

# Israeli Generals Revolt Against War Policy

by Dean Andromidas

The manifest failures of Israel's war in Lebanon have created a revolt within the Israeli military establishment, especially among some of the country's most respected retired officers. There have been calls for the resignation of Chief of Staff Gen. Dan Halutz, along with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Defense Minister Amir Peretz. While much of the criticism has focussed on the failings of the management of the war, the more astute of these officers are questioning whether Israel should have launched it in the first place.

But the underlying question, which few Israelis are prepared to ask publicly, is: Was Israel dragged into this war by U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and the synarchist forces that stand behind him, and will it be dragged into yet another, far more dangerous one, if Cheney orders an attack on Iran?

## Ya'alon: Corruption Is Biggest Threat

Former Chief of Staff Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, Halutz's immediate predecessor, gave an interview to the Sept. 15 edition of the daily *Ha'aretz*, much of which expressed the views within a broad swath of the Israeli military establishment. One senior military source described it to *EIR* as a "bombshell."

Disputing the justification for the war, Ya'alon said that during his term as Chief of Staff he had proposed to "act politically and in a limited military fashion so that in the end Hezbollah would disarm. I understood there was no military action which would smash or pulverize Hezbollah. I understood that there is no way to uproot Hezbollah from the hearts of the Shi'ites in Lebanon. I also understood that there is no gimmick that will remove the Katyusha threat instantly. . . ."

When asked if he would support negotiations with Syria, he said: "Yes. In the summer of 2003 I suggested to Prime Minister [Ariel] Sharon that he accede to the requests of [Syrian President] Bashar Assad and enter into negotiations with him. . . . Sharon rejected my suggestion outright. . . ."

Questioning the whole notion of using military force against Hezbollah, he said: "You have to understand the limitations of power. Those who do not understand them must not be in command of power. . . . You have to understand that the use of military force is a last resort. . . . And in order to use military force a legitimate strategic context is required. There was no such context regarding Hezbollah. . . . It was clear to me that Hezbollah is a rooted phenomenon and will not be

eradicated by military action."

He then said that the war actually could have ended after the first week, but instead, more force was used, "and instead of coordinating with the Americans for them to stop us when the operation was at its height, and setting into motion a political process. . . . We asked the Americans for more time. We let the Americans think that we have some sort of gimmick that will vanquish Hezbollah militarily. . . ."

While calling for the resignation of Olmert, Halutz, and Peretz because they are all responsible, Ya'alon's strongest attack was on the general political corruption, the use of "spin" as a replacement for truth, which led to launching military operations. He referred directly to the last offensive ground operation that was launched, just at the point when the ceasefire agreement was being finalized, and which led to the death of 33 Israeli soldiers. He said the tragedy now is that this corruption has spread into the highest echelon of the military. He specifically blamed Sharon, who politicized the military by placing his favorites in position. "The connection of officers to politics is undesirable. It is a corrupt connection," he said, and, "Corruption is the real threat to Israel. It is more dangerous than the Iranian threat and the Palestinian threat."

A few weeks before Ya'alon's interview, while the war was still raging, a similar assessment was issued by the Israeli peace organization Gush Shalom, in a paid advertisement which declared: "Starting this war was a scandal. . . . It was possible to solve the problem of the missiles in south Lebanon by diplomatic means. The offensive in the last two days of the war, in which 33 soldiers were killed after the ceasefire resolution had been accepted, was a spin of the prime minister. . . ."

Gush Shalom is led by Uri Avnery, and some Israelis had accused the group of treason when the ad was first published. Commenting on the Ya'alon interview, Avnery wrote in his newsletter, "Ya'alon is the very opposite of Gush Shalom. . . . He comes from the very center of the establishment. He is a rightist. He was responsible for some of the most cruel acts of the occupation. . . . Ya'alon's motives are unimportant. What is important is that things have been said by a person with supreme military credentials." When such a person makes these statements, "these things carry weight."

*Ha'aretz*, on Sept. 14, revealed that Israeli military intelligence had had information indicating that Hezbollah was planning a kidnapping of soldiers, before July 12, the date of the abduction, but the information was not passed on to the appropriate command. The same daily noted that over the last year, four other Hezbollah kidnapping attempts had failed, because Israeli military intelligence had information beforehand and passed it on to the ground commanders, who took appropriate action. The revelation begged the question of whether this was an example of incompetence—or evidence pointing to someone allowing the kidnapping to proceed, to provide the pretext for a war.

