothing good will come out of the situation. It is a shame that the US is unable to understand the situation and the new reality Israel will be faced with. It is possible that we will witness the last democratic elections to take place in the PA.”

THE POWERLESSNESS OF MAHMOUD ABBAS

RECENT reports that reached the security establishment portray the Palestinian President as a weak soul incapable of taking charge of the situation. The aides that surround Abbas are pegging their hopes on his failure and perceive him as a man unable to cope with the internal pressures he is confronted with. Security officials did not rule out the possibility that Abbas may resign.

Abbas’ biggest mistake was the strategic decision not to confront Hamas, because that enabled Hamas to continue with its ongoing activities uninterrupted. Abbas’ weakness can be seen in his failure to uphold any of the agreements he signed with Israel.

“In West Bank cities where the PA received security control he failed to disarm fugitives and reign in extremists,” an official said. The chaos and lawlessness that rage through the

PA-controlled areas continues without any real attempts by the PA leadership to halt the situation and restore law and order, the official added. - The Jerusalem Post / 11 Jan 06

WHAT ISRAEL'S POLITICAL LEADERS ARE SAYING

ISRAEL is going through a time of soul-searching, and blame-naming.

RAMON: "PA, HAMAS, NO DIFFERENCE"

Kadima MK (Member of Knesset) Haim Ramon said that he failed to understand the consternation that Hamas' seeming victory caused among right-wing politicians in Israel. Ramon told Israel Radio that right-wing politicians had said "over and over" that "Abbas was the same as Hamas," and had called the PA leader "even worse" because he and Fatah "hid their true intentions."

ORLEV: "DISENGAGEMENT DID IT"

National Religious Party MK Zevulun Orlev said the Hamas victory was the result of Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip. "The Palestinian public recognized that Hamas' suicide bombers and Kassam rockets convinced the Kadima-led disengagement government to uproot Jews from Gush Katif," he declared.

NETANYAHU: "IT'S HAMASTAN"

Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu told the Likud faction in the Knesset: "Before our very eyes, Hamastan - an offshoot of Iran - has been established, the step-child of Iran and the Taliban. It's in firing range of our airport, our highways and cities. This has to be a day of soul searching because the writing is on the wall.

"The policy of giving land for free gave a prize to terror and a winning card for Hamas. This event (elections) has produced an extreme Islamist country; the hands of all its leaders are stained in blood," he added.

"How are Olmert and Peres getting ready for this challenge? They are moving the fence 500 meters closer to the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway (Beit Iksa). They gave more land to the Hamas state. Any land given to Hamas will give more of a front to fire upon us. This is a new and dangerous situation. Sharon said he wouldn't let Palestinians in Jerusalem vote.

Olmert let them.”

EITAM: “HAMAS, SEND FLOWERS TO OLMERT”

MK Avigdor Lieberman (Yisrael Beiteinu) said that the results were “a victory for radical Islam”, while MK Effi Eitam said that Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar “should send flowers to Ehud Olmert.”

HENDEL: “TERROR WAS THE ONLY WAY”

National Union chairman Zvi Hendel had claimed that Hamas showed the Palestinians that terror was the only way by which they could “defeat and expel Israel.”

SHALOM: “ISRAEL MADE GRAVE MISTAKE”

Former foreign minister and Likud MK Silvan Shalom said that Israel had made a grave mistake in allowing Hamas to participate in the elections. “The over-whelming victory by Hamas is an earthquake that will set us back 50 years and lead the entire region to chaos.”

“The writing is on the wall,” he said. “I warned Ehud Olmert in our first meeting after he assumed the post of acting prime minister. For months I attempted to prevent Hamas participation in the elections. We initiated a large-scale diplomatic move and forwarded the Hamas charter, which calls on Israel’s destruction, to world leaders. We have nobody to blame but ourselves.”

“The international community will find a way to justify its dealings with Hamas by saying that it was democratically elected - and this after all Israel’s efforts to prove to the world that Hamas is a terror group,” Shalom declared.

PERES: “WE HAVE TO SEE WHERE THEY’RE GOING”

Shimon Peres. Kadima, said that Israel would engage in talks with Hamas if the party “abandoned terrorism.” “Israel will have to see where [Hamas] are going; back to the road of violence and terror, or ahead to the route of peace. They haven’t taken a decision yet. They weren’t prepared for this victory.”

“PERETZ: “HAMAS NOT A PARTNER”

Labor Chairman Amir Peretz said his party did not consider

Hamas a partner for peace negotiations. “We have no intention of allowing negotiations to take place, or of allowing a third party to force us to recognize an organization that openly seeks to destroy Israel,” Peretz said, adding that the apparent Hamas victory undermined the stability of the Middle East.

BEILIN: “LAUNCH PEACE TALKS WITH ABBAS”

Meretz-Yahad chairman Yossi Beilin told Israel Radio that Israel was to blame for the Hamas victory. “Israel played a large role in weakening the Palestinian Authority and strengthening Hamas,” he said. “The unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, not as a part of an agreement, greatly strengthened Hamas.”

The election results still provided a chance for an agreement with moderate Palestinians. Beilin called on Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to launch peace talks with PA President Abbas. Beilin warned that if Israel and the PA failed to reach an agreement soon, Hamas would win in the next elections, as well.

ISRAEL’S STRATEGIC FAILURE

EHUD OLMERT, like the rest of Sharon’s stalwarts in the government and Kadima party, are caught in a dilemma of their own making. Since they enthusiastically executed Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Hamas has gone from strength to strength – militarily and politically. The pull-out enabled an Islamic terrorist group dedicated to Israel’s destruction to leap into Palestinian government.

Because of this self-programming, Olmert and Kadima failed to heed the warning given last Nov-Dec by Shin Beit director Yuval Diskin that a strong Hamas showing at the ballot box would be disastrous for Israel. Now, it is too late to start fashioning a policy to hold back the rushing Hamas tide.

1. Iran’s fundamentalists as well as Egypt’s radical Muslim Brotherhood (the Hamas’ parent-organization), will ride straight into positions of influence in the Palestinian government in Ramallah, on the backs of Hamas.

2. Hamas in government broadens the scope of the Israel-Palestinian dispute to involve the most belligerent Muslim

Sunni and Shi'ite sects. In this sense alone, Sharon and his clique/successors performed a strategic misstep of monumental proportions.

3. Al Qaeda is not surprisingly poised to press its advantage and is racing its radical Muslim rivals in the effort to attack Israel.

4. In the aftermath of Sharon's unilateral disengagement, every single accord - from the Middle East Road Map to the pre-withdrawal security and diplomatic accords the United States and Europe brokered between Israel, the Palestinians and Egypt - has unraveled. The resulting security vacuum and diplomatic blind alley were graphically described by Gen. Yaalon.

And even supposing that the US and Europe freeze donations to a Hamas-dominated Palestinian Authority, as elder statesman Shimon Peres seems to believe they will, the Muslim world can easily afford to make up the difference from its abundant petrodollars.

The only positive outcome from Hamas gaining power in Palestinian government is a temporary one: The group may opt to continue the partial ceasefire for some time. But this will not mean the organization is changing its ways or disarming, any more than Lebanon's Hizbollah, only that it will welcome a breather to promote its long-term goals.

The Islamist radicals will need time to consolidate their grip on power and build a powerful military force. The price Israel will pay for this truce will be high - it will be Hamas' unopposed takeover of the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus and its buildup with the help of Iran, Syria and the Hizbollah, into an organized military force able to confront the Israeli army.

By failing to stop the Hamas in time, the Israeli government is now condemned to being dragged willy-nilly into playing ball with the long-term strategic goals of a radical Islamic group committed to wiping out the Jewish state. It is hard to see how the Olmert team can do anything tangible to arrest the slide at this late date. - Extracts from DEBKAfile. Jan 24, 06

WORLD LEADERS PESSIMISTIC, CAUTIOUS

AFTER IT became clear that the terrorist organization Hamas had won the Palestinian election with a land-slide victory,

Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Britain, Japan, the United States and the European Union all warned that international cooperation with the peace process will depend on Hamas' willingness to lay down its weapons and acknowledge Israel's right to exist.

US President George W Bush said Washington would not deal with Hamas unless it rejected its call to destroy Israel.

Condoleezza Rice phoned President Abbas to praise Palestinian democracy and to say the United States supports him and his policies. She asserted to him that US administration will continue supporting the elected president and his policies.

The German Foreign Ministry said German assistance to the Palestinian government, will not happen unless Hamas recognizes Israel.

The World Bank which coordinates financial matters between the Palestinian Authority and countries which provide monetary aid, said that there is a "lack of certainty and hope" in the financial world. An official said that by next week the PA will not be able to pay its employees' salaries, and that he believed international financial assistance will be terminated following the Hamas victory.

THE QUARTET WARNS HAMAS

JAN 31, 06. The EU, US, Russia and the UN has called for Hamas to renounce violence and recognise Israel or face the prospect of cuts in global aid.

Meeting in London, the Quartet of would-be Middle East peacemakers confirmed that aid to the Palestinians totaling more than \$1bn {£563m} could be jeopardised if Hamas refused change. (The EU gave some \$600m {£338m} in aid in 2005, while the US handed over \$400m {£225m}).

The Quartet's statement, read by Mr Kofi Annan, said: "All members of the future Palestinian government must be committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map."

The statement said future aid would be reviewed in reference to these demands, but did not threaten to cut it in the short term. The BBC's diplomatic correspondent said the words were chosen with care. They did not demand a renunciation of violence or immediate recognition of Israel, but a commitment

to these things in the future.

The EU wants to continue financing the Palestinian Authority while Hamas attempts to form a government. The EU foreign ministers stated that they expect the new Palestinian parliament to support the creation of a government committed to a peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict. "On this basis, the EU stands ready to continue to support Palestinian economic development and democratic state-building."

President Bush set out a far more terser message. "The Hamas party has made it clear that they do not support the right of Israel (to exist). And I have made it clear that so long as that's their policy, we will not support a Palestinian government made up of Hamas."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the US will fulfil its current aid commitments to Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, but will not give money to a Hamas government. "The United States is not prepared to fund an organisation that advocates the destruction of Israel, that advocates violence and that refuses its obligations under the roadmap to which everyone is committed."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Germany does not intend to hold talks with Hamas, which has spearheaded a campaign of suicide bombings that killed hundreds of Israelis in the past 5 years, unless the Islamic movement rejects violence and meets other conditions.

