

International Intelligence

British Expert Debunks Liquid Explosive Scare

Lt.-Col. Nigel Wylde (ret.), a former senior British Army Intelligence Officer, who was awarded the Queen's Gallantry Medal for his command of the Belfast Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit in 1974, recently said the liquid explosives threat featured in the August "terror plot" in Great Britain is a "fiction" and part of a "pattern of lies and deceit, according to a report originally posted on rawstory.com.

According to Wylde, the idea that people could sit in the plane lavatory and simply mix together these normal household fluids to create an explosive capable of blowing up the aircraft is untenable. So who came up with the idea that a bomb could be made on board? Not al-Qaeda, for sure. It would not work. Bin Laden is interested in success, not deterrence by failure.

"This story has been blown out of all proportion. The liquids would need to be carefully distilled at freezing temperatures to extract the required chemicals, which are very difficult to obtain in the purities needed," said Wylde. Once the fluids have been extracted, the process of mixing them produces significant amounts of heat and vile fumes. "The resulting liquid then needs some hours at room temperature for the white crystals that are the explosive to develop." The whole process, which can take between 12 and 36 hours, is "very dangerous, even in a lab, and can lead to premature detonation."

If there was a conspiracy, he added, "it did not involve manufacturing the explosives in the loo," as this simply "could not have worked." The fumes would also inevitably "cause the alarms in the toilet and in the air-change system in the aircraft to be triggered. The pilot has the ability to dump all the air from the aircraft as a fire-fighting measure, leaving people to use oxygen masks."

Even if it were possible for the explosive to have been made on the aircraft, the quantity involved would be small, and would not endanger the aircraft, the report stated.

"Why were the public delicately in-

formed of an alleged conspiracy which the authorities knew, or should have known, could not have worked?" Wylde asked.

For Egypt, Energy Policy To Include Nuclear

Gamel Mubarak, the son of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, in a speech delivered during the fourth annual convention of the ruling party on Sept. 19, said, "It is time for Egypt to put forth, and the party will put forth, this proposal for discussion about its future energy policies, the issue of alternative energy, including nuclear energy, as one of the alternatives," according to the *New York Times*. He is an assistant secretary general of the governing National Democratic Party, and head of its policies committee.

President Mbeki Targets Poverty as Threat

In his speech to the UN General Assembly on Sept. 19, South African President Thabo Mbeki stated that poverty and underdevelopment are the biggest threats to progress. He further "wished that if the wishes of the poorest people of the world could be turned into reality, this would be a century free of wars, free of hunger, and free of preventable diseases, and that it would be a century with great hopes for the better, peaceful and humane world."

He noted "that the global partnership for development is impossible . . . when the rich countries demand the right unilaterally to set the agenda and conditions for the implementation of commonly agreed programs."

Mideast 'Quartet' Meets at the UN

A high-level meeting of the so-called diplomatic Quartet group, which focusses on Israel and Palestine, and comprises the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and Russia, took place on Sept. 20 in

New York. The meeting was hosted by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to discuss developments in the Middle East since its last meeting on May 9. Also attending were: U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, the EU's High Representative for a Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja of Finland, which currently holds the EU Council presidency, and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

After the meeting, the following key points were made in a communiqué:

- The urgent need to make progress toward a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, concern about the grave crisis in Gaza, and the continued stalemate between Israel and the Palestinians, was noted;
- Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's efforts to form a Government of National Unity were welcomed;
- It emphasized the urgent need for the parties to implement fully all aspects of the Agreement on Movement and Access. Rafah and all other passages out of the Palestinian territories should remain open;
- Greater donor support should be encouraged, to meet the needs of the Palestinians, with particular emphasis on security-sector reform, reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, and economic development, and commended the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) devised by the EU and the World Bank to facilitate the channeling of aid directly to the Palestinian people;
- Israel and the Palestinian Authority should be encouraged to consider resumption of transfers of tax and customs revenues collected by Israel via TIM, noting, that such transfers would have a significant impact on the Palestinian economy and would improve the economic and humanitarian conditions in the West Bank and Gaza;
- The Quartet reaffirmed its commitment to the "Road Map" as the means to realize the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, and welcomed the prospect of a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and President Abbas soon.