

Planned US Israeli Attack on Iran: Will there be a War against Iran?

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)
In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

The media has failed to cover the history of US war preparations directed against Iran. News coverage of US sponsored war preparations in relation to Iran started to surface in early 2007 in scanty press reports.

Although confirmed by official military documents and reports, public opinion has largely been kept in the dark and misinformed on these war preparations.

A war on Iran has been envisaged since the mid-1990s as part of a strategic “sequencing” of theater operations. During the Clinton administration, US Central Command (USCENTCOM) had formulated “in war theater plans” to invade first Iraq and then Iran:

“The broad national security interests and objectives expressed in the President’s National Security Strategy (NSS) and the Chairman’s National Military Strategy (NMS) form the foundation of the United States Central Command’s theater strategy. The NSS directs implementation of a strategy of **dual containment of the rogue states of Iraq and Iran** as long as those states pose a threat to U.S. interests, to other states in the region, and to their own citizens. **Dual containment is designed to maintain the balance of power in the region without depending on either Iraq or Iran.** USCENTCOM’s theater strategy is interest-based and threat-focused. The purpose of U.S. engagement, as espoused in the NSS, is **to protect the United States’ vital interest in the region - uninterrupted, secure U.S./Allied access to Gulf oil.**”

(USCENTCOM,
<http://www.milnet.com/milnet/pentagon/centcom/chap1/stratgic.htm#USPolicy>
, emphasis added)

Consistent with CENTCOM’s 1995 “sequencing”, the plans to target Iran were activated under TIRANNT (Theater Iran Near Term) in the immediate wake of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. TIRANNT consisted in a model scenario type analysis of a theater war directed against Iran. The analysis, which involved senior military and intelligence experts, consisted in examining different theater scenarios.

“The US army, navy, air force and marines have all prepared battle plans and spent four years building bases and training for “Operation Iranian Freedom”. Admiral Fallon, the new head of US Central Command [resigned in March 2008], has inherited computerized plans under the name TIRANNT (Theatre Iran Near Term).” (New Statesman, 19 Feb 2007)

The following text (in annex) entitled [Planned US Israeli Attack on Iran](#) was published three years ago by Global Research in May 2005. It outlines the earlier phase of US-Israel war preparations in relation to Iran.

(See <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO505A.html>)

While much of this analysis remains valid, military planning in relation to Iran is now in a much more advanced stage. Moreover, the structure of military alliances underlying the Pentagon's war plans has also evolved. NATO is now part of the military alliance.

Under NATO auspices, in liaison with the Pentagon, British, German, Turkish and French forces are slated to play a significant role in the case of an attack on Iran and Syria.

In this regard, it is worth noting that already in 2005, NATO and Israel had established the basis of a far-reaching military cooperation agreement. In turn, Turkey, which from a military standpoint constitutes a significant force within NATO, has a comprehensive bilateral military cooperation agreement with Israel.

According to military documents and statements, US, Israeli and allied forces are "in an advanced state of readiness". In fact much of the war planning had already reached that "advanced stage" in 2005.

Several important variables come into play in assessing the possibility of an all out war on Iran.

"An advanced stage of readiness" to attack Iran does not signify that a war will actually occur. A number of important countervailing factors must be addressed.

Saber Rattling

Apart from outright war, the US sponsored war preparations serve several other foreign policy objectives.

The threat of war coupled by advanced military preparedness are often used to bully countries into compliance, to oblige them to give up their sovereignty, to open up their economy to Western investors, to privatize and sell off their assets to American companies, etc. These threats will only be effective if the country does not have the ability to defend itself militarily. The strength of its national economy is also a major consideration.

The Sabre rattling is ongoing in relation to Iran. The objective is ultimately to subdue Iran as a regional power and take possession of its oil wealth, which constitutes approximately ten percent of total world reserves.

What are Iran's military capabilities, namely its ability to defend itself and inflict damage on US and allied forces?

The answer to this question involves essentially two aspects.

First, Iran has an advanced air defense system, using both Iranian and Russian technology. Moreover, it has, according to Western military experts, perfected its ballistic missile capabilities to the extent that it is capable of inflicting significant damage on US and allied military installations in Iraq, the Persian Gulf and Israel.

Over the last few years, Iran has been actively preparing for a US sponsored attack. Moreover, resulting from the surge in oil revenues, the Tehran government has enhanced capabilities to finance its military preparedness. In this regard, Iran is in a very different situation to that of Iraq prior to the 2003 invasion, targeted by Anglo-American air attacks under the “No Fly Zone” coupled with more than ten years of deadly economic sanctions.

US military planners are fully aware of the possibility of escalation. If extensive air attacks were to be launched, Iranian conventional forces would immediately cross the border into Iraq and attack US military installations. This is a factor which has contributed to “putting the war on hold”.

Instead of extensive bombings which would result in retaliation. Washington may decide as a first step in a broader military campaign to launch limited air attacks, on the presumption that Iran would not retaliate. According to Philip Giraldi, the attack would “be as ‘pinpoint’ and limited as possible, intended to target only al-Qods and avoid civilian casualties.” Before launching a “limited attack”, the US would attempt to ensure, through threat and secret negotiations, that retaliation would not occur.

The US Military’s “Ability to Fight Wars”

Adm. William Fallon, who was recently fired as Commander of US Central Command (USCENTCOM) was acutely aware of Iran’s ability to retaliate militarily and inflict significant losses to US and coalition forces. This understanding was in fact conveyed at the outset of the 2003 war scenarios under TIRANNT.

