

Opinion

Israeli Threat

By Mohammad Mehdi Mazaheri

Due to maintaining the policy of 'nuclear ambiguity' in past decades, the Zionist regime has threatened the regional security by storing and proliferating nuclear weapons. Today, most experts refer to Israel as the sixth country in the world to develop nuclear weapons. It is estimated that the Zionist regime has 200 nuclear warheads.

Israeli threat pertains to the fact that it has not yet joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) despite the continued request of regional countries. Israel has instead adhered to its policy of deterrence and even expanded its nuclear arsenal. Israel has not yet permitted International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) experts to visit its largest nuclear power plant Dimona. The unconditional support of the West for Israel's nuclear program has actually taken the region on the verge of a human and environmental tragedy.

Israel's fundamental assumption about its national security is that it needs nuclear weapons for survival as regional countries do not consider it a legitimate state. This militaristic approach has provided the Zionists with the necessary pretext for maintaining and expanding its nuclear might.

The policy of deterrence has perpetually been one main element of national strategy among Zionist leaders. Zionists have practically ignored the regional public opinion and even international norms and standards by using the nuclear program for preventing contingent attacks by Arabs and their other enemies. The experiences of the wars fought with Arabs convince Israel that it should proliferate weapons of mass destruction in order to maintain its position as the top powerhouse of the region.

Israel has also tested the preemptive strategy on several occasions to maintain its military supremacy over other regional countries. Apart from the 1967 war in which Israel was entrapped for a while due to the quick and unexpected attack of Egyptian and Syrian forces, it has deployed the preemptive strategy in all its other wars against Arabs.

Another reason behind regional tensions is that the West pursues dual standards in dealing with Israel's nuclear arsenal. Western countries have pressured Iran, accused it of violating international laws and imposed economic and political sanctions under the pretext that the Islamic state is trying to make the atomic bomb, while there is no objection whatsoever to Israel's perpetual attempt to maintain and expand its nuclear arsenal.

Interestingly enough, the White House does not view Israel's nuclear arsenal as a threat to regional and global security, but rather support its nuclear program as the source of regional stability! While IAEA Chief Mohamed ElBaradei has on many occasions reiterated that Iran's nuclear program is of a peaceful nature, Israel has been lobbying to give the impression that Iran poses a serious threat to regional and international security.

Although Israel may believe that it can never be defeated by Arabs and Muslims, the 33-day war proved once again that Israel can be defeated.

It is obvious that storing and proliferating nuclear weapons have not helped Israel meet its declared objective of establishment of peace in the region.

Bush Downplays Olmert's Role

US President George W. Bush said in interviews published on Tuesday ahead of a visit to Israel that the Israeli peace process with the Palestinians does not depend on embattled Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Police suspect Olmert illicitly took hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash from an American fund-raiser. The Israeli leader has said he would resign if indicted.

Israeli police raided the municipality in Beit-ul-Moqaddas, confiscating documents related to the investigation against Olmert. According to police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld, the national fraud investigation unit seized documents on Monday that were connected to Olmert's tenure as mayor from 1993 to 2003.

Commonwealth Restores Pak Membership

The Commonwealth restored Pakistan's membership Monday in recognition of the democratic steps taken there since the country rescinded emergency rule late last year.

The 53-member organization said it welcomed Pakistani ruler General Pervez Musharraf's decision to step down as chief of army staff and the easing of restrictions on the country's media, AP reported.

The organization said that, while concerns remained over the independence of the country's judiciary and the need for electoral reform, Pakistan will fulfill its obligations as far as the body's democratic principles were concerned.

Pakistan was suspended from the Commonwealth, a grouping centered around Britain and its former colonies, in November following Musharraf's imposition of emergency rule and the detention of thousands of opposition activists.

Hamas Clarifies Truce Terms

Islamic resistance movement of Hamas say a captured Israeli soldier will not be included in any truce deal with Israel.

Hamas leader Mahmud Zahar said Tuesday that the group would not "offer [Cpl. Gilad] Schalit for free" and his release is not related to truce talks, AP reported.

Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman discussed conditions for a truce with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Monday. Meeting with Suleiman, Israel's leaders explicitly linked the cease-fire to Schalit, telling Suleiman there would be no truce if the soldier remained a prisoner. Olmert has told an Egyptian mediator that Schalit must be released as part of any ceasefire.

Meanwhile Hamas on Monday called on the Palestinians in Gaza Strip to organize a massive popular demonstration on Thursday near the border between northern Gaza Strip and Israel, Chivnavy said.

US Warship Back To Mediterranean

A US warship, which was deployed off Lebanon in February amid concern over Beirut's political crisis, crossed Egypt's Suez Canal on Sunday on its way to the Mediterranean, an official with the canal authority told AFP.

"The USS Cole has crossed the Suez Canal and is headed to the Mediterranean," the official said, adding he did not know its exact destination.

The United States sent the guided-missile destroyer to waters off the coast of Lebanon on February 28 in what US officials said was "a show of support for regional stability" amid concerns over Lebanon's protracted political crisis.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had defended the deployment saying it was designed to show Washington's readiness to defend the interests of its allies in the region.

News Diary

THURSDAY, MAY 15

■ **LJUBLJANA** - The European Union and the United States will kick off talks on further liberalization of transatlantic air traffic.

■ **LIMA** - European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean (EU-LAC) Summit, will be attended by 60 heads of state or government from both regions.

■ **PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES** - Annual Nakba Day, marking the tragedy Palestinians suffered when Israel was illegitimately created in 1948.

■ **RIO DE JANEIRO** - Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen to visit Brazil.

■ **CANNES** - 61st Cannes Film Festival (to May 26)

Lebanon Will Revoke Anti-Resistance Moves



Lebanese children pose with national flags during a rally at the residence of assassinated former prime minister Rafiq Hariri May 11.

Leader of Lebanon's Progressive Socialist Party confirmed the government is to rescind decisions that escalated domestic tensions.

Walid Jumblatt informed the Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri of the government's intention to swiftly reverse earlier decisions to ban Hezbollah telecommunications network and sack Beirut Airport's security chief.

According to Press TV's Beirut office, Berri said the ruling coalition known as the March 14 was to convene a session to revoke the decisions and return to the negotiating table.

Meanwhile, Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora insisted he would not resign, adding the Cabinet ministers will convene to examine the army's request for the reversal of the anti-Hezbollah measures.

Supporters of the leader of the government bloc, Saad Hariri, have also said the Lebanese government would back off from its earlier decisions and enter into negotiations.

Berri also said the closure of the Saudi

Embassy in Lebanon and the Saudi Ambassador Abdul Aziz Al-Khoja leaving Beirut indicate the fate of the Arab League initiative is still uncertain.

Clashes broke out after the Lebanese government decided to shut down Hezbollah's telecommunications network due to pressure from pro-government parties opposing Hezbollah.

Arab Delegation Due in Beirut

Meanwhile, an Arab delegation is expected in Beirut on Wednesday in a bid to bring an end to deadly sectarian fighting, the parliament speaker's office said on Monday.

It said the delegation would meet Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, embattled Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, army chief Michel Suleiman Christian opposition leader Michel Aoun, and two pro-government figures--Druze leader Walid Jumblatt and parliamentary majority leader Saad Hariri.

Election Postponed Again

In other news, Berri postponed a legisla-

tive session to elect the country's president for the 19th time.

Monday's announcement by the parliamentary secretariat that the session will be postponed until June 10 comes a day before the parliament was scheduled to meet to choose a new president, AP reported.

Lebanon has been without a president since Emile Lahoud's term ended in November.

The divided parliament has agreed on army chief Michel Suleiman as a consensus president but has failed to elect him because the government and the opposition are at loggerheads over power-sharing and the shape of the future Cabinet.

The Lebanese Army announced that troops will use force if needed to impose law and order in the country.

The army said the initiative would go into effect as of 6 a.m. (0300 GMT) Tuesday and called on all groups in the country to cooperate.

It also said troops were going to prevent the illegal use of arms in the country.