British foreign secretary, Jack Straw, said EU ministers were most likely to adopt a wait-and-see approach to Hamas before deciding whether to cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority. And the Dutch foreign minister, Ben Bot, said the EU could not do business "with a party that partakes in terrorism ... that intends to eliminate another country." But he added that EU ministers would wait and see what kind of government Hamas formed.

HAMAS REJECTS 'UNFAIR' AID DEMAND

JAN 31, 06. Hamas criticised the ultimatum to change, and said it will not abandon its strategy of "resistance" against Israel. Political head in Gaza, Ismail Haniya, said the "unfair conditions" would endanger the well-being of Palestinians. He insisted international aid was vital humanitarian assistance for people living under occupation. "This aid should not be linked to unfair conditions."

Khaled Mashaal, the movement's overall leader, wrote in the UK's Guardian newspaper saying, " Hamas is immune to bribery, intimidation and blackmail." He called on Arab states to increase aid to the Palestinians.

Hamas, on the other hand, called on Israel to change, repeating his demand for an end to the occupation of Palestinian land and attacks on Palestinians.

HAMAS VICTORY - ISRAEL'S WORST NIGHTMARE

OBSERVERS in Israel say that Hamas will never significantly alter its central charter goals, as they are based on a literal reading of the Koran.

Although some local Hamas politicians have recently spoken with relative moderation in relation to their charter's call for Israel's complete annihilation, most Israeli experts and officials do not accept this as reflecting a real sea change in the movement's radical positions. Therefore, the already fractured Israeli-Palestinian "land for peace" process will now be recognized by most Israelis as being beyond resurrection.

"HAMAS" is an Arabic acronym for "Islamic Resistance Movement." The organisation was formed in mid-1988 with a founding charter that spells out in graphic in detail Hamas' intention to destroy Israel and to replace it with a Palestinian Islamic regime.

Hamas is actually an outgrowth of the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood movement which made big inroads into the Egyptian parliament last year.

THE HERZLIYA CONFERENCE

THIS conference of Israeli establishment leaders was held on 24th January, the eve of the Palestinian election.

Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert addressed the Conference and outlined his views of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Evidently not anticipating a Hamas victory, Olmert made what seemed to be a disastrous capitulation to Palestinian demands. He said: "We cannot rule over areas with a Palestinian population" ...

"WE'LL HAVE TO PART WITH MOST OF YESHA"



EHUD OLMERT

OLMERT said his first priority would be to shape permanent borders that guaranteed a Jewish majority, and that he preferred agreement with the Palestinians, rather than further disengagements.

As chairman of the recently formed Kadima Party, Olmert essentially said he sees no future for a Jewish 'Yesha' (Judea and Samaria ~ The West Bank).

"The dramatic move before us," Olmert said, **"is to re-form our borders to ensure a Jewish majority. In order to guarantee the existence of the Jewish home, we will not be able to continue and rule over the areas in which a Palestinian population lives ... Israel will maintain the security areas, the Jewish settlement blocs, and those places that have supreme significance for the Jewish nation ... There can be no Jewish state without the capital Jerusalem in its center."**

Taking aim at the population of Judea and Samaria, Olmert said, **"The Government of Israel will not be deterred by any threat of a law-breaking minority... I have instructed the security forces to raze all the unauthorized outposts in Judea and Samaria."**

Settling all of Judea and Samaria does not jibe (go well) with preserving Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, the Kadima Prime Ministerial candidate said.

"We hope that they [the Arabs of the Palestinian Authority] will give up some of their dreams, just as we have given up some of ours."

"In the name of the Government of Israel," Olmert said, **"I say that we will fulfill all the Road Map commitments we took**

upon ourselves, and we demand that the leadership in Ramallah do the same.”

During his speech Olmert praised the work of Binyamin Netanyahu as finance minister in the former government. This has been interpreted as an indication that Olmert may take a turn to the right. It could be a clue as to the shape of the government coalition he will prefer after the Israeli election in March.

Olmert called on Palestinian leaders to join him in negotiations on the basis of current realities. If they fail to live up to their roadmap commitment to dismantle terrorists including Hamas, he warned that Israel would defend its interests by every means, and fight terrorism with increased vigor.

Olmert told a US envoy that he opposed controlling territory in which there was a Palestinian majority. He went on to say: “Israel accepts the need to forgo parts of the ancestral Land of Israel, retaining security zones, large settlement blocs and places of supreme importance to the Jewish people, primarily Jerusalem which must remain under Israel sovereignty. The Palestinians too must forgo some of their national dreams to achieve statehood. A Palestinian state will embody all their national aspirations including the settlement of refugees. But no Palestinian refugees will be allowed to enter Israel.”

REACTION TO THE SPEECH

MK ARYEH ELDAD (National Union) replied: “By Olmert’s logic, we’ll have to soon leave the Galilee. Olmert’s speech is the beginning of the end of the State of Israel ... If we cannot live in areas where what he calls ‘Palestinian’ population lives, then we will quickly have to part from the Galilee, the Triangle [Um el-Fahm], and the Negev, and the division of Jerusalem is just around the corner. Olmert will be able to say: ‘In Herzliya, I destroyed the Jewish State’.”

Labor’s YITZCHAK HERZOG said Olmert had “merely downloaded Labor’s platform from the internet, leaving out the social issues.”

A Likud spokesman said, “Olmert hid his true plans for a unilateral withdrawal from much of Judea and Samaria (Yesha), the Jordan Valley and Jerusalem - a position he has

expressed many times in the past years.”

The YESHA COUNCIL said Olmert’s remarks were “laced with an anti-Semitic tone towards the Jews of Yesha. In the Middle Ages, (vitriolic rumours said) ‘the Jews spread the Black Plague by poisoning the wells and murdering Christian children for their blood for matzas’; in the 20th century, ‘the Jews took over the world’s economy’; and now, they say, ‘the settlers are the reason for all of Israel’s problems’.”

Council spokesperson Emily Amrusi noted, “The same Olmert who emphasized in his speech that he was offering his hand in peace to murderers, has ordered his underlings over the past days not to conduct dialogue with the Yesha Council. It has never happened before that the government simply ignores the Yesha leadership and doesn’t talk with them ... He offers gestures and benefits to terrorists, but wages war on Jewish settlements, essentially naming us as the enemy.”

MK TZVI HENDEL (National Union): “With this shallow and hesitant speech, Olmert is trying to con-vince us that he is the new Sharon. But behind the fog of his press advisors, a clear plan is hiding: expulsion and destruction of Judea and Samaria, the division of Jerusalem, a return to the ’67 borders, and the abandonment of Israel’s security.”

BENNY KASHRIEL, the Mayor of Maaleh Adumim, just to the east of Jerusalem, said, “Olmert’s promise to preserve Jerusalem will be kept only if he reinforces the settlement belt around Jerusalem. He must allow contiguous construction from Jerusalem to Maaleh Adumim in order to stop the Palestinian choke-hold around the capital, and he must approve the E-1 construction plan [between the two cities].”

MK SHA’UL YAHALOM (National Religious Party): “Olmert copied Sharon’s speech from two years ago - and we have seen what that speech led us to: a rainfall of Kassam rockets, no security for the Jews living adjacent to Gaza, and no response from Israel.”

“PA WON’T RECOGNIZE ANY BORDERS”

SPEAKING at the Herzliya Conference, ex-IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen.

MOSHE YAALON warned that the time-honored phrase

“territories for peace” has no practical relevance for the Palestinian Authority. As the PA does not fulfill its obligations, any border that will be chosen, will be violated by violent activity - unless Israel manages to create a significant deterrence.

Yaalon related to Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and the reports that the Kadima Party favors additional such moves. He said that they are damaging to Israel’s deterrence ability because “they are interpreted by the other side as weakness.”

Regarding the Kassam rockets fired almost daily from Gaza towards the Negev and Ashkelon areas, Yaalon said, “Israel has not created reliable deterrence against this threat. Israel’s unilateral withdrawals are interpreted as a running away from this threat ... Gaza is turning,

in front of our very eyes, into Qaedastan and Hamastan.

The bottom line of this analysis is that for the foreseeable future, the '67 borders are not defensible.”



“YES, YES, YES TO PALESTINE”

ISRAEL’S zealous new foreign minister, TZIPI LIVNI, told participants in the Herzliya Conference, “We must say ‘yes, yes, yes’ to a Palestinian nation-state on these ancient Jewish lands (Judea and Samaria).”

Trying to balance her remarks, Livni went on to say Israel should make sure Palestine does not become a terrorist state that continues to threaten Israel. She did not, however, say just how Israel could try to make sure of this. (Earlier in the day, former IDF chief of staff Moshe Ya’alon indicated that this was in any case a lost cause.)

He said the problem is that Israel's surrender of land is seen as a retreat from the threat of Islamic terror, making it impossible for the Jewish state to create a credible deterrence against such aggression, and encouraging the nation's enemies to attack us.

The general insisted the situation will not change simply because Livni and her colleagues offer the Palestinian Arabs a state, explaining that the true source of the conflict is the Arabs' refusal to recognize Israel.

“INEXPLICABLE RUSH”

Speaking at the same conference, Nobel Laureate Professor ISRAEL AUMANN concurred that Israel is asking for trouble with its inexplicable rush to divide the land in the name of peace. The very act of running headlong after the longed-for peace is precisely that which distances it from us, the top game theorist said.

ISRAEL LOSING IMAGE OF TERROR FIGHTER

Another speaker at the Herzliya Conference was YUVAL STEINITZ, chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee. Steinitz warned that Israel's additional territorial transfers to a Hamas-dominated Palestinian Authority could cause it to lose its image as a major partner in the war against terrorism.

Steinitz asserted that Israel has enabled Hamas and other Palestinian insurgency groups to significantly strengthen over the last five years.

ISRAEL'S UNILATERALISM

UNILATERALISM means “one member of a group doing something alone without the agreement of the other members.” When negotiations break down, the members begin to take unilateral decisions and actions.

The Middle East Peace Process is supposed to progress by negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, and other involved parties, but for the lack of progress, Israel has resorted to unilateralism.

