

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration is moving cautiously on a new pilot program that would both detect ...

Children with type 1 diabetes are more likely to be overweight than those without the disease, increasing their risk of serious ...

TEHRAN — "About 200 thousand people will die each year in Iran as a result of smoking cigarettes within the next ten years," ...

PERSPECTIVE



Rewards of Syrian diplomacy

By Patrick Seale

The decision of the Obama administration to send an ambassador to Damascus after a four-year break is a noteworthy development. It is a recognition by the U.S. of Syria's regional importance; it is an admission that the Bush policy of seeking to isolate and punish Syria was a failure; and it is a realistic assessment that an Israeli-Palestinian settlement would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve if Syria were left out.

It is therefore a strong signal that U.S. President Barack Obama is seeking, not just Israeli-Palestinian peace, but a comprehensive Middle East settlement, involving Syria and, of course, Lebanon as well.

Obama has clearly understood that the Bush administration's policy towards the Arab and Muslim world - the global 'War on Terror' and the blind support for Israel - served only to inflame terrorism, create major obstacles to Middle East peace, and endanger American national interests. Obama is now seeking to correct America's policy.

This is good news for Syria's President Bashar Al Assad. His early years in power, and especially the years 2002 to 2006, were a period of great anxiety, which he managed to survive against great odds. He survived the U.S. neo-cons' aggressive determination to reshape the Middle East to Israel's benefit. He survived the American occupation of Iraq which, had it been successful, would undoubtedly have brought down his own regime. And he survived the forced withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, after the February 2005 assassination of former prime minister Rafik Hariri.

Throughout all these trials, Syrian diplomacy managed to defend the country's vital interests. It prevented Lebanon - Syria's 'near abroad' - from falling under the influence of a hostile power, thus protecting Syria's own sphere of influence in the Levant; it resisted U.S.-Israeli hegemony by forging its own regional alliance, notably the Tehran-Damascus-Hezbollah axis; and it remained steadfast in its backing of Palestinians of all stripes, including Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah and Khalid Meshal's Hamas.

The regime's legitimacy rests essentially on its steadfast refusal to compromise its Arab nationalist credentials. With the population at large, it also rests on the fact that it has managed to provide Syria with reasonable protection in a highly turbulent region. Several other Arab societies have been shattered by U.S. invasions, Israeli assaults, civil wars, insurgencies or other disturbances, but Syria has remained relatively unscathed.

This has come, however, at considerable cost ... Al Assad is aware that regional peace is essential if he is to achieve his ambition of building a modern state. He has called repeatedly for negotiations with Israel. Not surprisingly, he is anxious to recover the Golan, seized by Israel in 1967. But Syria has no time for a peace which will give Israel further strategic advantages or allow it to continue to oppress the Palestinians.

Living nose-to-nose in the Levant with Israel has not been comfortable for Syria. Its enduring goal has been to find a way to contain Israel. It has therefore sought to acquire a certain deterrent capability, if not by military means - not an easy task in view of the Israel Defense Forces' overwhelming power - then by expanding its network of allies and friends.

Iran has been Syria's strategic partner for 30 years, indeed ever since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 overthrew the Shah, ending Iran's alliance with the U.S. and Israel. And Hezbollah has been Syria's main partner in Lebanon, ever since this resistance movement emerged in the early 1980s to fight Israel's occupation. Hezbollah forced Israel's final departure from Lebanon in 2000, and successfully resisted its latest assault in 2006.

Syria's backing for the Hamas government in Gaza, together with the base it provides for Meshal in Damascus, underlines its view that Hamas, much like Hezbollah, is not a 'terrorist organization' but a legitimate movement of national resistance to Israeli occupation and aggression - a view widely shared throughout the Arab world, and which Europe and the U.S. itself will no doubt have to come to in due course.

Syria has already established better relations with European heavyweights such as France, Spain and the Britain, and with Russia and China. It has consolidated its close ties with Turkey. It has also found common ground with Qatar and Iraq.

An illusion, still entertained in some quarters in the U.S., is that peace with Israel might induce Syria to sever its links with Iran and Hezbollah, and abandon the Palestinians to an uncertain fate. Such thinking suggests a misunderstanding of the vital interests which Al Assad since 2000, and his late father former president Hafiz Al Assad, have been determined to defend.

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(Source: Gulf News)

Israel's act of piracy



The "Spirit of Humanity," along with members of a group of foreign peace activists seized at sea by the Israeli navy remained in custody until Friday.

By Paul Craig Roberts

On June 30, the government of Israel committed an act of piracy when the Israeli Navy in international waters illegally boarded the "Spirit of Humanity," kidnapped its 21-person crew from 11 countries, including former U.S. Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney and Nobel Laureate Mairead McGuire, and confiscated the cargo of medical supplies, olive trees, reconstruction materials, and children's toys that were on the way to the Mediterranean coast of Gaza. The "Spirit of Humanity," along with members of a group of foreign peace activists seized at sea by the Israeli navy remained in custody until Friday.

