

The real stumbling blocks to Reagan's Mideast policy

by Richard Cohen in Washington, D.C.

In a speech to Congressional Medal of Honor recipients in New York on Dec. 12, President Reagan summed up unambiguously the message he wished Moscow to receive—a message the President had been seeking to deliver with a series of U.S. demonstrations of force.

Reagan warned that “weakness on the part of those who cherish freedom inevitably brings on a threat to that freedom. . . . With the best of intentions we have tried turning our swords into plowshares hoping others would follow. Well, our days of weakness are over. Our military forces are back on their feet and standing tall.” After identifying this shift from the Kissinger-Carter disaster, the President continued: “When our citizens are threatened, it is government’s responsibility to go to their aid. We did so in Grenada. Our forces had what they needed to get the job done. . . . And now the world knows that when it comes to our national security, the United States will do whatever it takes to protect the safety and freedom of the American people.”

Reagan cautioned, “Freedom is never more than a generation away from extinction. Each generation must do whatever is necessary to preserve it and then pass it on to the next. And that means dealing with the world as it is and not as we wish it to be.”

The President’s rhetorical message to Moscow was immediately followed by new demonstrations of force. On Dec. 13, U.S. Navy ships off the Lebanon coast shelled Syrian-controlled positions with five-inch guns after two Navy F-14 reconnaissance planes were fired on over Syrian-controlled territory. Pentagon sources reported this action to be part of a new policy of “instant retaliation.” The next day the White House escalated, ordering the *U.S.S. New Jersey* to open fire at the Syrian-controlled areas to defend U.S. forces.

From bold statements to defensiveness

While the White House attempted to back up Reagan’s Dec. 12 warnings with firepower, senior administration officials began a campaign of escalating threats against the Soviets’ Middle East surrogates orchestrating the wave of

anti-American and anti-French terrorism. On Dec. 12, three days after announcing that Iranian-connected terrorists have organized suicide squads including 1,000 Khomeini-bred fanatics to conduct kamikaze raids against U.S. facilities in the Mideast, Europe, and the United States, the President told the *New York Daily News* that Iran will be held responsible for terrorist acts carried out in its name. And on Dec. 13, Secretary of State George Shultz said in Lisbon that if those behind the most recent Shi’ite-linked Muslim fundamentalist bombings against the United States on Dec. 12 in Kuwait can be identified, “there will be ways of getting to them.”

This new hard-line posture, if, and only if, combined with a presidential mobilization of public understanding of the need for major new measures to strengthen the nation’s defenses, especially for the development of directed energy-beam defensive systems, could force a Soviet recalculation of the risks involved in their confrontation course.

A more cautious note was struck on Dec. 14, in a quickly arranged presidential press conference, when the President acknowledged for the first time that the United States would consider total withdrawal of forces from Lebanon if that country fell into chaos, though the day before he had commented to the *New York Daily News* that he wished “some of those who are weakening in their resolve would recognize they’re weakening precisely because that’s why those committing the assaults . . . have committed them.” Now, the President took pains to report that the United States was not seeking war with Syria in Lebanon, and that the case against Khomeini as a terrorist controller is not one that could be brought to a court of law—thus weakening his own earlier hints of broader reprisals against the perpetrators of attacks on U.S. positions.

At the press conference, the President responded defensively to questions quoting administration leaks that withdrawal of U.S. forces from Beirut might be motivated by the 1984 election campaign, further reflecting the heavy domestic pressure being conducted through White House politicians led by Chief of Staff James Baker III and his deputy, Nancy Reagan favorite Mike Deaver, urging the President to back down in Lebanon to avoid Democratic attacks.

The ‘strategic alliance’

The signals from the impromptu Dec. 14 press conference augmented a series of strategic errors that drastically weaken the intended impact in Moscow of the President’s Dec. 12 policy clarification and related moves. Beyond the potentially fatal underestimate of Soviet short-term military intentions and risk-taking generally accepted by senior administration national security advisers, the decision to press for a U.S.-Israeli strategic alliance to supply an “effective” response in Lebanon compounded the problem.

As this correspondent has emphasized, readings in Moscow and other capitals of this American-Israeli relationship would be opposite from the message the President intended with his Dec. 12 statements. Moscow would spot a major

chink in White House armor, reasoning that the desperate negotiations conducted in Israel by Undersecretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, a Kissinger crony, were endorsed by President Reagan. Such an endorsement would have to be read as a U.S. attempt to secure Israeli ground forces in place of more American troops if the crisis in Lebanon were to escalate—as clearly it would if the White House chose to answer Syrian/Iranian provocations. In short, Moscow would have reason to question both the President's willingness to lead and the U.S. citizenry's willingness to follow in case of war.