IT IS hard to understand the disengagement line that Ariel Sharon and Israel has taken over the last couple of years. It was a unilateral decision, taken without any negotiation with the Palestinians, that led to the destruction of Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip, and the removal of Jewish settlers and soldiers from the heavily populated coastal region.

Earlier, Sharon had been such a strong supporter of settlements, but he evidently reached a confirmed conviction that there would be no negotiated settle-ment for many years, and that time was running out. Unilateral action was necessary. The plan was to reduce the state of Israel to a defensible territory with a Jewish majority. Gaza was the beginning. But this left open the possibility of more withdrawals from non-viable settlements in the West Bank. Major settlements, however, were to be enclosed within the defence wall, or otherwise protected.

The plan meant that the two sides would be unilaterally separated, and that the Palestinian terrorists would be kept at bay. It was hoped that the Palestinians in the vacated areas would be encouraged to establish viable governments for themselves. Final arrangements would be left for the next generation.

Unilateralism is what Israel has been pursuing.

The present situation has developed much faster than most expected! Now leaders of most of Israel's political parties favour some type of unilateral withdrawal, but there are wide differences on the extent of withdrawal.

Israel's own elections, due in March, are likely to be heavily influenced by the Palestinian results. There could be an increased support for a much harder line as the new dangers are more clearly realized.

Already Ehud Olmert has ordered the speeding up of the construction of the separation barrier, which runs along and through parts of the West Bank. After more than three years of building, "the wall" remains less than half finished, but Israeli officials say it has contributed enormously to the reduction of suicide bombings and other attacks.

Olmert made it clear after an emergency cabinet meeting that talks with Hamas, a party sworn to Israel's destruction, were out of the question.

Israel will now most likely pursue unilateral actions, drawing its own borders and separating itself more securely from the Palestinians. Some experts say that Israel will now be more freer to establish its future on its own.

Ami Ayalon, the former head of Israel's Shin Bet security service and now a parliamentary candidate for the left-leaning Labor Party, said the absence of a negotiating partner should not halt Israeli actions aimed at separating from the Palestinians. "Israel," he said, "should seek to create a situation where it disengages from the Palestinians and preserves the character of Israel as a Jewish democracy." Israel should continue, he said, "to move fast and independently to our goal."

But Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the right-wing Likud Party, made clear that the Palestinian results offered an opportunity for his more hawkish message to be heard. He said the Hamas victory was a result of the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and this proved that no more withdrawals should occur.

PERES: "GAZA WAS JUST THE BEGINNING"

KADIMA will enter final status talks despite PA non-compliance. Elder statesman Shimon Peres confirmed that last summer's Gaza "disengagement" was only the beginning of Ariel Sharon's strategy to fully divide the Land of Israel and relieve the Jews of their biblical heartland.

Peres said Sharon had told him the Gaza pullout was not the end of the story, but the beginning of a series of surrenders he believed would ultimately bring an end to Israel's conflict with the Arab world.

Peres vowed that if the Kadima Party is victorious in the upcoming general election, and Ehud Olmert is officially installed as prime minister, no time would be wasted in implementing this strategy.

Associated Press quoted Peres as saying a post-election Olmert government would, in conjunction with further withdrawals, immediately engage in final status peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, despite the latter's enduring failure to comply with decade-old commitments to combat anti-Jewish terrorism.

If Peres' words hold true, it would be the first time Israel has

agreed to discuss a final peace settlement in the absence of “Palestinian” compliance.

Meanwhile, security experts continue to blame the very policies Peres is championing for eroding Israel’s ability to deter terrorism and for recent increases in the Palestinian Arabs’ ability to mass murder Jews. - Jerusalem / NewsWireJanuary / 19 Jan 06

LABOR PARTY SUPPORTS GIVING UP PARTS OF JERUSALEM

In its new campaign platform, the Labor Party supports giving up Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem in a final deal with the Palestinians. “Labor backs a ‘united Jerusalem consisting of its Jewish neighborhoods’.” – AP / Jerusalem Post

“A HAMAS GOVERNMENT IRRELEVANT”

JAN 26, 06. Acting PM Olmert declared that any Palestinian Authority government that included Hamas would not be a partner for Israel.

“If a Palestinian government should arise of which Hamas is a participant, the world and Israel will ignore it and render it irrelevant,” he said.

“Israel will not negotiate with a Palestinian government, even if only part of it is an armed terrorist organization calling for Israel’s destruction; and in any case Israel will continue to strenuously fight terrorism everywhere.”

OLMERT SETS HAMAS ‘RED LINES’

JAN 29, 06. Ehud Olmert set out his government’s red lines for dealing with a Hamas government.

1. Hamas and all Palestinian terror groups must disarm.
2. The Hamas Covenant, which denounces peaceful negotiations, and calls for the destruction of Israel through jihad, must be annulled.
3. All the agreements which have been signed, and all the commitments which have been entered into, by the Palestinian Authority must be accepted and upheld.

What was unclear was how the Olmert government intends to respond should Hamas fail to meet any or all of the above criteria.

WHAT ISRAEL SAYS

ISRAEL has indicated that newly elected Hamas legislators will not be granted free access between Gaza and the West Bank.

Israel said that no Hamas leaders would be immune from targeted killings if the group maintained aggression and continued to refuse to acknowledge Israel's right to exist. Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz said: "Whoever stands at the head of a terror organisation and continues to carry out terror attacks against Israel is not immune."

Israeli Foreign Minister Tsipi Livni, called on the EU - the biggest financial donors to the Palestinian Authority - to oppose the creation of a "terrorist government."

WHAT HAMAS IS SAYING

HAMAS' overall Damascus-based leader, Khaled Mashaal, is playing up democracy. He attacked international governments for criticizing the democratic choice of the Arabs of the PA. "The world should respect the results of democracy," Mashaal said. "If you want to punish the Palestinian people for practicing democracy, then the Americans should be punished for choosing President Bush."

Mashaal has invited the Fatah group to join a Hamas-led government. "We believe it is in everybody's interest to ride the Hamas train, because this train will reach its destination," he said. "We extend our hand to everyone. We need each other." At the same time, Mashaal said his group's presence in the legislature will strengthen its ability to wage war against Israel.

Hamas policy-maker Ghazi Ahmed Hamad said, if Fatah does not join a government "we will try to form a government of technocrats."

Hamas emphatically says it has no intention of changing its charter or agenda; it will refuse to negotiate with Israel; it will continue its "armed resistance" and it will not revise its charter to acknowledge Israel's right to exist.

Hamas co-founder Mahmoud Zahhar said: “We are not playing terrorism or violence. We are under occupation. The Israelis are continuing their aggression against our people, killing, detention, demolition and in order to stop these processes, we run effective self- defence by all means, including using guns.”

Senior Hamas leader Ismail Haniya has rejected international calls, under the threat of cuts to international aid for the Palestinian Authority, to disarm and renounce violence.

“This aid cannot be a sword over the heads of the Palestinian people and will not be material to blackmail our people, to blackmail Hamas and the resistance.”

“Arms and resistance are issues that are linked to the presence of the occupation and as long as occupation exists the Palestinian people have the right to defend themselves, and to resist the occupation,” he said.

Hamas seeks to replace both Israel and the Palestinian Authority with an Islamic state. It has said it would support the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a first step. Haniya says that Hamas’ top priority remains completing the liberation of the other parts of “Palestine.”

Khaled Mashaal said that Hamas would honor commitments made by the PA to Israel, provided that those commitments “serve Palestinian interests.”

One of the group’s senior leaders said Hamas could agree to a long-term “hudna”, or truce, if Israel accepts a Palestinian state based on the internationally-recognised borders of 1967.

Mahmoud al-Zahar called for the release of Palestinian prisoners, an end to Israeli “aggression” against Palestinians, and a geographic link between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. “At that time, with assurance from other sides, we are going to accept to establish our independent state, and then give us one or two, ten, or fifteen years to see what is the real intention of Israel after that,” Zahhar said.

Sheikh Nazzar Rayan: “The vanquishing of the enemy in Gaza does not mean that this stage has ended. We still have Jerusalem and the pure West Bank to conquer. We will not rest until we liberate all our land, all our Palestine. We do not distinguish between what was occupied in the 1940s and what

was occupied in the 1960s. Our Jihad continues, and we still have a long way to go. We will continue until the very last usurper is driven out of our land.”

Mahmoud al-Zahar was quoted by Al-Jazeera as saying, “We did not fall upon Gaza from the moon. We are living within the society and know what the street wants and what their conscience is. Oslo is not only dead, it has rotted,” he said. In a statement from a pre-election debate, Al-Zahar said: “Between 1994-2004, the donor nations gave the PA \$US6 billion. Where did all this money go? Fifty-six million dollars go to salaries every month.

There are \$US100 million in revenue every month. There are 37,000 fictitious jobs; the colonel, his wife ‘the coloneless,’ his son, his daughter they all get paid, as you know very well.”

Mushir al-Masri, a Hamas candidate and spokesman, who won election in the northern Gaza Strip, said peace talks and recognition of Israel are “not on our agenda” but the group is ready for a partnership - presumably with Abbas.

“BUSH WON’T DICTATE TO US”

Hamas spokesman Sheikh Yasser Mansour said President Bush’s insistence on disarming Hamas constitutes a “blatant interference in Palestinian affairs. “Bush won’t dictate to us. We completely reject his remarks regarding disarming us. Nobody can force us to disarm.”

WHAT FATAH LEADERS SAY

PRESIDENT Mahmoud Abbas - who also heads the ruling Fatah party - said he remains committed to “a peaceful settlement.” As news of Hamas’ victory spread, Abbas said he would honor the outcome, and, according to Agence France-Press, he asked Hamas to form the next PA government even before the election results were officially released.

On Jan 26, the day the Hamas win was declared, Mahmoud Abbas indicated that far from stepping down after his Fatah party’s defeat, he is collaborating fully with the winning Hamas. That night Abbas was on the phone to Khaled Mashaal, at his Damascus headquarters.

According to Mohammed Mustafa, economic adviser to PA Chairman and Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas, Hamas will

“have to accept Abbas’ economic and diplomatic agenda.”

Palestinian Economy Minister, Mazen Sinokrot, was blunt about its need for cash and his expectations that the international community should provide it. “The whole world should understand that we are very much in need of \$97 million,” he said during his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

THE ARAB LEAGUE

The Arab League added its opinion that Hamas will be forced to accept the Beirut initiative, despite its current refusal to do so. Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa said that the diplomatic process in the Middle East moves according to the guidelines set forth in the Beirut initiative, which calls for full Arab recognition of Israel.

