

Israel's Airstrike on Khartoum: Part of a Broader US-NATO-Israel Military Agenda

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The recent attack on a weapons production plant in Ash Shajara area of Sudan's capital city, Khartoum, on October 24, can have many reasons. However, irrespective of those reasons, this attack cannot be analyzed separate from the large-scale and main strategy of the United States and Israel in the Middle East and North Africa. This means that the aforesaid operation has been certainly part of the big puzzle of the United States' and Israel's strategy in these regions. Meanwhile, any analysis of the attack should first focus on the conditions under which the airstrike has taken place because those conditions will show us whether it has been a unique operation or not?

1. The Israeli airstrike against Sudan followed an earlier operation by the Lebanese Hezbollah in which an Iran-made unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) penetrated deep inside Israel. Many reports have been published on that operation, but the gist of all of them is that the operation greatly scared the inhabitants of Israel. On the one hand, it was a deterrent operation which aimed to change Israel's calculations with regard to launching any possible attack in the Middle East region, and also posed a serious challenge to rumors about Israel's attack on Iran. Therefore, the Israeli leaders needed to not only boost the morale and spirit of their people, but had to do the same for their military commanders as well. As a result, they had to launch an operation which would prove the upper hand of the Israeli forces both in military terms and in terms of intelligence and espionage in order to boost their people's morale. The attack on weapons production facility in Sudan could be analyzed from this viewpoint.

2. There is also another large-scale aspect to this attack. Following the recent developments in the Middle East and in the light of the Arab Spring and the Islamic Awakening, Israel actually intended to test regional countries and reassess its regional standing in view of the aforesaid developments. This means that by conducting such a military operation, which amounted to a blatant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and also by carrying out the operation against an Arab and Islamic country, Israel intended to know what changes have been made to decision-making systems of these countries in the wake of the Arab Spring and what possible reactions these countries may show to Israel's military operation. Unfortunately, the Arab League only showed a very feeble reaction by issuing a simple statement and this issue may embolden the Israeli regime to continue such attacks.

3. To carry out the operation, Israel needed to cross the Saudi Arabian airspace or that of Egypt. Have those countries been informed in advance? Had Saudi Arabia been especially

pre-warned of the attack in view of the policy that Riyadh has been following in the Persian Gulf region and the entire Middle East? In both cases, Saudi Arabia's responsibility will not be reduced. If the attack had been carried out in coordination with Saudi Arabia, it can be considered a really catastrophic development for the Arab world and the entire Islamic world as well. If it had taken place without Saudi Arabia knowing anything about it, then it would follow that the American military advisors who are in charge of management and training of very advanced military equipment in Saudi Arabia do not provide such information to Saudi Arabian government. In fact, Saudi Arabia's hands are totally closed for dealing with such issues as its government does not know what is going on within its borders. In both cases, Saudi Arabia should be held to account for this incident. On the other hand, the weak statement that the Arab League has issued, which has been naturally under the influence of Saudi Arabia, clearly proves that Saudi Arabia is not willing to come under pressure for this issue. Either Riyadh wants to prevent the attack from emerging as an acute issue in the Arab world, or it is not willing to support Sudan as an Islamic country which is also part of the resistance front in the Middle East and North Africa.

4. As everybody knows, the United States and Israel have started joint military drills since last week. The drills are, per se, unprecedented in the history of Tel Aviv's relations with Washington. A total of 1,000 American troops have already arrived in Israel while another 1,000 Israeli troops are also taking part in the maneuvers. According to some reports, 2,500 American forces have been also posted in various parts of the Mediterranean region and elsewhere in Europe. The main goal of the maneuvers is to test the readiness of Israel's missile defense system. Therefore, the operation inside Sudan has been carried out simultaneous with the joint military drills by the United States and Israel.

5. This operation has been carried out after certain developments in the besieged Gaza Strip. Israel restarted its aerial attacks on Gaza last week after which Tel Aviv accepted a cease-fire mediated by the government of Egypt. A few days later, Egypt sent its new ambassador to Israel who presented his credentials to the Israeli President Shimon Peres along with a letter from the Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi which conveyed a half poetical, half reconciliatory message. These conditions have been certainly influential in emboldening Israel to carry out the attack.

6. This operation has greatly reduced defensive abilities of Sudan at a time that the government in Khartoum needs all its ammunitions and defensive capacity to repel possible attacks from South Sudan. The country's defense capacities have been attacked on such baseless grounds as the plant belongs to the Islamic Republic of Iran's armed forces, or under other ridiculous pretexts including that Sudan has been possibly using the demolished facility to build a nuclear bomb. However, the main goal was nothing but to undermine and weaken Sudan's defense capacities.

7. Israel has embarked on a limited military operation in order to make up for the humiliation it suffered due to Hezbollah drone operation and at a time that despite intense rhetoric about attacking Iran, it lacks the practical ability to do so. In this way, Israel will be able to claim that it has dealt a blow to the Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas as well as Iran. The operation, however, was in fact a compensation for the humiliation that has greatly undermined military and security prestige of Israel.