## It's the Bush Administration, Stupid

What Ya'alon failed to say in his interview, was that the Israeli leaders' most serious failure was to follow the policies of Dick Cheney and his backers, which promise to put Israel into the vortex of a clash of civilizations, where war is asymmetric and therefore unwinnable through military means.

While no one in the Israeli security establishment is prepared to say that Olmert's government colluded with Cheney, many retired officers told *EIR* something along these lines: "I don't agree with you: We Israelis are stupid enough to have made such a decision ourselves, we've always make the same mistake. But you are absolutely correct to say that Cheney was very happy with it and did everything to help us on the road to this disaster."

With Cheney and his fellow neo-cons planning a new war with Iran, Israeli military officers are now openly expressing their serious doubts with the Bush Administration. Gen. Giora Eiland (res.), former director of Israel's National Security Council, in an interview appearing in the *Jerusalem Post* on Sept. 15, criticized U.S. policy towards Iran. On the one hand, he said, the United States has not made any credible military threats against Iran. "On the other hand it is not prepared to offer a bigger carrot—in the form of a dramatic change in policy on Iran, to say that, 'We'll speak directly to you.'" Direct U.S. engagement "might make an impression on the Iranians. But the U.S. is ideologically opposed to doing this."

He said Israel had always been unwilling to so much as suggest to Washington that it change its policy when it is tougher than Israel's, on matters relating to "Iran, the Palestinians, the Syrians, whoever. We don't dare to suggest to them that perhaps something else would be better. . . . If we think the U.S. is making a mistake, we should say so. We don't. We do go to the Americans with complaints when we think they're not being tough enough, but never in the other direction." He went even further to say that the whole policy of not talking to Iran was wrong. The United States says, " 'Don't talk to them.' But that doesn't work. Neither Iran, nor Hezbollah, nor anybody else, surrendered. We're through with the era of the ultimatum."

## Madrid II or Netanyahu and Lieberman

The latest opinion polls give Olmert an approval rating of no more than 7%, far lower even than those of George Bush and Dick Cheney. Peretz's rating stood at 1%! In fact, the highest rating given to a member of Olmert's government was achieved by Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who reached only 14%. The big winner in the poll was Likud party chairman and Cheney agent Benjamin Netanyahu, who reached 27%. Israeli fascist Avigdor Lieberman achieved 15%. According to the poll, the Likud would double its Knesset seats and reach 24, and Lieberman's Yisrael Beitenue party could win at least 15, which could lead to a Lieberman-Netanyahu alliance that would form the core of a new government, putting Netanyahu into the Prime Minister's office, and bring



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*Israeli former Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon: "Corruption is the real threat to Israel. It is more dangerous than the Iranian threat and the Palestinian threat."*

Israel into a new war.

According to Israeli political observers, the only thing keeping Netanyahu out of the Prime Minister's office is the fact that the most recent elections were held less than five months ago, and the electorate would be loath to go to new elections so soon—the fourth general election in six years. The other reason is the fear of the alternative, Netanyahu and Lieberman.

As one intelligence source said, Olmert and his coalition partners know one thing, "We either hang together or hang separately," so they will do everything to keep the coalition from collapsing.

The coalition might survive, but will Israel? The only thing that could save Israel from another disaster is a Madrid II international peace conference or other regional peace initiative.

In a Sept. 12 column in *Yediot Ahronot*, Israel's largest-circulation daily, Yossi Beilin, who first called for a Madrid II at the end of the Lebanon war, called for a "September surprise," which would be a joint Arab-Israeli peace initiative. Beilin, whose call has been endorsed by Lyndon LaRouche, came out in support of moves by the Arab League to reintroduce the Arab Peace initiative of 2002. Beilin pointed out that when it was initiated by Saudi Arabia in 2002, the proposal received the support of 41% of the Israeli population.

"This is how Israel could create the September surprise," Beilin wrote. "It could come to the United Nations with a joint Israeli-Arab proposal that would assist in reviving the diplomatic process—whether by means of a second Madrid Conference or by some other less dramatic means. . . ."

"The abasement of the initiative was typical during Sharon's tenure," Beilin stated. "Today, we are paying the price. In light of the madness of fundamentalist threats, this is the time to create a coalition of sanity between Israelis and Arabs who wish to live. This can still become a reality in September 2006, but the window of opportunity will not be open for long."