Prior to his dismissal, Admiral Fallon played down the possibility of a war with Iran: “We are not going to do Iran on my watch.”.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, while broadly supportive of the Bush-Cheney White House, has officially acknowledged US military weaknesses. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan “may have undermined the military’s ability to fight wars against major adversaries - including Iran.” (quoted in Haaretz, October 22, 2007).

In an interview with the New York Times, Mullen stated:

“...the risks could be very, very high.... We’re in a conflict in two countries out there right now... We have to be incredibly thoughtful about the potential of in fact getting into a conflict with a third country in that part of the world.”

These statements were made at the very outset of his mandate as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in October 2007.

Mullen’s hesitations to wage war on Iran are not based on a divergent political stance but on a realistic assessment of US military capabilities. Admiral Mullen recognizes that the US military is overstretched and that in relation to Iraq, the US military is facing serious problems in military recruitment.

Moreover, tacitly acknowledged by the Pentagon, US and coalition forces are facing fierce resistance in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Appointment of General David Petraeus as Head of USCENTCOM

The appointment of General David Petraeus to the Head of U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) has served to neutralize potential opposition within the US Armed Forces. It reinforces Vice President Cheney's ability to order an attack and ensure that the Military will fully support the Bush administration.

The objective is to "set up Iran for attack" using Iran's alleged intervention in Iraq as a pretext and justification, "on [the] grounds that Iran ... is responsible for the mounting death toll among American troops in Iraq." ([See Iran should be "Set Up for an Attack" by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach, Global Research, May 2008](#)). Iran is also accused of intervening in Afghanistan and Lebanon. In this regard, the 2006 Israeli attacks on Lebanon are part of the roadmap of a broader war directed against Iran and Syria. ([See Mahdi D. Nazemroaya, Global Research, May 2007](#))

Armed Clashes in Lebanon

The recent armed clashes in Lebanon opposing Hizbollah to the US-Israeli supported May 14th Movement, have precipitated the country into chaos. Fighting erupted after the pro-US Siniora government announced a crackdown on Hizbollah.

Hizbollah has taken control of parts of West Beirut setting the stage for a NATO "peacekeeping" intervention inside Lebanon. A greater involvement of NATO coupled with the militarization of the entire Eastern Mediterranean coastline is an integral part of the Iran-Syria war scenario: "a peacekeeping" role by NATO forces, on behalf of Israel, targetting Syria as well as Hizbollah and Hamas.

These recent events in Lebanon have been triggered quite deliberately with a view to destabilizing the country. They are part of the US sponsored military roadmap; they are intended to set the stage for a confrontation with Syria.

The Structure of Military Alliances

The structure of military alliances is crucial. America's allies are Israel and NATO.

Iran's allies are China and Russia and the member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Both China and Russia have far-reaching bilateral military cooperation agreements with Iran. Since 2005, Iran has an observer member status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In turn, the SCO has ties to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), an overlapping military cooperation agreement between Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan.

In October 2007, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding, laying the foundations for military cooperation between the two organizations. This SCO-CSTO agreement, barely mentioned by the Western media, involves the creation of a full-fledged military alliance between China, Russia and the member states of SCO/CSTO. It is worth noting that the SCTO and the SCO held joint military exercises in 2006, which coincided with those conducted by Iran. ([For further details see Michel Chossudovsky, Russia and Central Asian Allies Conduct War Games in Response to US Threats, Global Research, August 2006](#))

In the context of US war plans directed against Iran, the US is also intent upon weakening

Iran's allies, namely Russia and China. In the case of China, Washington is seeking to disrupt Beijing's bilateral ties with Tehran as well as Iran's rapprochement with the SCO, which has its headquarters in Beijing.

In this regard, a military operation directed against Iran can only succeed if the structure of military alliances which link Iran to China and Russia is significantly weakened.

There are indications that this Eurasian military alliance underlying the SCO has in fact been strengthened. While currently Iran has observer status, the Tehran government has indicated its desire to become a full member of the SCO. Moreover, in the course of the last year, Iran has strengthened its bilateral ties in the field of energy and oil and gas pipelines with India as well as Pakistan. The positioning of India on the side of Iran in the oil and energy field is another factor which weakens Washington's influence in the region.

"What Tehran is seeking is "nothing less than a blueprint for a new correlation of nations in Eurasia, whose collaboration in developing continental infrastructure—nuclear energy, gas and oil pipelines, and transportation—should establish the economic, and therefore political, basis for true independence" (see [Muriel Mirak Weissbach, May 2008](#))

History points to the importance of competing military alliances. In the present context, the US and its NATO partners are seeking to undermine the formation of a cohesive Eurasian SCO-CSTO military alliance, which could effectively challenge and contain US-NATO military expansionism in Eurasia, combining the military capabilities not only of Russia and China, but also those of several former Soviet republics including Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic.

The Decision to go to War: Not a Rational Choice

The decision to go to war is not made by the Military high command.

The decision to go to war is taken by civilians.

The US Military is characterised by a hierarchy and command structure. Orders come from above, emanating from the "civilian government", namely the Bush administration. They are transmitted downwards through the military command structure. Once the order to go to war is taken, it is not discussed or debated, it is carried out by the military. Moreover, in all likelihood, in implementing a "preemptive attack" on Iran, the Bush administration would bypass the US Congress, in blatant violation of Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution.

In practice, the President and Commander in Chief, namely George W. Bush, does not decide. He also obeys orders from above. He follows the dictates of powerful financial and corporate interests.

