

International Intelligence

Sharon Consolidates Grip On Military, Security

An Israeli intelligence source told *EIR* that the termination of Israeli Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon is aimed at consolidating full control of the Israeli security/military establishment by those loyal to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz. These loyalists are hardliners who share Sharon's and Mofaz's views on Syria and Iran.

Ze'ev Schiff, military correspondent for the daily *Ha'aretz*, wrote similarly on Feb. 17 that the charge that Sharon and Mofaz are putting out, that Ya'alon opposed the planned disengagement from Gaza, is "groundless."

Elsewhere it is reported that also involved in the decision was Sharon's personal advisor, Dov Weisglass, who is also Sharon's principal emissary to the Bush White House, particularly to Vice President Dick Cheney. While the top prospect for Chief of Staff is Ya'alon's deputy and Sharon favorite Dan Halutz, another Sharon man is expected to move up the command ladder: Gen. Moshe Kaplinski, who just finished a tour of duty as commander of the Central Command. Prior to that he was Sharon's personal military secretary, in which capacity he often travelled to Washington to meet Bush Administration officials. He could become Deputy Chief of Staff. Gen. Benny Gantz, former Northern Commander, is expected to be made head of military intelligence.

The Knesset member representing the Yahed Party, Yossi Sarid, told *EIR* that it was irresponsible for Sharon to be "shaking the boat" just at the time that his disengagement plan is supposed to be implemented.

Mahathir Warns, U.S. Proxy May Bomb Iran

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad predicted to the *Malaysia Star* of Feb. 17 that the United States may use Israel as a proxy to launch an attack against Iran's nuclear facilities.

"The United States seems to want other people to fight for them," he said on Feb. 16, in response to a question on the development of the Iranian and North Korean nuclear issues.

The United States, he said, would attack Iran because it thought that the latter had no weapons of mass destruction, although such an allegation had been made against Tehran. "They attacked Iraq because they knew Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction," he added.

Protests Continue in Russia Against 'Reforms'

Political tension is running high around the devastating entitlements reforms, imposed in Russia since the start of the year. The protest demonstrations of the weekend of Feb. 12-13 involved several hundred thousand people, with particularly large turnouts in the central and Volga River basin regions.

At the Feb. 14 Cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov chastized the Minister of Health and Social Development for poor implementation of the reform. In a session with State Duma (parliament) leaders the next day, President Vladimir Putin continued to stress that the problem was with "glitches" in implementing the measures, rather than with the conception of the policy—which is based on the classic Mont Pelerin Society dictum that people should have cash with the "freedom to choose" how to spend it, rather than a guarantee of social security in the form of in-kind benefits. State television on Feb. 17 showed Putin in intense conversation with Gov. Nikolai Vinogradov of the Vladimir Region, who was giving a detailed report on the availability of medications there.

Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov announced on Feb. 16 that he would ask the Constitutional Court to review the cash-for-entitlements policy, saying that the law "grossly infringes the rights of the constituent territories of the Russian Federation" (i.e., the regions, which are forced to pay some of the cash compensation to people) and is incomprehensible

in some sections. Luzhkov is a member of the United Russia bloc, whose leader, Speaker of the Duma Boris Gryzlov, somewhat lamely rejoined that the Mayor has a right to his opinion and will not be subjected to "party discipline"!

Novgorod Governor Mikhail Prusak told Itar-TASS he would support Luzhkov's initiative. He said that Novgorod Region is implementing the reforms gradually, only as funds are available to make the cash payments, and he criticized the implementation of this policy, which hits senior citizens hard, in the year of the 60th anniversary of victory in World War II.

In Chita Region, the local government has filed a complaint with the Prosecutor General's office against a pharmaceuticals company called Rosta, which won the tender for the right to supply medicines in Siberia and the Far East under the new system, for failing to provide the drugs they are required to.

10 Million African AIDS Deaths Preventable

A study published in January shows that a combination of wide access to AIDS treatment and national prevention activities could avert 10 million deaths in Africa by 2020.

In the first modeling done of the long-term effects of treatment and prevention on the HIV epidemic in Africa, the Harvard School of Public Health, in collaboration with UNAIDS, UNICEF, the Futures Group, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, analyzed the potential impact on the rate of new infections and mortality, if large-scale treatment is used, either alone, or combined with scaled-up prevention efforts.

With no change in current levels of prevention and care, new HIV infections and deaths from AIDS in Africa are expected to continue to rise. The authors of the study estimate that a combination of treatment and prevention could reduce projected new infections by 74%, and projected annual mortality by half, which would mean about 29 million new infections prevented, as well as 10 million deaths averted in total.