The guidelines, approved by the Arab League in 2002, also call for a full Israeli withdrawal from territories gained in the 1967 and 1973 wars, according to UN resolutions 242 and 338. The initiative was rejected at the time by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

AHMEDENIJAD RECEIVES PALESTINIAN TERRORIST LEADERS IN SYRIA

JAN 20, 06. The Iranian President, during a visit to Syria, received leaders from 10 terrorist groups, and promised to support their struggle. Among them were HAMAS leader, Khaled Mashaal, Abdallah Ramadan Shalah, head of JIHAD ISLAMI, Ahmed Jibril, head of the radical PFLP, and HIZBOLLAH’S Hassan Nasrallah.

ISMAIL HANIYA LIKELY TO HEAD HAMAS GOVERNMENT



ISMAIL HANIYA

JAN. 27, 06. According to sources close to Hamas, Ismail Haniya is likely to head the new Palestinian Authority cabinet.

Haniya, who ran at the head of Hamas' Change and Reform List, will replace outgoing Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei, who submitted his resignation after learning that Hamas had scored a landslide victory.

Some Palestinians predicted that Hamas might ask former finance minister Salam Fayyad to head the new cabinet, so as to avoid a boycott by the international community.

Fayyad's Third Way List won two seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council. He is a widely respected figure with close ties to many world leaders, including Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Hamas may therefore use him as a bridge to Israel and the rest of the world.

It is not yet clear what would happen with the PA's Interior Ministry, which is in charge of the security forces. Interior Minister Nasser Youssef, a veteran Fatah official, is unlikely to remain in his post under a Hamas prime minister. As security chief, Youssef was responsible in the mid-1990s for a massive crack-down on Hamas and Islamic Jihad members in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A new interior minister would have to appoint security commanders, and it remained to be seen if some of the Fatah chiefs would agree to give up their posts.

It was also unclear what would happen with Palestinian ambassadors around the world. Almost all current ambassadors are Fatah loyalists.

KHALED MASHAAL TO MOVE TO GAZA

The overall Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal intends to arrive in the Palestinian territory the moment Hamas takes over from the Fatah.

Mashaal says he does not want to be prime minister and he would therefore not appoint the new government. But he suggested several names of public Palestinian figures with international credibility for the position of prime minister and finance minister.

If Mashaal sets foot in Israel-controlled territory he will be arrested, but he can easily reach Gaza through Egypt.

A HAMAS 'PEACE INITIATIVE'

JAN 27, 06. WORLDNETDAILY's Middle East correspondent, Aaron Klein, says Hamas will soon make public a "peace initiative" in which it will offer to trade strategic land with Israel, cease attempts to capture parts of Jerusalem, and sign a 10-year renewable cease-fire with the Jewish state.

A Hamas leader who gave an exclusive interview said the plan, which he justified using Islamic tradition, is a temporary machination to ease international and US hostility toward his group in hopes of receiving financial assistance.

"We will not impose Islamic laws and we will not escalate our fight against Israel," he said. "We will even be ready to accept an interim long-term agreement that will give the Palestinian people an independent state on most of the territories occupied in 1967. I tell you we will surprise everyone with our new attitude."

FUNDING SITUATION COMPLEX

A DIPLOMATIC official said that Israel faces a real dilemma, because although on the one hand its reflex was to push for the world to cut off aid to the PA; on the other hand, if it does, and the PA collapses, Israel would once again bear responsibility for the fate of millions of Palestinians. "If the PA dissolves and can't pay salaries, then suddenly everything again is on Israel's doorstep," he said.

Israel must immediately decide whether it will continue to transfer customs revenue to the PA under terms of the interim agreement signed in 1995, an agreement that Hamas does not recognize. The government currently transfers about \$60 million a month.

In addition to this revenue, outside sources - such as the EU and US - contribute another \$60 million monthly to the PA, which keeps it solvent. "Israel has to think hard about the alternatives," one diplomatic official said. "Israel has always said the PA must crack down on the terrorist organizations. Now that's over. But if the West stops funding the PA, the Iranians may step in and fill the gap. The situation is complex."

Last month, after the EU did not transfer funds because the PA did not live up to certain benchmark requirements, the PA turned to the Saudis who paid the salaries.

BUSH WARNS US MAY CUT AID

JAN 28, 06. President George Bush has warned US aid to the Palestinian Authority may be cut after Hamas' surprise election win. He said the US would stop \$400m (£225m) of aid unless the militant group renounced violence and stopped calling for Israel's destruction.

The Palestinian Authority has always been heavily reliant on international cash, and its main donors, the US, EU, Japan and Arab states, are reviewing their position. Last month the PA finance minister begged the Group of Seven richest countries to provide aid to keep the government afloat.

Since 1993, the Palestinians have received more than \$1.5 billion in U.S. economic assistance via the U.S. Agency for International Development. In 2005, Washington gave \$225 million in aid to the Palestinians through USAID, and \$88 million to a UN fund.

“They’ve got to get rid of that arm of their party which is armed and violent, and secondly, they’ve got to get rid of that part of their platform that says they want to destroy Israel,” Mr Bush said. “And if they don’t, we won’t deal with them. Aid packages won’t go forward.”

OPPOSITION IN CONGRESS

IN Congress, there is strong opposition toward giving aid to a Hamas-led government. US Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, an influential Florida Republican, said lawmakers could not support a group that called for the destruction of Israel and did not renounce violence.

“I will work with my colleagues to undertake all necessary steps to prevent US foreign aid from being diverted to Hamas by placing strict limitations on direct US assistance to the Palestinian Authority,” said Ros-Lehtinen, chairwoman of a House of Representatives subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia.

The EU, the Palestinian Authority's largest donor with \$US 606m (£341m) a year, was also pegged to the Palestinian Authority's recognition of Israel and Hamas' renunciation of violence, according to the German State Minister for Foreign

Affairs.

Hamas has rejected international calls for the group to renounce violence or face cuts in aid to Palestinians.

Ismail Haniya, who headed Hamas' election list, said: "This aid cannot be a sword over the heads of the Palestinian people and it will not be material to blackmail our people, to blackmail Hamas and the resistance. It is rejected."

ISRAEL DELAYS PALESTINIAN FUND TRANSFER

JAN. 30, 06. Israel has suspended a transfer of tax revenue to the Palestinian Authority until Hamas agrees to back peace with Israel.

Israel was scheduled to hand over 200 million shekels (\$43 million) to the Palestinian Authority on Feb. 1, but the PM Olmert suspended the transfer pending a review on the direction the Palestinian Authority will take.

Olmert said that Israel had no intention of letting the tax revenue end up in the hands of terrorist groups. "It must be made very clear, we are not going to transfer funds which could finance terrorist attacks against our civilians."

But Israel was also concerned about undermining Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who has negotiated with Israel in the past.

FINANCE FLEES FROM WEST BANK!

JAN 30, 06. DEBKAFfile reports that Palestinian financial assets have begun to flee from the West Bank. Senior Palestinian Authority officials, including ministers and security chiefs, have begun transferring their assets overseas. One source estimates that some \$45 million were shifted in one day (Jan. 30).

Businessmen, doctors and lawyers, worried by the regime change from Fatah to Hamas, are moving their businesses and assets to Europe and Gulf emirates.

This flight of funds is a symptom of how little confidence the business community and elite have in Mahmoud Abbas' ability to limit the Hamas drive to grab full control of government and its institutions.

There is also a fear that the property of prominent figures will be impounded to make a show of the corruption and thieving of the defeated Fatah.

AL QAEDA CALLS FOR VOLUNTEERS TO FIGHT WITH PALESTINIANS

SEPT 17, 05. In statements on its websites, internet radio and e-mail, a- Qaeda told followers: "Now is your chance. Hurry up and make your way to the Philadelphi route crossing from Sinai, to fight with your Palestinian brothers."

"GAZA NOW ARMED TO THE HILT"

AFTER the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, militants have been able to smuggle tons of weapons into the Gaza Strip for use against Israel, a senior security official said.

"Gaza is armed to the hilt. The Palestinians have now moved an enormous quantity of weaponry, including anti-tank missiles, explosives, ammunition, rocket-propelled grenades and the like from Sinai into the Gaza Strip. They took complete advantage of the lack of any real security along the Egypt border."

ASHKELON IN RANGE OF 27km-RANGE MISSILES

JAN 24, 06. The Fatah-al Aqsa Brigades of the Gaza Strip announced the receipt of a new surface missile, designated No. 207, whose 27-km range covers the entire district of the Israeli port of Ashkelon. A missile with this range could also hit the towns of Netivot, Ofakim and places west of Beersheba, capital of the Negev.

The new weapon has been identified as the Russian short-range Grad 121mm. On Jan 3, Shin Beit director Yuval Diskin reported this weapon had been smuggled into the Gaza Strip to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee. - DEBKAFfile

ISRAEL TO PROTECT STRATEGIC SITES

JAN 9, 06. Israeli authorities have begun planning for a Palestinian missile strike on strategic facilities. The military and civilian authorities plan to relocate or protect strategic sites in Ashkelon, the latest target of Palestinian gunners. Ashkelon contains a major oil and gas terminal, naval port and power station.

“Most of these facilities cannot be moved and must be protected,” an official said. “Some smaller sites might be relocated.”

Israeli military sources said Palestinian insurgency groups were ready to fire extended-range Kassam and other missiles and rockets from the Gaza Strip. Palestinians have been trained in Iran and Lebanon in the production and assembly of missiles with a range of 20 kilometers.

Over the last month, a basic training camp in the Ashkelon area was struck several times by Kassam missiles and several soldiers were slightly injured. Ha’aretz reported that Palestinian insurgency groups have acquired “improved Katyusha rockets” in the Gaza Strip with a range of 20 km.

HAMAS PLEDGES TO FORM ARMY

JAN 28, 06. Three days after winning a landslide victory in the PA elections, Hamas called for the creation of a Palestinian army, even larger than the current 60,000-man police force.

Khaled Mashaal said the force would include the Hamas’ militant wing. “We will form an army like every other country. Hamas was ready to “unify the weapons of Palestinian factions, with Palestinian consensus, and form an army like any independent state ... an army that defends our people against aggression.”

