

# NATO to be extended into the Mideast

by Joseph Brewda

Developments over the last week of May show that Operation Desert Storm, and the continuing destruction of Iraq through sanctions, are intended by the Anglo-American policymakers to extend NATO into the Middle East, with Israel as its main base of operations.

On May 29, President George Bush proclaimed another postwar Mideast initiative in an address before the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. His plan would impose a ban on the sale of weapons of mass destruction to the region—a policy designed to leave Israel as the unchallengeable regional power. The day prior to the address, a NATO meeting in Brussels adopted a U.S. proposal to form a British-run Rapid Reaction Corps, for use in the NATO area “from Norway to Turkey,” but also undoubtedly for “out-of-area” deployments in the Middle East and Africa. On May 31, U.S. Defense Secretary Richard Cheney announced in Israel that the United States would be “pre-positioning” undisclosed U.S. war matériel in Israel for “regional use.”

The idea of using the Anglo-American puppet state of Israel as the basis for NATO domination of the Middle East is an old one. In 1986, the Reagan-Bush administration commissioned a strategic study entitled “Discriminate Deterrence,” which advocated extending NATO into the Mideast with Israel as its anchor. The proposal to upgrade the U.S. strategic relationship with Israel, and the related idea of using it as a depot for NATO war matériel, was a central plank in Bush’s 1988 presidential campaign platform.

## Gutting Arab defenses

In his Air Force Academy address, Bush warned that “weapons proliferation” in the Mideast has become “dangerous,” and proposed that the world’s five largest weapons suppliers—the United States, Britain, France, Soviet Union, and China—curb their sales of conventional arms to the region. These five states, which are also the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, coordinated the recent obliteration of Iraq. Bush also called for a freeze on the sale of short-term missiles to countries in the region, and the imposition of a ban on the regional production of weapons-

grade uranium and poison gas.

The reality behind such professed concerns for peace is the following. Israel already has some 50-100 nuclear bombs; the technology to produce them was supplied by the United States, France, and Britain. Israel also has massive regional superiority in chemical and biological weapons, and the ability to deliver them, for the same reasons. Last fall, the United States sold Israel a Cray supercomputer, to allow it to design a nuclear bomb in the 50-megaton range.

No Arab state has a nuclear bomb, and, in fact, every major Arab state has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty—unlike Israel. A freeze on conventional arms development, in this context, would leave Israel unchallengeable.

Simultaneous with the Bush proposal, Defense Secretary Cheney traveled to Israel to announce a new arms package. The United States will fund almost all of Israel’s \$300 million Arrow missile development program, to give Israel the capability to shoot down whatever missile the Arabs might possess. As the recent war with Iraq showed, the Scuds are hardly top-of-the-line. Moreover, some \$700 million of extra weapons authorized by Congress after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait will soon be delivered.

More importantly, Cheney’s also announced that the U.S. has already begun to pre-position undisclosed arms in hardened bunkers in Israel, supposedly exclusively under U.S. control.

Claiming that the arrangement did not contradict Bush’s disarmament plan, Cheney told the Israeli press, “There is nothing inconsistent with, on the one hand, saying that we are interested in pursuing arms control, and on the other hand providing for legitimate security requirements.” Although the U.S. has refused to disclose what matériel is being pre-positioned, various regional sources project that it includes nuclear weapons and related capabilities.

## A new war?

Meanwhile, the much-discussed postwar regional security arrangement, which involves Egypt, Syria, the Gulf states, and the United States—but not Israel—is falling apart. In May, Washington quietly ordered Egypt and Syria to pull their troops out of Saudi Arabia. This withdrawal was depicted in the press as a sovereign Egyptian decision—to preserve the illusion that the U.S. still needs or wants “brown” troops.

Instead of relying on these troops, the U.S. will be setting up a naval base in tiny Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, linked up with its Diego Garcia naval base in the Indian Ocean. These U.S. bases, together with Israel—and no Arab army—will be the centers of U.S. power in the region.

If Israel goes to war with the inferior forces of Syria, as the U.S. seems to be planning, or if Egypt is destabilized by an assassination of President Hosni Mubarak (which some say the U.S. is also planning), there will be nothing left in the region which could constrain the Anglo-Americans’ Israeli puppet state.