This war is profit-driven. "War is good for business". It is a money making operation. It results in billions of dollars of profits for Wall Street, the oil giants and the military industrial complex, not to mention the institutional speculators in the oil, currency and commodity markets.

The objective of the proposed war is to extend the frontiers of the global capitalist economy, eventually taking control of Iran's oil wealth. The broader implications of a war using tactical nuclear weapons in the conventional war theater are of no concern to those who decide to

go to war.

The Central Role of Vice President Dick Cheney

In contrast to previous administrations, the Vice President has played a central role in the Bush administration, overshadowing the office of the President. In practice, Vice President Cheney, supported by an army of senior officials and loyal advisers, controls the White House. At the same time, Cheney is part of a powerful corporate apparatus, through his links to Halliburton and the role Halliburton has played in defining a profit-driven military agenda.

Cheney has personally played a key role in activating war plans directed against Iran.

“At the outset of Bush’s second term, Vice President Dick Cheney dropped a bombshell. He hinted, in no uncertain terms, that Iran was “right at the top of the list” of the rogue enemies of America, and that Israel would, so to speak, “be doing the bombing for us”, without US military involvement and without us putting pressure on them “to do it”.” (Michel Chossudovsky, May 2005)

Cheney is the de facto Head of State, he overshadows George W. Bush, who is mere figurehead. More recently, he has played a key role in pressuring the frontline Arab states into supporting a preemptive attack on Iran.

Vice President Cheney has little concern for the likely consequences and the resulting loss of life which would result from the use of both conventional and nuclear weapons. He is fully aware that even a limited air attack on Iran could contribute to unleashing a broader Middle East-Central Asian war, extending from the Eastern Mediterranean to China’s Western frontier. The various scenarios of this broader war have already been envisaged.

Most serious Crisis in Modern History

We are at the crossroads of the most serious crisis in modern history. These war plans coincide with a parallel process of economic restructuring and a deep-seated worldwide economic depression. War and globalization are intimately related processes. The militarisation of the Middle East and Central Asia supports the extension of the global “free market” system into new frontiers.

In turn, the war has heightened the economic crisis. The civilian economy is collapsing, overshadowed and undermined by the dynamic growth of the military industrial complex, which in a very real sense produces “weapons of mass destruction. In turn, the concurrent hikes in the price of crude oil, in the price of basic food staples, through speculative activities on major commodity exchanges have contributed to impoverishing millions of people.

“The antiwar movement must act, consistently, to prevent the next phase of this war from happening.

This is no easy matter. The holding of large antiwar rallies will not in itself reverse the tide of war.

High ranking officials of the Bush administration, members of the military and

the US Congress have been granted the authority to uphold an illegal war agenda.

What is required is a grass roots network, a mass movement at national and international levels, which challenges the legitimacy of the military and political actors, and which is ultimately instrumental in unseating those who rule in our name.

War criminals occupy positions of authority. The citizenry is galvanized into supporting the rulers, who are “committed to their safety and well-being”. Through media disinformation, war is given a humanitarian mandate.

To reverse the tide of war, military bases must be closed down, the war machine (namely the production of advanced weapons systems) must be stopped and the burgeoning police state must be dismantled.

The corporate backers and sponsors of war and war crimes must also be targeted including the oil companies, the defense contractors, the financial institutions and the corporate media, which has become an integral part of the war propaganda machine.

Antiwar sentiment does not dismantle a war agenda. The war criminals in the US, Israel and Britain must be removed from high office.

What is needed is to reveal the true face of the American Empire and the underlying criminalization of US foreign policy, which uses the “war on terrorism” and the threat of Al Qaeda to galvanize public opinion in support of a global war agenda.” (Michel Chossudovsky, May 1st 2005)

Michel Chossudovsky, May 14, 2008

ANNEX: TEXT OF 2005 ARTICLE

Planned US Israeli Attack on Iran

by Michel Chossudovsky

May 1st, 2005

At the outset of Bush’s second term, Vice President Dick Cheney dropped a bombshell. He hinted, in no uncertain terms, that Iran was “right at the top of the list” of the rogue enemies of America, and that Israel would, so to speak, “be doing the bombing for us”, without US military involvement and without us putting pressure on them “to do it”:

“One of the concerns people have is that Israel might do it without being asked... Given the fact that Iran has a stated policy that their objective is the destruction of Israel, the Israelis might well decide to act first, and let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterwards,” (quoted from an MSNBC Interview Jan 2005)

[Israel is a Rottweiler on a leash: The US wants to “set Israel loose” to attack Iran.](#)

Commenting the Vice President’s assertion, former National Security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski in an interview on PBS, confirmed with some apprehension, yes: Cheney wants Prime Ariel Sharon to act on America’s behalf and “do it” for us:

“Iran I think is more ambiguous. And there the issue is certainly not tyranny; it’s nuclear weapons. And the vice president today in a kind of a strange parallel statement to this declaration of freedom hinted that the Israelis may do it and in fact used language which sounds like a justification or even an encouragement for the Israelis to do it.”

The foregoing statements are misleading. The US is not “encouraging Israel”. What we are dealing with is a joint US-Israeli military operation to bomb Iran, which has been in the active planning stage for more than a year. The Neocons in the Defense Department, under Douglas Feith, have been working assiduously with their Israeli military and intelligence counterparts, carefully identifying targets inside Iran (Seymour Hersh, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/HER501A.html>)

Under this working arrangement, Israel will not act unilaterally, without a green light from Washington. In other words, Israel will not implement an attack without the participation of the US.