Asked what he meant by “defending against aggression,” Mashaal said that Hamas would continue to carry out attacks on Israeli civilians. “Our presence in the legislature will strengthen the resistance,” he said. “Hamas had no plans to disarm. As long as we are under occupation then resistance is our right.”

Mashaal is taking advantage of his party’s conquest of Palestinian government by the ballot to appropriate Mahmoud Abbas’ slogan endorsed by Washington - “one authority, one law and one gun (under Hamas).”

Senior Fatah figures have warned Hamas not to inter-fere in the Palestinian security forces - most of whom are linked to Fatah. Gaza police chief Ala Hosni told Associated Press: “The security institution is a red line. We will not allow anyone to tamper with it.”

THE SEEDS OF CIVIL WAR?

ABBAS SEEKS TO ASSERT CONTROL OF SECURITY FORCES

JAN 30, 06. The Washington Times reported that Mahmoud Abbas who continues as president of the PA, has ordered all main branches of the security forces to report to him personally, in his capacity as the “supreme commander of the security forces,” rather than to the interior minister or prime minister.

The decision is a bid to forestall a takeover of the security forces by Hamas, and it also aimed at calming rising anger from security forces members themselves. Most of the 63,000 security force members are Fatah loyalists, and have expressed concern that they would lose their jobs in any Hamas-led government.

Members of the Fatah-led security services stormed into the grounds of the National Assembly buildings in Gaza and Ramallah on Saturday (28th), declaring that they would not countenance a Hamas takeover of their forces.

Sources in Ramallah told The Washington Times that Abbas has revoked a decree he issued after being elected to the presidency a year ago after Yasser Arafat’s death. In that order, Abbas had sought to diffuse presidential power by allocating three of the four main security organs to the interior minister, who serves the prime minister.

The intelligence service and a smaller elite presidential guard remained under his direct control, but Abbas relinquished control over the preventive security forces, the general security forces and the police. So now the president is seeking to take back control of security.

The portfolio that Hamas wants is internal security with control over Palestinian security and intelligence services. The new Palestinian ruler will also take over the PAs television, radio and press.

Hamas’ internal leader, Mahmoud Zahar, told The Times that his organization planned to take control of the security services and turn them from “serving Israeli interests” to “confronting Israel and protecting our people.”

Asked if the Palestinian Authority’s official forces would be Hamas’ armed wing, he said: “We will be the Palestinian

Authority, and they will integrate with us.”

Other Hamas legislators said they did not intend to expel the bulk of security forces members, but they would “purify” the leadership of each security service of its “corrupt elements.”

HAMAS TO KIDNAP SOLDIERS AS BARGAINING CHIPS

JAN 8, 06. Hamas sets up special unit to kidnap Israeli soldiers as bargaining chips for release of its jailed terrorists. Hamas also announced the end of talks with Israel if it scored high in the Jan 25 elections. The announcement came from the Islamic group’s leader Mahmoud al-Zahar in Gaza City.

Ismail Haniya, who leads the Hamas list of candidates, said negotiations with Israel will only take place through the barrel of a gun.

HISTORY OF HAMAS’ MURDEROUS ATTACKS

HAMAS has set the destruction of Israel as its goal. Before Sept 2000, Hamas, which introduced the tactic of suicide bombing to the Middle East, was responsible for 180 murders. Between September 2000 and April 2004, Hamas perpetrated 425 terrorist attacks against Israel and murdered at least 377 Israelis - nine every month - a total of at least 557.

Hamas was founded by Islamic militant extremists in the Gaza Strip in 1988, shortly after the first intifada broke out. Though it is also involved in social and welfare programs, the organization is devoted chiefly to the obliteration of Israel. Its charter states, “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.”

The charter further states, “There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors.

TEHRAN PROMISED EMBASSY IN RAMALLAH!

JAN 28, 06. Five days before the Palestinian election, Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal promised Tehran an Iranian embassy in Ramallah very soon. The promise was delivered at a secret meeting with Iranian President Ahmanidejad in Damascus on Jan. 20. - DEBKAfile

COMMENT FROM CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IN ISRAEL

In The CARMEL ALERT, Jan 27, 06, David wrote:

“Realistically, the future of the Peace Process and the Road Map is surely doomed to failure. The big question is ‘How many innocent Israelis will have to pay with their lives, or live the rest of their lives maimed by the terrorists that the US administration, the UN & the EU have allowed to continue operating, and even become a “legitimate” part of Middle East Politics?’

“It seems George Bush’s ‘war against terror’ does not include one of the world’s most murderous terror organisations - Hamas. Will the US & Israel refuse to deal with Hamas now that it is to become the official PA government?

“One thing is for sure - the pressure on Israel to give away her God-given territory will increase, as will the violence. At this time two of the possible choices for Israel’s next government are all prepared to give away the Land for a ‘pie in the sky’ dream of peace with our neighbours.

“Whatever the ultimate result, good, bad or cataclysmic, we need to know that for reasons above our understanding, God is in control and is allowing it. At the same time we need to exercise the spiritual gifts and authority that Yeshua has invested in us to do our best to search the scriptures and to pray the relevant verses back to the Father.”

“O God, do not keep silent! Do not be quiet, and do not be still, O God! For look, Your enemies are roaring; and those who hate You have raised their heads.

“They craftily plot against Your people, and conspire against Your hidden, treasured ones. They have said, ‘Come, and let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.’

“For they have conspired together with one mind; they make a pact against You; the tents of Edom and the Ishmailites; Moab and the Hagarites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre. Assyria also had joined with them; they have been a help to the sons of Lot. ...

“Cover their faces with shame, that they may seek Your Name, O YHWH. Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever; yes, let them be humiliated and perish, that they may know that You, whose Name is YHWH - You alone are the Most High over all the earth.” (Psalm 83:1-8, 16-18)

HAMAS, IRAN AND THE NEW MIDDLE EAST CRISES

ARTICLE 2

IRAN'S NUCLEAR CRISIS



IT'S 3 MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT (again) !

IRAN'S decision on 10th January to resume uranium conversion led Britain, France and Germany to break off the talks that were meant to persuade Iran to scrap its program related to uranium enrichment.

The dispute with Iran arose in 2003, when the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) reported that Iran had a hidden uranium enrichment programme for 18 years.

Tehran's clandestine nuclear program, along with the recent extremist statements of Iran's new president, Ahmadinejad, has brought Iran to the brink of a nuclear confrontation with Europe, the US, and Israel.

The Sunday Times wrote in December, "The world is looking into the abyss, thanks to a man with a PhD in traffic management. Ahmadinejad's fiery rhetoric about wiping out Israel, denial of the Holocaust, and asserting Iran's right to nuclear energy – a potential cloak for developing nuclear weapons – has triggered global alarm bells." If only he had stuck to his chosen profession as a traffic engineer!

The Sunday Times concluded its alarming article with these words: "We have been here before. History would have been different if Hitler had stuck to painting and Pol Pot to teaching.

Once again, it's three minutes to midnight."

'THE WORLD WITHOUT ZIONISM' (and without the US)



THE newly-elected Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, addressed a "World Without Zionism" conference in Tehran on Oct 26, 05, calling for Israel to be wiped off the face of the earth. That aspect of his speech got a wide coverage by the international media, but a key element of the address was overlooked or ignored.

It was the anti-American substance of Ahmadinejad's speech. It wasn't just a world without Zionism and Israel that Ahmadinejad was envisioning. It was a world without the United States of America.

Ahmadinejad asked, "Is it possible for us to witness a world without America and Zionism? But you had best know that this slogan and this goal are attainable, and surely can be

achieved.”

What is he talking about?

According to WorldNetDaily (Jan 21, 06), Iran has developed a strategic “war preparation plan” for what it calls the “destruction of Anglo-Saxon civilization.”

“LET EUROPE TAKE THE JEWS BACK”

IN AN attack on the existence of Israel, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad challenged Europe to take back the Jews who emigrated to Israel. His comments were made during a 2-day visit to Syria in January.

Ahmadinejad said Europe should welcome Jewish people to prove its sincerity in supporting people’s freedoms. He added he was confident that no Jews would remain in Israel if European countries allowed them to immigrate. Ahmadinejad provoked an international outcry last year when he said Israel should be “wiped out,” and that the Nazi Holocaust against Jews in World War II was a “myth.”

AWAITING THE IMAM MAHDI AND THE COMING APOCALYPSE

IRAN’S president is a devout Shi’ite Muslim; he is also a Mahdaviat - “one who believes in and prepares for the Imam Mahdi.” The Mahdi, also known as the “Twelfth Imam,” is the Shi’ite messiah: “the restorer of religion and justice who will rule before the end of the world.”

During his speech to the UN General Assembly last Sept, President Ahmadinejad prayed for God to “hasten the emergence of . . . the Promised One . . . that will fill this world with justice and peace.”

A string of similar statements and actions suggest Ahmadinejad believes that he himself is destined to bring about the “End Times” - the end of the world - by paving the way for the return of the Imam Mahdi.

In a Nov 16 speech in Tehran to senior clerics who had come from all over Iran to hear him, the new President said the main mission of his Government was to “pave the path for the glorious reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance).”

The mystical 12th Imam of Shia Islam disappeared as a child in 941 AD, and Shia Muslims have awaited his reappearance ever since, believing that when he returns, he will reign on earth for seven years, before bringing about the Last Judgment and the end of the world.

In order to prepare for the Mahdi, Ahmadinejad said, “Iran should turn into a mighty, advanced, and model Islamic society.” Iranians should “refrain from leaning toward any Western school of thought” and abstain from “luxurious lives” and other excesses.

Ahmadinejad also says: “The skirmishes in the occupied land are part of a war of destiny. The outcome of hundreds of years of war will be defined in Palestinian land. As the Imam said, Israel must be wiped off the map.”

“IRAN INTENDS TO NUKE ISRAEL”

PRESIDENT Bush has warned that Iran is seeking to produce nuclear weapons and intends to use them to destroy Israel.

Speaking at a joint press conference in Washington, DC with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Bush warned: “I want to remind you that the current president of Iran has announced that the destruction of Israel is an important part of their agenda. And that’s unacceptable. And the development of a nuclear weapon, it seems like to me, would make them a step closer to achieving that objective.”

