

# Bush gives go-ahead for new Mideast war

by Joseph Brewda

Casting himself as a new David fighting an awesome Goliath, U.S. President George Bush told reporters on Feb. 25 that he was determined to link \$10 billion in U.S. housing loan guarantees to Israel to a freeze on Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories. "I'm not going to shift the foreign policy of this country because of political expediency," he said, alluding to the vast powers of the U.S. Zionist lobby—which Bush has always patronized. "Frankly, we have an obligation to the American taxpayer," Secretary of State James Baker added.

The decision was promptly condemned by numerous senators, including Robert Kasten (R-Wisc.), Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.), and J. Bennett Johnston (D-La.). "I believe that United States responsibility to Soviet Jews is at least as compelling" as the question of the (illegal) settlements where the Jews would be housed, Kasten railed.

But this election theater has intentionally obscured the fact that the Bush administration is encouraging Israel to go to war, possibly during this spring's U.S. primary season. There has never been an Israeli war with the Arabs that was not first cleared in London and Washington.

## Provocations mount

On Feb. 16, Israeli helicopters launched a rocket attack on a car convoy of the Hezbollah leader Sheikh Abbas Musawi in southern Lebanon, killing him and his family. The operation against the Iranian-run guerrilla leader had been planned for six months, according to Israeli authorities, and was not in response to any particular incident. Following the murder and a 50,000-man funeral in Beirut, Hezbollah guerrilla units in Lebanon predictably began firing rockets into northern Israel.

Also on Feb. 16, Israeli aircraft attacked two Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon, killing four people and wounding ten. The attack was in purported response to the killing of three Israeli soldiers at their barracks in northern Israel.

On Feb. 19, Israeli armed units, backed by helicopters and 36 tanks, attacked United Nations peacekeeping forces stationed on the border between Lebanon and Israel, gravely wounding two U.N. soldiers from Fiji, and wounding a dozen more. After attacking the U.N. forces, the Israelis bulldozed their way through U.N. positions and attacked seven villages in southern Lebanon, in what was termed a 24-hour "clean up operation." Following the invasion, Israeli officials

told the press that they would soon return if "extremists" resumed their earlier rocket attack on Israel. They did not say whether they would again attack U.N. soldiers.

Speaking on Feb. 20, Secretary of State Baker refused to condemn Israel for the murder of Musawi, the invasion of Lebanon, or the attack on U.N. troops. "It's unfortunate," Baker blandly told the Washington press corps, "that there are these ever increasing cycles of violence." The same day, State Department spokesman Margaret Tutwiler asserted, "I am not going to make a judgment on if this was justified, non-justified. You know very well there have been rockets that have been launched onto Israeli soil off of Lebanese soil."

For its part, the U.N. Security Council, chaired in February by U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering, refrained from condemning Israel for either the invasion or the attack on U.N. troops. Instead, a mealy-mouthed statement was first issued against the "upsurge of violence" in the region, followed by a mild protest no one took seriously, issued as the Israelis were already withdrawing.

The new U.N. secretary general, Boutros Boutros Ghali, former deputy prime minister of Egypt and a life-long British asset, could only issue appeals for "restraint . . . on all sides," especially given the supposed promise of the Bush-initiated Mideast peace conference which reopened in Washington on Feb. 24.

The British Broadcasting Corporation had its own evaluation of the new invasion, and coming invasions: "a neat and efficient exercise in an election year," as Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir faces a national election in June while an embattled George Bush has to contend with this spring's primary season.

## Iraq set to be hit

While Israel was invading Lebanon, the United States was again threatening military action against Iraq. On Feb. 19, the U.N. Security Council warned that Iraq would face "serious consequences" if it didn't unconditionally comply with all U.N. demands concerning elimination of weapons of mass destruction, and capacity to build such weapons. According to the new U.N. demand, four assembly lines in Iraqi factories must be dismantled simply because they had the potential of being used for military production purposes. There is also a new report before the U.N. Human Rights Commission, which makes the unprecedented demand that U.N. "human rights monitors" be allowed full and unimpeded access anywhere and everywhere they might want to go inside Iraq.

On Feb. 20, British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd raged against the Iraqi leadership in a London address before the Anglo-Egyptian Society. Warning against alleged Iraqi violations of U.N. resolutions pertaining to the Kurdish part of Iraq, Hurd threatened, "Saddam should not think we will stand idly by."