Covert Intelligence Operations: Stirring Ethnic Tensions in Iran

Meanwhile, for the last two years, Washington has been involved in covert intelligence operations inside Iran. American and British intelligence and special forces (working with their Israeli counterparts) are involved in this operation.

“A British intelligence official said that any campaign against Iran would not be a ground war like the one in Iraq. The Americans will use different tactics, said the intelligence officer. ‘It is getting quite scary.’” (Evening Standard, 17 June 2003, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/FOX306A.html>)

The expectation is that a US-Israeli bombing raid of Iran’s nuclear facilities will stir up ethnic tensions and trigger “regime change” in favor of the US. (See Arab Monitor, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/ARA502A.html>).

Bush advisers believe that the “Iranian opposition movement” will unseat the Mullahs. This assessment constitutes a gross misjudgment of social forces inside Iran. What is more likely to occur is that Iranians will consistently rally behind a wartime government against foreign aggression. In fact, the entire Middle East and beyond would rise up against US interventionism.

Retaliation in the Case of a US-Israeli Aerial Attack

Tehran has confirmed that it will retaliate if attacked, in the form of ballistic missile strikes directed against Israel (CNN, 8 Feb 2005). These attacks, could also target US military facilities in the Persian Gulf, which would immediately lead us into a scenario of military escalation and all out war.

In other words, the air strikes against Iran could contribute to unleashing a war in the broader Middle East Central Asian region.

Moreover, the planned attack on Iran should also be understood in relation to the timely withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, which has opened up a new space, for the

deployment of Israeli forces. The participation of Turkey in the US-Israeli military operation is also a factor, following an agreement reached between Ankara and Tel Aviv.

In other words, US and Israeli military planners must carefully weigh the far-reaching implications of their actions.

Israel Builds up its Stockpile of Deadly Military Hardware

A massive buildup in military hardware has occurred in preparation for a possible attack on Iran.

Israel has recently taken delivery from the US of some 5,000 “smart air launched weapons” including some 500 [BLU 109 'bunker-buster bombs](#). The (uranium coated) munitions are said to be more than “adequate to address the full range of Iranian targets, with the possible exception of the buried facility at Natanz, which may require the [more powerful] [BLU-113 bunker buster](#) “:

“Given Israel’s already substantial holdings of such weapons, this increase in its inventory would allow a sustained assault with or without further US involvement.” (See Richard Bennett, <http://globalresearch.ca/articles/BEN501A.html>)



Gbu 28 [Guided Bomb Unit-28 \(GBU-28\)](#)

The Israeli Air Force would attack [Iran’s nuclear facility at Bushehr](#) using US as well Israeli produced bunker buster bombs. The attack would be carried out in three separate waves “with the radar and communications jamming protection being provided by U.S. Air Force AWACS and other U.S. aircraft in the area”. (See W Madsen, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/MAD410A.html>

Bear in mind that the bunker buster bombs can also be used to deliver tactical nuclear bombs. The [B61-11](#) is the “nuclear version” of the “conventional” [BLU 113](#). It can be delivered in much same way as the conventional bunker buster bomb. (See Michel Chossudovsky, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO112C.html> , see also http://www.thebulletin.org/article_nn.php?art_ofn=jf03norris) .

According to the Pentagon, tactical nuclear weapons are “safe for civilians”. Their use has

been authorized by the US Senate. (See Miochel Chossudovsky, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO405A.html>)

Moreover, reported in late 2003, Israeli [Dolphin-class submarines](#) equipped with [US Harpoon missiles](#) armed with nuclear warheads are now aimed at Iran. (See Gordon Thomas, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/THO311A.html>)

Even if tactical nuclear weapons are not used by Israel, an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities not only raises the specter of a broader war, but also of nuclear radiation over a wide area:

“To attack Iran's nuclear facilities will not only provoke war, but it could also unleash clouds of radiation far beyond the targets and the borders of Iran.” (Statement of Prof Elias Tuma, Arab Internet Network, Federal News Service, 1 March 2005)

Moreover, while most reports have centered on the issue of punitive air strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities, the strikes would most probably extend to other targets.

While a ground war is contemplated as a possible “scenario” at the level of military planning, the US military would not be able to wage an effective ground war, given the situation in Iraq. In the words of former National Security Adviser Lawrence Eagleburger:

“We are not going to get in a ground war in Iran, I hope. If we get into that, we are in serious trouble. I don't think anyone in Washington is seriously considering that.” (quoted in the National Journal, 4 December 2004).

Iran's Military Capabilities

Despite its overall weaknesses in relation to Israel and the US, Iran has an advanced air defense system, deployed to protect its nuclear sites; “they are dispersed and underground making potential air strikes difficult and without any guarantees of success.” (Jerusalem Post, 20 April 2005). It has upgraded its Shahab-3 missile, which can reach targets in Israel. Iran's armed forces have recently conducted high-profile military exercises in anticipation of a US led attack. Iran also possesses some 12 X-55 strategic cruise missiles, produced by the Ukraine. Iran's air defense systems is said to feature Russian SA-2, SA-5, SA-6 as well as shoulder-launched SA-7 missiles (Jaffa Center for Strategic Studies).

The US “Military Road Map”

The Bush administration has officially identified Iran and Syria as the next stage of “the road map to war”.

Targeting Iran is a bipartisan project, which broadly serves the interests of the Anglo-American oil conglomerates, the Wall Street financial establishment and the military-industrial complex.