Gaza has been described as the "world's largest concentration camp." It is home to 1.5 million Palestinians who were driven by force of American-supplied Israeli arms out of their homes, off their farms, and out of their villages so that Israel could steal their land and make the Palestinian land available to Israeli settlers.

What we have been witnessing for 60 years is a replay in modern times, despite the United Nations and laws strictly preventing Israel's theft of Palestine, of the 17th, 18th, and 19th century theft of American Indian lands by U.S. settlers. An Israeli government spokesman recently rebuked the President of the United States, a country, the Israeli said, who stole all of its land from Indians, for complaining about Israel's theft of Palestine.

I knew the "Spirit of Humanity" would fall to Israeli piracy the minute I received on June 25 from an official of an Israeli peace organization a "public advisory" that the government of Cyprus had withheld permission for the "Spirit of Humanity" to leave for Gaza. The U.S. State Department had advised that "The Israeli Foreign Ministry informed U.S. officials at the American Embassy in Tel Aviv that Israel still considers Gaza an area of conflict and that any boats attempting to sail to Gaza will not be permitted to reach its destination." The "Spirit of Humanity" obtained permission to leave Cyprus when all aboard signed a waiver absolving Cyprus of all responsibility for the crew's safety at the hands of the Israelis.

As President Obama has called for humanitarian aid to be sent to Gaza, and as the International Red Cross has damned the inhumanity of Israel's blockade, the question that immediately comes to mind is why did not the United States send sufficient U.S. Navy escort to see the "Spirit of Humanity" safely through international waters to Gaza? We send ships against Somali pirates, why not against Israeli ones?

We all know the answer. The U.S. talks a good "human rights" game, but never delivers--especially if the human rights abuser is Israel. After all, Israel owns the U.S. Congress and President Obama. Israel even has an Israeli citizen and former member of the Israeli Defense Forces as the Chief-of-Staff in Obama's White House. Israel owns millions of American "Christian Zionists" and "rapture evangelicals." When it comes to Israel, the American government is a puppet state. It does what it is told.

Macho Americans might stand tall, but not when Israel snaps its fingers.

Israel, of course, will get away with a mere act of piracy. After all, Israel has been getting away with its war crimes and violations of international law for 60 years. If the UN tries to do anything, the U.S. will veto it, as the U.S. has done for decades.

What will happen to the kidnapped foreign nationals? Most likely they will be released and sent back to their respective countries. Israel, of course, will keep the stolen "Spirit of Humanity" to foreclose any further attempts by human rights activists to run Israel's inhumane blockade of Gaza.

On the other hand, Israel might declare its captives to be terrorists on the ground that the Gazans elected in a free election Hamas as their government. Hamas, unlike Israel, is declared to be a terrorist organization by the puppet American State Department in Washington. Thus the human rights activists onboard the "Spirit of Humanity" are aiding and abetting terrorists by delivering goods to them. The U.S. Department of Justice (sic) prosecutes American citizens and charities for sending aid to Palestinians on the grounds that Palestinians, if

Gaza aid boat passengers still in Israeli custody

JERUSALEM (AP) — Most members of a group of foreign peace activists seized at sea by the Israeli navy remained in custody Friday, three days after their failed attempt to run Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip, relatives and supporters said.

In the latest attempt by activists to break a crippling two-year blockade of Gaza, a group called the Free Gaza Movement sent the ship loaded with humanitarian supplies and 21 activists and crew from Cyprus.

The Israeli navy intercepted the ship

Tuesday after it ignored repeated messages saying it would not be allowed to enter Gaza waters and ordering it to turn back.

Among those still being held Friday were former U.S. Representative Cynthia McKinney and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mairead Corrigan Maguire, said Sandra Law, mother of detained British activist Alex Harrison.

Law, speaking to The Associated Press from her London home, said her daughter was being held together with other women from the group at Ramle jail, near Ben-Gurion airport. She said she spoke briefly to

her daughter on Friday.

"The conditions (in the jail) aren't great, but they're certainly not as bad as they could be," Law said. "They're in good spirits. ... Alex is very upbeat."

She said the planned deportation of the activists may have been delayed by their refusal to sign legal documents in Hebrew, which they do not understand.

Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor said that those who signed an undertaking to return home voluntarily could be released immediately and repatriated on the first available flight.

not everyone a terrorist, are governed by terrorists.

I wouldn't be surprised if a Nobel Laureate and a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives, along with the rest of the crew, are handed over to the Americans for indefinite detention and for torturing and waterboarding in the American torture facility at Bagram. I am certain that "Homeland Security" and the U.S. Government are desperate to be rid of all of critics, and knocking off a Nobel Laureate and a member of the House sets a precedent for getting rid of the rest of us.

Meanwhile, California, which has become a failed state, has been denied bailout money from Washington. Israel, which has been a failed state for 60 years, can, unlike the American state of California, always count on Washington to deliver the money and the weapons to keep Israel going.

The same week that "our" government in Washington told the Governor of California "not one red cent," President Barack Obama handed over \$2.775 billion to Israel.