The president said that Iran’s nuclear ambitions pose a threat, not just to the Jewish state, but to the world.

“Iran armed with a nuclear weapon poses a great threat to the security of the world. Countries such as ours have a great obligation to step up, working together to send a message to the Iranians that their behavior, trying to clandestinely develop a nuclear weapon, or using the guise of a civilian nuclear program to attain a nuclear weapon, is unacceptable.”

For her part Chancellor Merkel added, “To Germany, it is totally unacceptable, what Iran said recently, especially regarding Israel and the Holocaust.”

In December, Ahmadinejad said that historical coverage of the Holocaust had been “exaggerated.” In October he urged that Israel be “wiped off the map.”

IRAN'S NUCLEAR STANDOFF

Sep 2002: Work begins on Iran's first reactor at Bushehr

Dec 2002: Satellites reveal Arak and Natanz sites, triggering IAEA inspections

Nov 2003: Iran suspends uranium enrichment and allows tougher inspections

Jun 2004: IAEA rebukes Iran for not fully co-operating

Nov 2004: Iran suspends enrichment under deal with EU

Aug 2005: Iran rejects EU plan and re-opens Isfahan plant

Jan 2006: Iran re-opens Natanz facility

Jan 2006: IAEA votes and reports Iran to UN Security Council

“BUSH WON'T TOLERATE NUCLEAR IRAN”

JAN 23, 06. “President George W. Bush will not accept a nuclear Iran,” says John Bolton, the US ambassador to the United Nations.

According to Bolton, Bush worries that a nuclear-equipped Iran under its current leadership could well engage in a nuclear holocaust, “and that is just not something he is going to accept.” Bush was determined to pursue the issue through peaceful and diplomatic means, “but has made clear that a nuclear Iran is not acceptable.”

Bolton said that referring the issue to the Security Council was a form of pressure on Iran to convince them to make the same strategic decision Libya made in 2004 - that their national interests would be better served, and they would be safer in giving up nuclear weapons, rather than continuing the pursuit of them.

UN WARNING TO IRAN TO BACK OFF

JAN 9, 06. Each of the 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council has told Iran to drop plans for new nuclear activities or risk being hauled before the powerful body for possible sanctions. All the 5 nations – US, UK, France, Russia and China are nuclear powers themselves, and individually they could veto any punishment the body might try to impose on Iran.

IRAN REMOVES SEALS ON NUCLEAR PLANTS

JAN 10, 06. In a defiant move, Iran removed the seals on its nuclear facilities, announcing it would restart experiments, including what it described as small-scale enrichment, despite

warnings from the US and other countries concerned about its nuclear ambitions.

Iran has rejected accusations that it was seeking to develop atomic bombs, saying its nuclear program is geared merely toward generating electricity.

Uranium enriched to low levels is used to produce nuclear fuel for use in reactors producing electricity but further enrichment makes it suitable for use in building nuclear bombs.

The US rebuked Iran for the move, calling it a step toward creating the material for nuclear bombs. The United States is among nations that have called on Tehran to cease nuclear activities until an agreement has been reached on the scope of its nuclear program.

Iran announced plans last week to resume research on the production of nuclear fuel at its Natanz facility, heightening concerns that Tehran was moving toward building atomic weapons.

Mohammad Saeedi, the deputy head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, said that Iran was not resuming the production of nuclear fuel, a process that would involve uranium enrichment. "What we resume is merely in the field of research, not more than that. We make a difference between research on nuclear fuel technology and production of nuclear fuel. Production of nuclear fuel remains suspended."

Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency affixed the seals more than two years ago, after Iran agreed to the measure in an effort to dampen suspicions about its nuclear ambitions.

CONFRONTATION OVER COOPERATION

In Vienna, the chief US representative to the IAEA, Gregory L. Schulte, said that by cutting the seals, Iran had shown "its disdain for international concerns and its rejection of international diplomacy. The regime continues to choose confrontation over cooperation, a choice that deepens the isolation of Iran and harms the interests of the Iranian people," he said.

Russia, Iran's ally, also expressed concern about Tehran's intention to renew uranium enrichment activities and called

on Iran to maintain its moratorium on enrichment pending negotiations.

Russia confirmed to Iranian officials that Moscow's offer to jointly enrich Iranian uranium on Russian territory still stands. Iran initially insisted it would not agree to moving enrichment abroad.

INTERNATIONAL ALARM

JAN 10, 06. French President Jacques Chirac said it would be a "grave error" for Iran and North Korea to ignore the international community's repeated warnings and press forward with contested nuclear programs. The world must ensure that agreements on nuclear proliferation are not trampled on," he said.

"Everyone recognizes that Iran or North Korea have a right to peacefully use nuclear energy," Chirac said. "But it is imperative for the international community to ensure that the commitments reached for everyone's security are respected."

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said Iran had crossed the line, and was sending "very, very disastrous signals" on its nuclear program, and indicated that the country's latest moves would have consequences for Tehran's talks with European negotiators.

The United States has threatened to bring Iran before the UN Security Council for possible sanctions if it doesn't cooperate with international mediators.

JAN 19, 06. President Chirac said in a surprising comment that leaders of states who would "use terrorist means against us, just like anyone who would envisage using, in one way or another, arms of mass destruction, must understand that they would expose themselves to a firm and adapted response from us. This response could be conventional. It could also be of another nature," Chirac said in the speech given at a nuclear submarine base in western France.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, speaking at a news conference with President Jacques Chirac, defended the French leader's threat that France might use its nuclear weapons against state-sponsored terrorism or to thwart an attack involving weapons of mass destruction - comments that drew criticism from elsewhere in Europe and from Iran.

HISTORY OF BROKEN PROMISES

TWO years ago, UN nuclear watchdogs affixed seals to the equipment for making centrifuges for the enrichment of uranium at the subterranean Natanz facility in Iran.

(A centrifuge is a machine with a part that spins around to separate substances; for example liquids from solids, by forcing the heavier substance to the outer edge. Centrifuges are used in the production of nuclear fuel.)

Depending on the level of enrichment, the uranium enrichment process results in either nuclear fuel or weapons grade uranium for nuclear warheads.

A Debkafile report (10 Jan 06) says that during these two years, “Tehran has broken one pledge after another and defied every international rebuke, as diplomacy led by the “EU-3” - France, Britain and Germany, alternated with unfulfilled threats of UN sanctions, and granted Iran precious time to forge ahead with its atomic weapons program.

Tehran cannily prepared the way for its fateful step at Natanz, by calling it the resumption of the innocent-sounding ‘nuclear research’.”

According to DEBKAFfile’s Iranian sources, the Iranians have used the time afforded them by sterile diplomacy to manipulate their way to their objectives.

Thousands of centrifuges have been developed under cover of the two-year purported suspension, and these can go into action free of international curbs. The IAEA statement said uranium hexafluoride, a uranium gas - can be fed into cascades of centrifuges to produce low-level nuclear fuel or weapons-grade material. This can happen within a week or two. And intelligence sources say that within two months, the centrifuges will have produced enough enriched uranium to build a single nuclear weapon. Tehran has thus reached a point of no-return - with no real opposition.

Iran’s Islamic rulers are evidently not too concerned about the threats of sanctions from the EU-3, the IAEA, the Americans or the UN. They are fairly sure Moscow and Beijing will veto any Security Council sanction. The Russians are motivated by their heavy investments, past and potential, in Iran’s nuclear industry. The Chinese are heavily dependent on Iranian gas and keen to expand their stake in Tehran’s oil industry, partly

in order to compete with the Russians.

None of this is new; Iran's attempts to hide its nuclear bomb program go back more than a decade. Therefore, recurring threats to submit Iran to UN sanctions have always been hollow ones and never had the slightest deterrent effect on Tehran.

EMP ATTACK ON U.S. POSSIBLE

WorldNetDaily has reported that in Washington, there is concern that Iran's ultimate target is the US.

In January, Iran's Revolutionary Guards conducted a conference on the use of weapons of mass destruction – nuclear, chemical and biological. Included in those briefings were presentations on electro-magnetic pulse weapons (EMP), and other military technologies deemed to be under development for use against the US, rather than Israel or other enemies of the Islamic republic.

Even one nuclear weapon, used in an EMP attack on the US, would prove catastrophic to the nation, a congressional panel studying the vulnerability of America to electro-magnetic pulse weapons concluded last year.

Such an attack would not require Iran to use long-range or intercontinental ballistic missiles, which it does not possess. But a simple Scud missile, with a nuclear warhead, could be fired from offshore and detonated above the US wreaking near total devastation on the country's technological, electrical and transportation infrastructure.

It would also have the advantage of offering Iran a degree of plausible deniability, given that "terrorists" armed with one nuclear weapon could achieve the same results.

NO POINT IN MORE NEGOTIATIONS

Britain, France and Germany, with US backing, have been trying to persuade Iran to import nuclear fuel instead of having its own uranium enrichment program, but Iran has rejected this.

JAN 18, 06. France, with the support of the US, rejected Iran's request for more negotiations on the Islamic republic's nuclear program.

At the same time, President Ahmadinejad accused the West of trying to deprive Iran of peaceful technology. “We are asking that they step down from their ivory towers and act with a little logic,” he said. “Who are you to deprive us from fulfilling our goals? You think you are “the Lord of the world” and everybody should follow you. But that idea is a wrong idea.”

Tehran’s defiant tone came as France and the EU, with US backing, rejected Iran’s request for a resumption of negotiations, saying Tehran must first suspend its nuclear-related activities.

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki told state radio: “During the past 10 days we have tried to relay our message to all relevant parties, including the Europeans, about Iran’s readiness to negotiate on the production of nuclear fuel.” Mottaki said he hoped European countries would avoid taking steps that could only worsen the current situation - an apparent reference to US and European talk of sanctions.

“THE BIG FIVE” AGREE ON REFERRAL

IN mid-January, the Europeans began drafting a resolution calling for the 15-nation Security Council to press Tehran to re-impose its freeze on enrichment and fully cooperate with the UN agency in its investigation of suspect nuclear activities though it stops short of asking for sanctions.

Ahmadinejad shrugged off the draft resolution, calling it politically motivated and said he was unconcerned by the attempts to refer Iran to the council. “There isn’t any problem. This is their endeavor. We can’t stop others from trying,” he told reporters.