The broader Middle East-Central Asian region encompasses more than 70% of the World's reserves of oil and natural gas. Iran possesses 10% of the world's oil and ranks third after Saudi Arabia (25 %) and Iraq (11 %) in the size of its reserves. In comparison, the US

possesses less than 2.8 % of global oil reserves. (See Eric Waddell, The Battle for Oil, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/WAD412A.html>)

The announcement to target Iran should come as no surprise. It is part of the battle for oil. Already during the Clinton administration, US Central Command (USCENTCOM) had formulated “in war theater plans” to invade both Iraq and Iran:

“The broad national security interests and objectives expressed in the President’s National Security Strategy (NSS) and the Chairman’s National Military Strategy (NMS) form the foundation of the United States Central Command’s theater strategy. The NSS directs implementation of a strategy of dual containment of the rogue states of Iraq and Iran as long as those states pose a threat to U.S. interests, to other states in the region, and to their own citizens. Dual containment is designed to maintain the balance of power in the region without depending on either Iraq or Iran. USCENTCOM’s theater strategy is interest-based and threat-focused. The purpose of U.S. engagement, as espoused in the NSS, is to protect the United States’ vital interest in the region – uninterrupted, secure U.S./Allied access to Gulf oil.

(USCENTCOM ,
<http://www.milnet.com/milnet/pentagon/centcom/chap1/stratgic.htm#USPolicy> , emphasis added)

Main Military Actors

While the US, Israel, as well as Turkey (with borders with both Iran and Syria) are the main actors in this process, a number of other countries, in the region, allies of the US, including several Central Asian former Soviet republics have been enlisted. Britain is closely involved despite its official denials at the diplomatic level. Turkey occupies a central role in the Iran operation. It has an extensive military cooperation agreement with Israel. There are indications that NATO is also formally involved in the context of an Israel-NATO agreement reached in November 2004.

Planning The Aerial Attack on Iran

According to former weapons inspector Scott Ritter, **George W. Bush has already signed off on orders for an aerial attack on Iran, scheduled for June.**(See <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/JEN502A.html>)

The June cut-off date should be understood. It does not signify that the attack will occur in June. What it suggests is that the US and Israel are “in a state of readiness” and are prepared to launch an attack by June or at a later date. In other words, the decision to launch the attack has not been made.

Ritter’s observation concerning an impending military operation should nonetheless be taken seriously. In recent months, there is ample evidence that a major military operation is in preparation:

1) several high profile military exercises have been conducted in recent months, involving military

deployment and the testing of weapons systems.

2) **military planning meetings have been held** between the various parties involved. There has been a shuttle of military and government officials between Washington, Tel Aviv and Ankara.

3) **A significant change in the military command structure** in Israel has occurred, with the appointment of a new Chief of Staff.

4) **Intense diplomatic exchanges have been carried out at the international level with a view to securing areas of military cooperation** and/or support for a US-Israeli led military operation directed against Iran.

5) **Ongoing intelligence operations inside Iran have been stepped up.**

6) **Consensus Building: Media propaganda on the need to intervene in Iran has been stepped up**, with daily reports on how Iran constitutes a threat to peace and global security.

Timeline of Key Initiatives

In the last few months, various key initiatives have been taken, which are broadly indicative that an aerial bombing of Iran is in the military pipeline:

November 2004 in Brussels: NATO-Israel protocol: Israel's IDF delegation to the NATO conference to meet with military brass of six members of the Mediterranean basin nations, including Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania. "NATO seeks to revive the framework, known as the Mediterranean Dialogue program, which would include Israel. The Israeli delegation accepted to participate in military exercises and "anti-terror maneuvers" together with several Arab countries.

January 2005: the **US, Israel and Turkey** held **[military exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean](#)** , off the coast of Syria. These exercises, which have been held in previous years were described as routine.

February 2005. Following the decision reached in Brussels in November 2004, **Israel was involved for the first time in military exercises with NATO**, which also included several Arab countries.

February 2005: Assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The assassination, which was blamed on Syria, serves Israeli and US interests and was used as a pretext to demand the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon.

February 2005: Sharon fires his Chief-of-Staff, Moshe Ya'alon and appoints Air Force General Dan Halutz. This is the first time in Israeli history that an Air Force General is appointed Chief of Staff (See Uri Avnery, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/AVN502A.html>)

The appointment of Major General Dan Halutz as IDF Chief of Staff

is considered in Israeli political circles as “the appointment of the right man at the right time.” The central issue is that a major aerial operation against Iran is in the planning stage, and Maj General Halutz is slated to coordinate the aerial bombing raids on Iran. Halutz’s appointment was specifically linked to Israel’s Iran agenda: “As chief of staff, he will in the best position to prepare the military for such a scenario.”

March 2005: NATO’s Secretary General was in Jerusalem for follow-up talks with Ariel Sharon and Israel’s military brass, following the joint NATO-Israel military exercise in February. These military cooperation ties are viewed by the Israeli military as a means to “enhance Israel’s deterrence capability regarding potential enemies threatening it, mainly Iran and Syria.” The premise underlying NATO-Israel military cooperation is that Israel is under attack:

“The more Israel’s image is strengthened as a country facing enemies who attempt to attack it for no justified reason, the greater will be the possibility that aid will be extended to Israel by NATO. Furthermore, Iran and Syria will have to take into account the possibility that the increasing cooperation between Israel and NATO will strengthen Israel’s links with Turkey, also a member of NATO. Given Turkey’s impressive military potential and its geographic proximity to both Iran and Syria, Israel’s operational options against them, if and when it sees the need, could gain considerable strength. ” (Jaffa Center for Strategic Studies, <http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/sa/v7n4p4Shalom.html>)

The Israel-NATO protocol is all the more important because it obligates NATO to align itself with the US-Israeli plan to bomb Iran, as an act of self defense on the part of Israel. It also means that NATO is also involved in the process of military consultations relating to the planned aerial bombing of Iran. It is of course related to the bilateral military cooperation agreement between Israel and Turkey and the likelihood that part of the military operation will be launched from Turkey, which is a member of NATO.