Online Journal (June 29) reported that the handover to Israel of the unemployed Americans' tax dollars took place in a "tiny Capitol room" to which members of the press were denied access. I mean, really, who wants the media writing about U.S. taxpayer dollars for Israel's nuclear weapons while Americans are being kicked out of their homes. Not that, of course, the "Christian" supporters of Israel would mind.

Unlike every other recipient of U.S. military largesse, Israel is permitted to bypass the Pentagon and to deal directly with U.S. suppliers. Consequently, the Israel Lobby's influence multiplies, because military suppliers fight for Israel in congressional committees in order to get Israel's business. This lets Israel turn the screws on Iran. According to Grant F. Smith writing in Online Journal, Republican U.S. Representative Mark Steven from Illinois has received \$221,000 in campaign contributions from Israel political action committees (PACs). Therefore, it was a sure thing that he would introduce legislation preventing the Import-Export bank from providing loan guarantees to countries doing business with Iran.

Americans think that they are a superpower, but in fact they are a stupor-power. A puppet state if truth be known.

There is a great deal of evidence, even in Time Magazine that Israel is a child abuser. "God's Chosen People" routinely abuses captured Palestinian children. The Israelis also abuse Palestinian children by shooting them down in the streets.

Don't take my word for it. The Geneva-based Defense for Children International says, according to Time Magazine, that "the ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian child prisoners appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalized, suggesting complicity at all levels of the political and military chain of command."

According to Time Magazine, "Often, children suffer lasting traumas from jail. Says Saleh Nazzal from the Palestinian Ministry of Prisoner Affairs, 'When soldiers burst into a house and drag away a child, he loses his feeling of being protected by his family. He comes back from prison alienated from his family, his friends. They don't like going back to school or even leaving the house. They start wetting their beds.' Says Mona Zaghrout, a YMCA counselor who helps kids returning from prison: 'They come out of prison thinking and acting like they are men. Their childhood is gone.' And they often turn to another father figure--the armed militant groups fighting the Israeli occupation."

And so it goes. There's no money for California, or for Americans' health care, or for the several million Americans who have lost their homes and are homeless, because Israel needs it. Israel need the Americans' taxpayers money to that it can create even more enemies, and, therefore, need more American money to spend with the American armament industries to oppress more Palestinians and to make more enemies, requiring more American money to protect Israel from its folly and its evil.

And the brainwashed American public goes along year after year.

(Source: Vdare.com)

Anti-U.S. protesters denounce Biden visit to Iraq

BAGHDAD (Reuters) — Supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr paraded through a Baghdad slum on Friday, burning American flags and shouting anti-U.S. slogans during a visit to Iraq by U.S. Vice President Joe Biden.

Biden was on a trip to Iraq to promote reconciliation between Iraq's fractious groups after six years of bloodshed. He met for breakfast on Friday with his son Beau Biden, who is serving there with the U.S. military.

Biden started his visit to Iraq on Thursday night, after U.S. forces pulled out of Iraq's towns and cities this week under the terms of a bilateral security pact that paves the way for a full U.S. withdrawal by 2012.

After Friday prayers, hundreds and possibly thousands of residents of Sadr City chanted "down, down USA" and burned U.S. flags in protest at Biden's visit. A smaller demonstration also took place in Kerbala, in the Shi'ite south.

Biden helped author a 2006 plan to split Iraq into self-ruled Sunni, Shi'ite and Kurdish enclaves. That plan angered many Iraqis, and was quietly shelved as violence ebbed.

"Biden has come here to divide Iraq according to his plan," said a message from Sadr read out by one Imam in a mosque.

One of Baghdad's blinding dust storms blanketed the city on Friday, grounding helicopters and forcing Biden to reschedule meetings with Iraqi officials.

White House officials said Biden would meet President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, and U.S. commanders and troops, marking the U.S. July 4 Independence Day holiday.

This was Biden's second trip to Iraq this year and his first as vice president. President Barack Obama visited Iraq in April.

Biden's visit comes at a critical time in U.S.-Iraqi relations. The bilateral security pact sets a target of pulling all U.S. forces out of Iraq by 2012, putting pressure on Sunni, Shi'ite and Kurdish leaders to resolve disputes over power, oil and land that have stalled reconciliation.

Iraqi politicians had mixed feelings about Biden's visit.

"This visit is important ... the issue of dividing Iraq was rejected by Iraqis, so we don't fear it," said Abdul-Kareem al-Samarrai, head of parliament's Accordance Front Sunni bloc.

"But the reconciliation issue ... should be activated by Iraqis themselves not by others' recommendations."

Obama this week asked Biden to play a coordinating role in the White House on Iraq policy.

The sectarian warfare and insurgency unleashed by the 2003 U.S.-led invasion have receded dramatically over the past year, but there continue to be largescale attacks. Some Iraqis blame U.S. policies for sowing those divisions.

"So far, we haven't experienced neutrality from the U.S. toward the differing parties. They usually back a party against another," said Usama al-Nujaifi, a lawmaker from former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's Iraqiya list.

Nasseer al-Issawi, from Sadr's movement, called Biden's visit a "public interference in Iraq's affairs."