On Jan 30, envoys of the Big Five - US, UK, China, France and Russia - met in London and agreed to recommend that the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) focus on Iran’s potential nuclear threat and report the matter to the UN Security Council.

However, the Five recommended that the Security Council take no action until March - after it receives a report on Tehran’s activities from the IAEA.

The decision by Russia and China to vote for referral surprised observers as the two nations have consistently counselled caution on Iran’s nuclear file. Both have major economic ties with Iran. A French official said the Russian

and Chinese ministers had been persuaded of the need to show a united front.

IAEA REFERS IRAN TO UN SECURITY COUNCIL

The IAEA's board held an emergency meeting 2/4 Feb in Vienna, and 27 out of 35 countries voted in favour of reporting the Iranian issue to the Security Council.

IRAN THREATENS TO BEGIN FULL-SCALE ENRICHMENT

IRAN struck back at the Big Five's decision to ask the IAEA to refer the country's nuclear file to the Security Council, saying the move has no legal justification, and would be the end of diplomacy.

IRAN warned that if the IAEA board does vote to refer it to the UN Security Council, Iran will immediately begin developing a full-scale uranium enrichment program.

Iran's parliament has already approved a law requiring the government to stop all voluntary cooperation with IAEA in the event of referral. This would mean that Iran will stop allowing IAEA inspectors to carry out intrusive searches of its facilities, and the country will resume large-scale enrichment of uranium.

Iran insists it has the right as a signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to build nuclear power stations and produce their fuel by enriching its own uranium.

But the US and the EU do not believe Iran would enrich uranium only for peaceful purposes because the country has concealed significant aspects of its nuclear program in the past.

A three-year IAEA probe has not found firm evidence to back assertions by the US and others that Iran's nuclear activities are a cover for an arms program, but has not been able to dismiss such suspicions either.

A COMPROMISE PLAN PROPOSAL TO ENRICH IRAN'S URANIUM IN RUSSIA

IN late January, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, met Russia's security chief, Igor Ivanov, and other officials in Moscow, to discuss Russia's proposal that Iran conduct its uranium enrichment inside Russian territory. The enriched uranium would be returned to Iran for use in the country's

reactors.

The proposal is seen as a compromise that would ease controversy over Iran's nuclear programme as it would provide more oversight, and would ease tensions and limit Iran's ability to covertly produce fissile material for possible use in a nuclear weapon.

Few details have been released about the Russian proposals, but Iran is thought to be keen that its own scientists should be involved in enrichment. Russia, mean-while, has previously said any spent nuclear fuel must be returned to Russia for reprocessing.

Mr Larijani told reporters, "We are assessing this proposal positively, and are trying to bring the position of the sides closer." But he warned that Iran would begin enriching uranium on its own territory if Western countries referred it to the UN Security Council for sanctions.

The statement came a week before the UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), was scheduled to meet to discuss whether to refer Iran to the Security Council for possible sanctions.

CHINA BACKS COMPROMISE NUCLEAR PLAN

JAN 26, 06. China says the plan to enrich uranium in Russia for use in Iran could help break a global stale-mate over Tehran's nuclear aims. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Kong Quan said the threat of "arbitrary sanctions" complicates negotiations with Iran. China believes the dispute can still be solved by diplomatic means. (Iran is a major supplier of oil to China's fuel-hungry economy.

Mr Larijani said China and Iran held "similar views" on the nuclear issue. "We agreed members of the Non-Proliferation Treaty have [the] right to peaceful nuclear energy," he told reporters.

BUSH ENDORSES RUSSIAN PLAN

JAN 27, 06. President Bush has declared his full support for the Russian proposal to allow Iran to operate civilian nuclear facilities, as long as Russia and international nuclear inspectors are in full control of the fuel.

Mr. Bush's public endorsement puts all of the major powers

on record as supporting the proposal, even as most acknowledge that it is a significant concession to Iran, and runs the risk that the country will drag out the negotiations while continuing to produce nuclear material. Yet officials say it is the best face-saving strategy to pursue a negotiated settlement with Iran.

European and American officials familiar with the details of the offer that Russia made to Iran say that Iran would continue to be allowed to operate its nuclear plant at Isfahan, which converts raw uranium into a form that is ready to be enriched. That is a step that both Europe and the US said last year they could not allow - and it was explicitly barred under the agreement between Iran and Europe in late 2004, because Iran could divert the uranium to secret enrichment facilities. Iran began operating the Isfahan plant again in August.

Critics of that concession say that it could send a signal to Iran that it no longer has to comply with all provisions of its November 2004 agreement with Europe.

Huge questions remain, including the scale of the program, the degree of involvement of Iranian engineers and program's commercial viability. More-over, just working out a deal this complex would take months or longer, experts say, at a time the administration fears the Iranians could surge ahead.

On Feb 1, a new revelation hit the headlines ...

IRAN HAS DOCUMENTS ON HOW TO MAKE ATOMIC WARHEADS

FEB 1, 06. The UN nuclear watchdog agency, IAEA, says in a report to be tabled at an emergency meeting of its 35-member board tomorrow, that Iran obtained documents and drawings on the black market that serve no other purpose than to make an atomic warhead.

The report says bluntly that the 15 pages of text and drawings showing how to cast fissile uranium into metal were "related to the fabrication of nuclear weapon components."

The IAEA said the documents in question were given to Iran by members of a nuclear black market network. Iran has claimed it did not ask for the documents but received them anyway as part of other black market purchases.

The findings added to the pressure to refer Tehran to the Security Council within days. Such a referral, Iran said, will

lead to a halt in surprise UN inspections and will prompt it to resume frozen nuclear activities.

“If it happens, the government will be required under the law to end the suspension of all nuclear activities it has voluntarily halted,” the Iranian Foreign Minister said on Iranian television.

Speaking to a crowd of thousands Iran today, President Ahmadinejad again vowed to resist Western pressures to constrain his country’s nuclear program. “Nuclear energy is our right, and we will resist until this right is fully realized,” he said.

The IAEA report also criticized Iran for refusing to provide interviews with at least one nuclear scientist linked to the military, and for dismissing requests for information on “tests related to high explosives and the design of a missile re-entry vehicle, all of which could have a military nuclear dimension.”

NEXT STEPS

16 Feb, Moscow: Russia and Iran resume talks on Russia’s proposed compromise

March, Vienna: IAEA to report on Iranian compliance; possible Security Council action to follow.

IRAN COULD ACHIEVE NUCLEAR CAPABILITY IN 2006

IRAN has acquired sufficient technology and equipment to produce nuclear weapons, according to a report published by the US Army War College, and financed by the Defence Department. It asserted that Iran has virtually completed the nuclear fuel cycle and was ready to assemble weapons.

The report, entitled “Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran,” said Iran could reach nuclear weapons capability as early as 2006. “The truth is that Iran can and will soon get a bomb option. All Iranian engineers need is a bit more time: 1 to 4 years at most.” - Middle East Newswire

IRAN HOLDS HUGE MILITARY EXERCISE

IN December 2005 Iran completed a huge military exercise that tested Tehran’s ability to attack Western shipping and Arab oil facilities in the Persian Gulf. Sources said it was Iran’s largest military exercise in years. The exercise which

included a range of fighter-jets, helicopters, surface vessels and submarines was intended to show the West that Iran could stop all oil shipments in the Gulf and destroy numerous oil facilities in Gulf Arab countries.”

IRAN IS USING OIL AND THE EURO TO UNDERMINE U.S.

Last July the Iranian government quietly reaffirmed plans to create a euro-denominated exchange in oil, natural gas and other petroleum products.

If the billions of dollars in oil sales ever got going in euros, experts say, that could dry up the demand for dollars that the heavily indebted US economy depends on, and it could mean big trouble for the US economy.

IRAN'S OIL DEAL WITH CHINA AND INDIA

Iran has approved huge energy deals with both India and China, deals that not only cement Iran as an energy power, but also could create powerful friends for Tehran's ambitions.

Iran signed an agreement last year to provide India with liquefied natural gas over a 25-year period, and signed a similar agreement to supply China with natural gas over a 30-year period. Both countries are in a deal to invest in and develop Iran's Yadaravan oil field.

IRAN SEEKS INTELLIGENCE ON ISRAEL

Israeli officials say Iran has sought intelligence to determine military and strategic targets for any missile strike on the Jewish state. Iran has tried to recruit Israelis and foreigners to provide information on military bases and strategic sites in Israel.

The officials said the Tehran regime has also sought to penetrate the Israeli leadership to learn whether the military was planning to attack Iran's nuclear facilities.

“Over the last 18 months, Iran has been aggressively recruiting all kinds of people to obtain any sort of military and political information on Israel,” an official said. - Middle East Newsline / 10 Jan 06

IRAN ISSUES STARK WARNING ON OIL PRICE

JAN 16, 06. Iran stepped up its defiance of international

pressure over its nuclear programme by warning of soaring oil prices if it is subjected to economic sanctions.

Iran's economy minister, Davoud Danesh-Jafari, said the country's position as the world's fourth-largest oil producer meant such action would have grave consequences.

IRAN'S THREAT TO SEAL PERSIAN GULF TO HALT FLOW OF OIL

JAN 23, 06. A senior Iranian official warned that Tehran may forcibly prevent oil export via the Straits of Hormuz if the UN imposed economic sanctions on Iran.

Mohammed-Nabi Rudaki, deputy chairman of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, said that "if Europe does not act wisely with the Iranian nuclear portfolio, and if it is referred to the UN Security Council, and economic or air travel restrictions are imposed unjustly, we have the power to halt oil supply to the last drop from the shores of the Persian Gulf via the Straits of Hormuz."

25% of the world's oil production passes through the Straits of Hormuz, which connect the Persian Gulf with the Indian Ocean.

The meaning of Rudaki's threat is that not only will Tehran stop its oil production from reaching the West; it may also use force to prevent the other oil producers in the region (the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait) from exporting to the West.

Raduki also warned that his country might quit from its membership in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

IRAN SEEKS OPEC OIL PRODUCTION DROP

JAN 23, 06. Iran has pressed OPEC to reduce oil production by one million barrels per day, to avoid excessive oil stockpile."

Production is presently set at 28 million barrels per day.