On Dec. 11 and 12, senior spokesmen for American-allied moderate Arab states, King Hussein of Jordan and Dr. Osama el-Baz, an adviser to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, appearing on U.S. television, attacked the strategic accord in violent terms. Indeed on Dec. 11, Shultz, Eagleburger's co-conspirator, began an urgent visit to Tunisia and Morocco, after being dis-invited to Algeria, in a supposed effort to calm the moderate Arab allies of the United States, who, themselves weak, saw treachery and disaster in the new U.S. policy.

The reported arrangements for financial and military aid to be granted to Israel without concomitant Israeli concessions on the Palestinian question define the policy both Shultz and Eagleburger were advised to promote by Henry Kissinger. This arrangement would constitute the revival of a similar deal between former Secretary of State Alexander Haig and former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, which was scotched when Israel, with Haig's secret help, invaded Lebanon in 1982. When Haig was replaced, Reagan initiated a new Middle East policy, on Sept. 1, 1982, dubbed the Reagan Plan, which was strongly supported by the U.S.-allied Arab states. Resurrecting the Haig Plan means the Reagan Plan's death.

Meanwhile the Israeli government itself moved to capitalize on the perceived weakness of the United States when, on Dec. 11, it firmly announced it would not accept the evacuation of PLO chairman Yasser Arafat and his forces from Tripoli. Shortly after that announcement, the Israelis began naval shelling, and continued it even after Shultz and other administration officials, on Dec. 13, publicly pressed for Arafat's safe passage.

Finally, on Dec. 12, Syria and Iran, backed by Moscow, escalated with a wave of terror bombings in Kuwait aimed primarily at Americans. Then Soviet Chief of Staff Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov arrived in Algeria at the same time Shultz was "dis-invited" to that country. Reportedly Ogarkov was seeking to assure port-of-call rights in the wake of potential increased Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean.

In short, all relevant parties to the Middle East conflict now read U.S. weakness, not strength. The administration's actions have only helped to fuel an environment in the United States in which the use of American force, loss of life, and future loss of life in the Mideast are becoming the principal administration vulnerabilities.

General Graham is

by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

We have recently received a copy of a letter of Dr. Edward Teller to Lt.-Gen. (ret.) circulating to his supporters with his own covering letter.

Apparently, Dr. Teller was pressured or duped into endorsing a lie which Graham is circulating against Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. Teller's letter devotes two of its three paragraphs to attacks on LaRouche in support of this falsehood. However, Dr. Teller being Dr. Teller, the third paragraph of his letter informs Graham that the "High Frontier" policy is incompetent and useless against Soviet technology today.

Typical of Graham, his own covering letter advises his supporters to circulate only the first two paragraphs of Teller's letter in a whispering campaign against LaRouche.

General Graham's rise to the rank of Lieutenant-General came by the same route as the fictional character in Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore*, who rose to "Lord High Admiral of the Queen's Navee" by "polishing up the handle" on the office doors, and never going to sea. Graham, a flunkie for former Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and the screwballish Kissinger sidekick James R. Schlesinger, rose to his present rank by the same general practice as the four-paper-clip Kissinger sidekick Al Haig.

Graham's outstanding achievements have been faking intelligence estimates in Vietnam, and working with Schlesinger to wreck the system of national intelligence estimates of the U.S. executive branch at the beginning of the 1970s. Graham's most famous achievement was underestimating Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army forces in South Vietnam by 100 percent on the eve of the 1968 Tet Offensive, and defending the same methods of strategic intelligence estimates during the early 1970s from the Pentagon's DIA. Since the beginning of 1983, even prior to President Reagan's March 23, 1983 announcement of the new U.S. strategic doctrine of "Mutually Assured Survival," Graham has been a leading figure in efforts to block all funding for beam-weapon defense, arguing that his own obsolete "High Frontier" concoction is more "practical," and insisting that scientists are incompetent in matters of technology.

Graham's "High Frontier," proposal interestingly, requires about six years to put into place (approximately 1990). He estimates that it would cost about \$50 billion; it would actually cost about 50 percent more than that estimate, ig-