Late March 2005: News leaks in Israel indicated an “initial authorization” by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of an Israeli attack on Iran’s Natanz uranium enrichment plant “if diplomacy failed to stop Iran’s nuclear program”. (The Hindu, 28 March 2005)

March-April 2005: The Holding in Israel of Joint US-Israeli military exercises specifically pertaining to the launching of Patriot missiles.

US Patriot missile crews stationed in Germany were sent to Israel to participate in [the joint Juniper Cobra exercise](#) with the Israeli military. The exercise was described as routine and “unconnected to events in the Middle East”: “As always, we are interested in implementing lessons learned from training exercises.” (UPI, 9 March 2005).

April 2005: Donald Rumsfeld was on an official visits to Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan. His diplomatic endeavors were described by the Russian media as **“literally circling Iran in an attempt to find the best bridgehead for a possible military operation against that country.”**

In Baku, Azerbaijan Rumsfeld was busy discussing the date for deployment of US troops in Azerbaijan on Iran’s North-Western border. US military bases described as “mobile groups” in Azerbaijan are slated to play a role in a military operation directed against Iran.

Azerbaijan is a member of [GUUAM](#), a military cooperation agreement with the US and NATO, which allows for the stationing of US troops in several of the member countries, including Georgia, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. The stated short term objective is to “neutralize Iran”. The longer term objective under the Pentagon’s “Caspian Plan” is to exert military and economic control over the entire Caspian sea basin, with a view to ensuring US authority over oil reserves and pipeline corridors.

During his visit in April, Rumsfeld was pushing the US initiative of establishing “American special task forces and military bases to secure US influence in the Caspian region:

“Called Caspian Watch, the project stipulates a network of special task forces and police units in the countries of the regions to be used in emergencies including threats to objects of the oil complex and pipelines. Project Caspian Watch will be financed by the United States (\$100 million). It will become an advance guard of the US European Command whose zone of responsibility includes the Caspian region. Command center of the project with a powerful radar is to be located in Baku.” (Defense and Security Russia, April 27, 2005)

Rumsfeld’s visit followed shortly after that of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami’s to Baku.

April 2005: Iran signs a military cooperation with Tajikistan, which occupies a strategic position bordering Afghanistan’s Northern frontier. Tajikistan is a member of “The Shanghai Five” military cooperation group, which also includes Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia. Iran also has economic cooperation agreements with Turkmenistan.

Mid April 2005: Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon meets George W Bush at his Texas Ranch. Iran is on the agenda of bilateral talks. More significantly, the visit of Ariel Sharon was used to carry out high level talks between US and Israeli military planners pertaining to Iran.

Late April 2005. President Vladimir Putin is in Israel on an official visit. He announces Russia’s decision to sell short-range anti-aircraft missiles to Syria and to continue supporting Iran’s nuclear industry. Beneath the gilded surface of international diplomacy, **Putin’s timely visit to Israel must be interpreted**

as “a signal to Israel” regarding its planned aerial attack on Iran.

Late April 2005: US pressure in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been exerted with a view to blocking the re-appointment of Mohammed Al Baradei, who according to US officials “is not being tough enough on Iran...” Following US pressures, **the vote on the appointment of a new IAEA chief was put off until June. These developments suggest that Washington wants to put forth their own hand-picked nominee prior to launching US-Israeli aerial attacks on Iran’s nuclear facilities.** (See VOA, <http://www.voanews.com/english/2005-04-27-voa51.cfm>). (In February 2003, Al Baradei along with UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix challenged the (phony) intelligence on WMD presented by the US to the UN Security Council, with a view to justifying the war on Iraq.)

Late April 2005. Sale of deadly military hardware to Israel. GBU-28 Buster Bunker Bombs: Coinciding with Putin’s visit to Israel, the [US Defence Security Cooperation Agency](#) (Department of Defense) announced the sale of an additional 100 bunker-buster bombs produced by Lockheed Martin to Israel. This decision was viewed by the US media as “a warning to Iran about its nuclear ambitions.”

The sale pertains to **the larger** and more sophisticated “[Guided Bomb Unit-28 \(GBU-28\) BLU-113 Penetrator](#)” (including the WGU-36A/B guidance control unit and support equipment). The GBU-28 is described as “a special weapon for penetrating hardened command centers located deep underground. The fact of the matter is that the GBU-28 is among the World’s most deadly “conventional” weapons used in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, capable of causing thousands of civilian deaths through massive explosions.