8. By attacking Sudan, Israel wants to show that it is aware of every political and military movement in the region and will lose no time to react to them. Israel had already carried out limited operations in Sudan in 2009 and 2011. In 2009, it attacked a convoy of trucks in

Sudan which Israeli officials claimed to have been smuggling arms into Gaza Strip to be used by Hamas.

In 2011 and under the same pretext, Israel attacked another vehicle. On the other hand, the United States attacked a pharmaceutical factory called Al-Shifa (The Cure) near Khartoum in 1998 and razed it to the ground. The American officials claimed that the plant was going to be used to build chemical bombs. Later investigations refuted that allegation. Therefore, the military attacks carried out by the United States and Israel against Sudan prove that the Americans are undoubtedly providing intelligence to Israel and are thus implied in Israel's attacks on the Arab country. Even the Sudanese Defense Minister Abdel Rahim Mohamed Hussein has noted that some elements in Sudan's military forces have possibly played a part in providing the Israelis with intelligence relevant to the attacks.

Therefore, it is clear that a host of regional, international and domestic factors in Israel have prompted Tel Aviv to take such a step. As for domestic factors, Israel is trying to repair its tarnished military prestige through the attack. On the regional scale, Tel Aviv is trying to show that it is still capable of conducting intelligence and military operations at any point in the Middle East and North Africa. When it comes to international level, Israel is trying to prove that although such operations amount to the violation of international law, Israel does not consider itself bound to any limits when its security is at stake. However, a closer look at the operation clearly shows that due to its small scale and the lame excuse used to launch it, the operation actually indicates that Israel is currently in a weak position and this point has not been overlooked by the global community.

The point which should be borne in mind here is that the mainstream Western media such as the daily Guardian in Britain and the Washington Post in the United States have tried to connect the Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas, and finally Iran to this operation. This measure has been taken in order to discredit Iran's allies in the region while there has been not a single shred of evidence to prove that Iran has had any role in what was going on inside Yarmouk weapons production plant in Sudan. Nobody has been so far able to produce such evidence and it seems that incriminating Iran is mostly an excuse and a cover for what Israel has done. A close review of the remarks made by the Sudanese officials is enough to show that the Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has clearly stated that the main goal of the Israeli operation was to weaken the defense abilities of Sudan as a country which is supporting Hamas. He continued by warning the Israeli regime that such hopeless measures will not prevent Sudan from supporting the cause of Palestine. On the other hand, Sudan's minister of media has pointed to various issues stipulating that Sudan will never give up its position on the issue of Palestine, noting that his country had been attacked due to Sudan's support for Palestine. The permanent representative of Sudan to the United Nations also stated that the aftermath of Israel's invasion of Sudan will not remain limited to his country, but will jeopardize peace and security throughout the entire region.

Of course, the Israeli officials have noted that recent attacks on Israel from Gaza have not been carried out by Hamas, but have been actually launched by Iran. Israel has not officially claimed responsibility for attacking Sudan, but no Israeli official has rejected the remarks made by Sudanese officials either. Therefore, it seems that Israel is trying to show that it is still capable of conducting operations on regional scale. The officials of Sudan have announced that they were actually planning to move Yarmouk plant from Khartoum to another region, but the Israelis had got wind of Sudan's decision beforehand and embarked on the preemptive attack.

On the whole, Israel wants to use this very limited and actually blind operation to buy new

regional credit. This is why when asked whether this operation has been carried out by Israel or not, Major General Amos Gilad, head of the Israeli Defense Ministry's diplomatic security bureau, noted that the operation aimed to boost the morale of the Israeli army. He claimed that the Israeli air force is the most prestigious among air forces of the world and has proven this more than once. The emphasis he put on the Israeli air forces was the most remarkable point in his remarks. The strange point, however, is that Sudanese officials made no effort to incriminate South Sudan for the attack while South Sudan is the main beneficiary if Sudan's defense capacities are compromised. On the contrary, officials in Khartoum noted that recent agreements they had reached with South Sudan have infuriated Israel and the United States.

The Arab League has been also playing a very significant role in recent regional developments. In the case of Libya, the Arab League allowed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to launch military operations against the government of Libya's former dictator Muammar Gaddafi. The Arab League also planned to do the same in the case of Syria, but Russia and China effectively vetoed a draft resolution for military attack on Syria at the United Nations Security Council, thus foiling the Arab League's plan. In the cases of Yemen and Bahrain, however, Saudi Arabia has been taking any unilateral measures it deems necessary to suppress popular protests in those countries. The Arab League, meanwhile, has not only refrained from making any protest to Saudi Arabia's interventions in Yemen and Bahrain, but has also indirectly supported Riyadh's interventionist policy.

This clearly proves that the Arab League has become a plaything in the hands of Saudi Arabia and is complying with Saudi Arabia's policies at a time that a member state, that is, Sudan, has become target of such a large-scale military invasion. Although the invasion has been carried out by the Zionist regime of Israel, the Arab League, under the Saudi Arabia's influence, has so far shown no serious reaction. Such double standards will certainly be detrimental to solidarity among the Arab League members in medium and long terms. Unfortunately, the international community sees the political developments in the Arab world from the viewpoint of the Arab League. Such double-standard policies have made it easy for Israel to continue its aggressive and invasive policies against a number of important regional countries even after the downfall of regional dictators without being faced with any serious protest from international community.

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