AHMADINEJAD MEETS SYRIA'S BASHAR ASSAD



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bashar al-Assad

JAN 19, 06. President Ahmadinejad began a visit to Syria, to meet President Bashar Assad, and to consolidate an old alliance made increasingly crucial, as both countries face mounting US pressure and the threat of international sanctions.

Both men face confrontations with the United Nations Security Council. Ahmadinejad, because of Iran's standoff with the West over its nuclear program and the threat to refer it to the UN Security Council. Assad, because his regime is under intense scrutiny after a UN report implicated senior figures in the assassination last year of the former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri.

Syria is Iran's closest Arab ally. The two countries have had close relations since 1980 when Arab Syria sided with Persian Iran against Iraq, a fellow Arab nation, in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq border war.

In addition to discussing how to stave off the mounting international pressure, the two were also expected to discuss bilateral economic, industrial and cultural agreements during the two-day visit.

Both countries share to a certain extent, similar foreign policy objectives: opposition to what they describe as US attempts to dominate the Middle East, hostility toward Israel, and support for Palestinian and Lebanese terrorist groups.

SYRIA BACKS A NUCLEAR IRAN

SYRIA backed Iran in its nuclear confrontation with the West as their leaders met in Damascus in a defiant show of solidarity.

The Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, welcomed Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and said the Iranian leader had the right to acquire nuclear technology for peace-ful purposes. In turn, Mr Ahmadinejad asserted his host's right to freedom from foreign interference.

The meeting came as Ahmadinejad's government warned the West that the world would face an oil crisis if Iran was referred to the Security Council and sanctions followed. "One of the consequences will be the unleashing of an oil crisis and particularly a price hike," said Davoud Danesh-Jafari, the oil minister.

IRAN MOVING ITS FOREIGN CURRENCY RESERVES

JAN 20, 06. Iran has begun moving its foreign currency reserves out of European banks as a pre-emptive measure against any possible UN sanctions over its nuclear program. The UN Security Council has the power to impose economic and political sanctions.

Ebrahim Sheibani, the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran told reporters: "We begun transferring the foreign exchange reserves to wherever we deem fit." He would not say how much money was involved or to where it was being sent.

The move suggests Iran has taken the issue of possible UN sanctions seriously. However, it has insisted that it won't give up its right under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty to enrich uranium and produce nuclear fuel.

PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK ALMOST INEVITABLE

ISRAELI sources have assured the WorldNetDaily that a pre-emptive US and Israeli military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities is almost inevitable.

The incapacitation of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has made a pre-emptive attack on Iran more likely in the next two months. It was Sharon who vetoed the nearly unanimous recommendations of Israel's generals that a quick strike was the Jewish state's only chance at preventing Iran from building a significant nuclear arsenal.

JAN 19, 06. Former Shin Bet chief Avi Dichter, who is considered a top choice for a future defense minister, said that Israel should let the international community act to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons but, if pushed

to the wall, it should act against Iran.

He told Army Radio that Israel was currently satisfied with the international community's efforts to stop Iran from enriching uranium but must act if it faces the real danger of Iran possessing nuclear weapons. "I don't think it is correct for Israel to act alone on a matter that really disturbs and engages the enlightened countries of the world, led by the US. If we feel that we are facing an imminent threat, Israel has the real insights and a bit of experience on how to deal with such matters a moment before someone tries to destroy us."

ISRAEL HAS IDENTIFIED 60 TARGETS IN IRAN

IN January, Kenneth Timmerman, a US specialist on Middle East affairs, and author of a new book, "Countdown to Crisis," was interviewed on Israel National Radio. He said Israel has identified 60 sites that need to be targeted to destroy Iran's nuclear weapons program.

Timmerman said any military strike on Iran would be much more difficult than the Israeli destruction of Iraq's nuclear weapons program in 1981. Israel Air Force F-16s destroyed the Osirak nuclear reactor outside of Baghdad.

Israel has the ability to destroy Iran's nuclear weapons program, he said, and Israel's Air Force is practicing to destroy Iranian nuclear assets in a single sweeping strike.

Timmerman said Israel has formed a leadership team that has focused on the destruction of Iran's nuclear weapons program. He pointed out that the new head of military intelligence, Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, was the lead air force pilot in the operation against Osirak. "I don't think that was a coincidence," he said. "You have a team in place that has tremendous experience, knows what they're doing and has cool nerves."

Under international pressure, Iran could spark a crisis by withholding oil exports. "I'm sure Iran will activate all of its minions," Timmerman said. "We're looking for \$100 per barrel of oil before the crisis begins."

WORLD TRIBUNE.COM commented: "Israel has not confirmed Timmerman's assertions. But former senior officials and parliamentarians stress that Israel must prepare for a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, preferably in cooperation with the United States.

Former Israel Air Force commander Maj. Gen. Eitan Ben Eliahu said, "We must make practical preparations in that maybe we will be asked to operate as part of a coalition."

"Numerous Iranian sites must be targeted in any effort to destroy that nation's nuclear program," Ben Eliahu said, but he appeared to doubt the ability of Israel to carry out such a mission alone. "If this operation is to be conducted, it must be done in continuing waves [of air strikes]. Therefore, we are talking of an international effort."

"WE'LL PUT ISRAEL INTO AN 'ETERNAL COMA' LIKE SHARON"

IF ISRAEL attacks Iran's nuclear facilities, Iran will respond so strongly that it will put the Jewish state into "an eternal coma" like Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's, Iran's defense minister, Gen. Mostafa Mohammad Najjar said. "Zionists should know that if they do anything evil against Iran, the response of Iran's armed forces will be so firm that it will send them into an eternal coma, like Sharon."

(Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has been in a coma since he suffered a massive stroke in early Jan. His deputy, Ehud Olmert became the Acting Prime Minister, and will contest the Israel elections on March 28 as leader of the new Kadima party.)

Najjar said the United States and Israel have been trying to frighten Iran, but neither country would dare to attack Iran.

THREATS OF RETALIATION

FEB 2, 06. As well as recommencing uranium en-richment, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani made a veiled threat to retaliate in the Middle East against the interests of those countries taking action against Iran. "If these countries use all their means ... to put pressure on Iran, Iran will use its capacity in the region," he said.

This was interpreted to mean that Iran could mobilize its militant allies, particularly the Shia Muslim militias in Iraq and Lebanon and militant Islamic groups in the Palestinian territories, to take action against the West.

PRESSING FOR COMPROMISE

JAN 31. Russian and Chinese diplomats will head to Tehran

shortly to explain the meaning of the 'Big 5' agreement, and to urge Iran to meet IAEA demands.

Moscow is trying to prevent the IAEA referral to the Security Council from scuttling negotiations it hopes will persuade Iran to accept a compromise proposal, moving any Iranian uranium enrichment to Russia to eliminate misuse for a nuclear program.

THE COMING HOLOCAUST ?

IT WOULD be comforting if we could say, "Oh, they will avert another war!" But there is a lot of "writing on the wall"; and there are many Bible prophecies that proclaim, a "Second Holocaust" is scheduled.

An attack on Iran this year is quite possible. But if Iran runs with the Russian compromise plan, the tension may cool down - for some time. And if it does, we can expect Iran to continue with its clandestine nuclear program. But the evil day will be postponed for some time.

In the meantime, the Iran-Syria-Hizbollah-Hamas-alQaida axis will continue to keep the Middle East stewing pot simmering - until the Antichrist arrives.

That evil man will forge a peace treaty which will last a short time - probably a few months. The treaty will break down, and then the big showdown - the Battle of Jerusalem.

By that time the nations will be rapidly realigning - taking their place in one of four alliances of which the Bible foretells:

1. The Northern Confederation led by Russia. Allies including will be Germany, Iran, Turkey and the Turkic republics of central Asia.
2. A Southern Alliance led by Egypt, including a number of Arab and African nations.
3. An Eastern Alliance - "the Kings of the East" led by China and Japan. It will include a number of Asian nations.
4. The 10-nation Western "Roman" Confederation, led by the Antichrist who arises out of the geographical area of the old Greek-Roman world - Europe.

All nations will be allied with one or the other of these groupings as the nations prepare for world war. God says:

“Look! I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the people around. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. And on that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem a very heavy rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will be severely injured.”

“For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to fight against it, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into captivity, but the rest of the people will not be exiled from the city. Then YHWH will go out and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle.” (Zechariah 12:2-3. 14:2-3)

“Watch! For in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat on the east side of Jerusalem. There I will enter into judgment against them.” (Joel 3:1-2)

My reader, can you see the stage being set for this great climax of the age – the worldwide Holocaust that will be much, much bigger than World War 2?

“Then another horse, a fiery red one, went forth. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and cause men to slay one another. A huge sword was given to him.”

“I looked and saw a pale, ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name “Death”; and Hades (the realm of the dead) was following close behind him. And authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with famine, with plague and pestilence, and by the wild beasts of the earth.” (Revelation 6:4, 8)

Readers, as many of you know, MRC has been warning of this Great Tribulation – “the Day the world burns like a furnace,” for the last forty years. And you know that 7-year holocaust is scheduled.

IT WILL COME, SAYS THE LORD!

“For I am YHWH who speaks, and whatever word I speak will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, for in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, declares the Sovereign Master, YHWH.

“Again the word of YHWH came to me, saying, ‘Son of man,

listen, the house of Israel is saying, “The vision that he sees is for many years from now, and he prophesies of times far off.”

“Therefore say to them, “Thus says the Sovereign Master, YHWH, ‘None of My words will be delayed any longer. Whatever word I speak will be performed’,” declares Sovereign Master, YHWH.” (Ezekiel 12:25-28)

“The wicked will be turned into Sheol - into Hell, all the nations that forget God.” (Psalm 9:17)

But God says: “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.” [Ex 33:19] (Romans 9:15)

“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge and condemn the world; but so that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not condemned; he who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the Name of the only begotten, the one-and-only unique, eternal Son of God.” (John 3:17-18)

“Believe in the Heavenly Master, Y’shua the Messiah and you will be saved; (and this applies both to) you and your household as well.” (Acts 16:31)

If you do not know the Lord Jesus (Y’shua) as your personal Saviour, just pray to Him right now, and ask Him to forgive your sins, and to save you.

Yield your life to God, and simply trust Him for His grace to save you, to teach you, to keep you, and to help you to grow in your spiritual life.

God bless you,

Don Stanton