The Israeli Air Force are slated to use the GBU-28s on their F-15 aircraft.
(See text of DSCA news release at http://www.dsca.osd.mil/PressReleases/36-b/2005/Israel_05-10_corrected.pdf)

Late April 2005- early May: Turkey’s Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Israel for follow-up talks with Ariel Sharon. He was accompanied by his Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul, who met with senior Israeli military officials. On the official agenda of these talks: joint defense projects, including the joint production of [Arrow II Theater Missile Defense](#) and Popeye II missiles. The latter also known as the Have Lite, are advanced small missiles, designed for deployment on fighter planes. **Tel Aviv and Ankara decide to establish a hotline to share intelligence.**

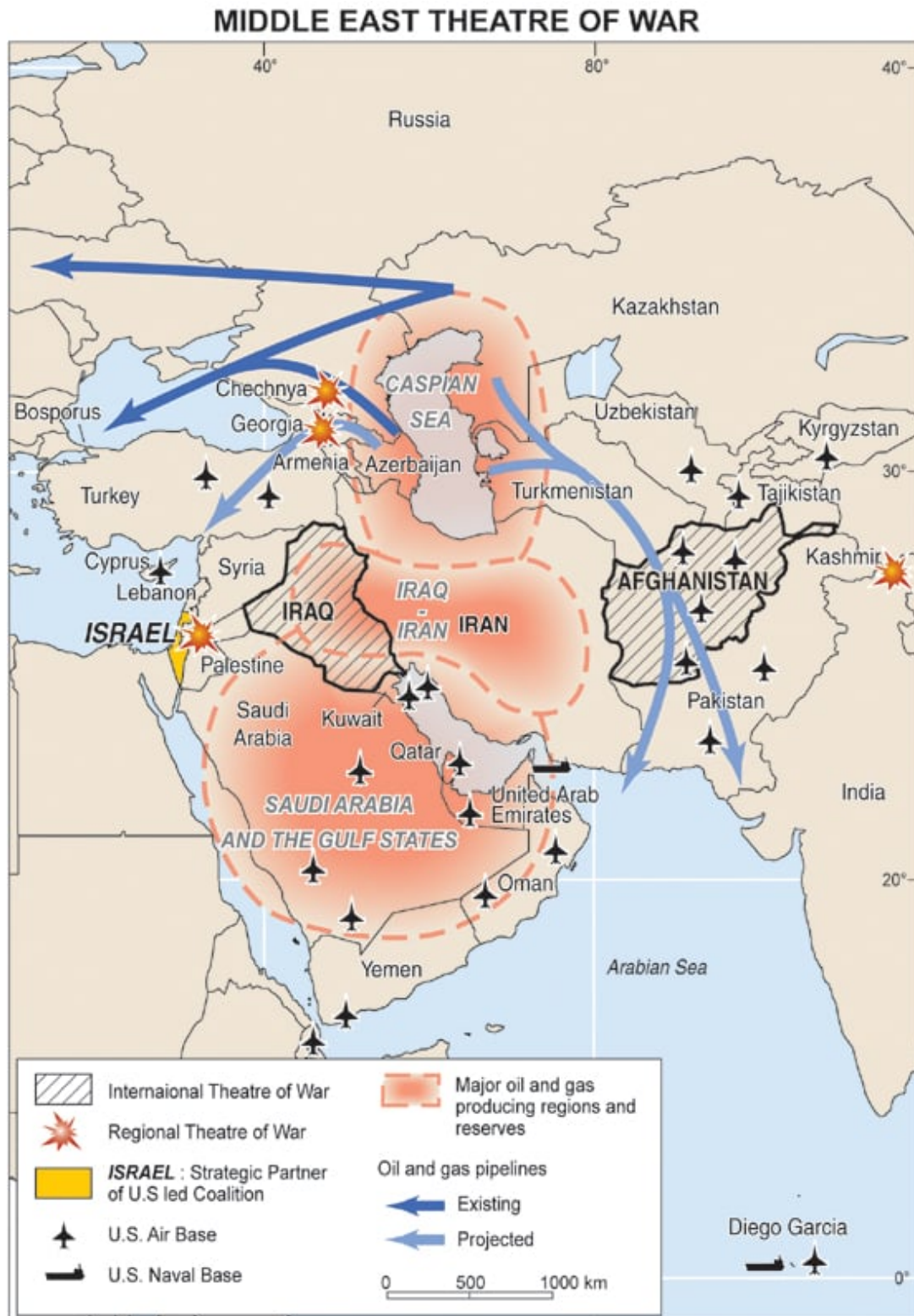
May 2005: Syrian troops scheduled to withdraw from Lebanon, leading to a major shift in the Middle East security situation, in favor of Israel and the US.

Iran Surrounded

The US has troops and military bases in Turkey, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, and of

course Iraq.

In other words, Iran is virtually surrounded by US military bases. (see Map below). These countries as well as Turkmenistan, are members of [NATO's partnership for Peace Program](#), and have military cooperation agreements with NATO.



Copyright Eric Waddell, Global Research, 2003 (Click Map to enlarge)

In other words, we are dealing with a potentially explosive scenario in which a number of

countries, including several former Soviet republics, could be brought into a US led war with Iran. IranAtom.ru, a Russian based news and military analysis group has suggested, in this regard:

“since Iranian nuclear objects are scattered all over the country, Israel will need a mass strike with different fly-in and fly-out approaches – Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and other countries... Azerbaijan seriously fears Tehran’s reaction should Baku issue a permit to Israeli aircraft to overfly its territory.” (Defense and Security Russia, 12 April 2005).

Concluding remarks:

The World is at an important crossroads.

The Bush Administration has embarked upon a military adventure which threatens the future of humanity.

Iran is the next military target. The planned military operation, which is by no means limited to punitive strikes against Iran’s nuclear facilities, is part of a project of World domination, a military roadmap, launched at the end of the Cold War.

Military action against Iran would directly involve Israel’s participation, which in turn is likely to trigger a broader war throughout the Middle East, not to mention an implosion in the Palestinian occupied territories. Turkey is closely associated with the proposed aerial attacks.

Israel is a nuclear power with a sophisticated nuclear arsenal. (See text box below). The use of nuclear weapons by Israel or the US cannot be excluded, particularly in view of the fact that tactical nuclear weapons have now been reclassified as a variant of the conventional bunker buster bombs and are authorized by the US Senate for use in conventional war theaters. (“they are harmless to civilians because the explosion is underground”)

In this regard, Israel and the US rather than Iran constitute a nuclear threat.

The planned attack on Iran must be understood in relation to the existing active war theaters in the Middle East, namely Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine.

The conflict could easily spread from the Middle East to the Caspian sea basin. It could also involve the participation of Azerbaijan and Georgia, where US troops are stationed.

An attack on Iran would have a direct impact on the resistance movement inside Iraq. It would also put pressure on America’s overstretched military capabilities and resources in both the Iraqi and Afghan war theaters. (The 150,000 US troops in Iraq are already fully engaged and could not be redeployed in the case of a war with Iran.)

In other words, the shaky geopolitics of the Central Asia- Middle East region, the three existing war theaters in which America is currently, involved, the direct participation of Israel and Turkey, the structure of US sponsored military alliances, etc. raises the specter of a broader conflict.

Moreover, US military action on Iran not only threatens Russian and Chinese interests, which

have geopolitical interests in the Caspian sea basin and which have bilateral agreements with Iran. It also backlashes on European oil interests in Iran and is likely to produce major divisions between Western allies, between the US and its European partners as well as within the European Union.

Through its participation in NATO, Europe, despite its reluctance, would be brought into the Iran operation. The participation of NATO largely hinges on a military cooperation agreement reached between NATO and Israel. This agreement would bind NATO to defend Israel against Syria and Iran. NATO would therefore support a preemptive attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, and could take on a more active role if Iran were to retaliate following US-Israeli air strikes.

Needless to say, the war against Iran is part of a longer term US military agenda which seeks to militarize the entire Caspian sea basin, eventually leading to the destabilization and conquest of the Russian Federation.

The Antiwar Movement

The antiwar movement must act, consistently, to prevent the next phase of this war from happening.

This is no easy matter. The holding of large antiwar rallies will not in itself reverse the tide of war.

High ranking officials of the Bush administration, members of the military and the US Congress have been granted the authority to uphold an illegal war agenda.

What is required is a grass roots network, a mass movement at national and international levels, which challenges the legitimacy of the military and political actors, and which is ultimately instrumental in unseating those who rule in our name.

War criminals occupy positions of authority. The citizenry is galvanized into supporting the rulers, who are "committed to their safety and well-being". Through media disinformation, war is given a humanitarian mandate.

To reverse the tide of war, military bases must be closed down, the war machine (namely the production of advanced weapons systems) must be stopped and the burgeoning police state must be dismantled.

The corporate backers and sponsors of war and war crimes must also be targeted including the oil companies, the defense contractors, the financial institutions and the corporate media, which has become an integral part of the war propaganda machine.

Antiwar sentiment does not dismantle a war agenda. The war criminals in the US, Israel and Britain must be removed from high office.

What is needed is to reveal the true face of the American Empire and the underlying criminalization of US foreign policy, which uses the "war on terrorism" and the threat of Al Qaeda to galvanize public opinion in support of a global war agenda.

TEXT BOX: Israel's Nuclear Capabilities

With between 200 and 500 thermonuclear weapons and a sophisticated delivery system, Israel has quietly supplanted Britain as the World's 5th Largest nuclear power, and may currently rival France and China in the size and sophistication of its nuclear arsenal. Although dwarfed by the nuclear arsenals of the U.S. and Russia, each possessing over 10,000 nuclear weapons, Israel nonetheless is a major nuclear power, and should be publicly recognized as such.

Today, estimates of the Israeli nuclear arsenal range from a minimum of 200 to a maximum of about 500. Whatever the number, there is little doubt that Israeli nukes are among the world's most sophisticated, largely designed for "war fighting" in the Middle East. A staple of the Israeli nuclear arsenal are "neutron bombs," miniaturized thermonuclear bombs designed to maximize deadly gamma radiation while minimizing blast effects and long term radiation- in essence designed to kill people while leaving property intact.(16) Weapons include ballistic missiles and bombers capable of reaching Moscow...

The bombs themselves range in size from "city busters" larger than the Hiroshima Bomb to tactical mini nukes. The Israeli arsenal of weapons of mass destruction clearly dwarfs the actual or potential arsenals of all other Middle Eastern states combined, and is vastly greater than any conceivable need for "deterrence."

Many Middle East Peace activists have been reluctant to discuss, let alone challenge, the Israeli monopoly on nuclear weapons in the region, often leading to incomplete and uninformed analyses and flawed action strategies. Placing the issue of Israeli weapons of mass destruction directly and honestly on the table and action agenda would have several salutary effects. First, it would expose a primary destabilizing dynamic driving the Middle East arms race and compelling the region's states to each seek their own "deterrent."

Second, it would expose the grotesque double standard which sees the U.S. and Europe on the one hand condemning Iraq, Iran and Syria for developing weapons of mass destruction, while simultaneously protecting and enabling the principal culprit. Third, exposing Israel's nuclear strategy would focus international public attention, resulting in increased pressure to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction and negotiate a just peace in good faith. Finally, a nuclear free Israel would make a Nuclear Free Middle East and a comprehensive regional peace agreement much more likely. Unless and until the world community confronts Israel over its covert nuclear program it is unlikely that there will be any meaningful resolution of the Israeli/Arab conflict, a fact that Israel may be counting on as the Sharon era dawns.

From John Steinbach, Israel's Nuclear Arsenal,
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/STE203A.html>



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