

Grist for Israel's propaganda war

Sharon brandishes documents to justify slaughter of Palestinians

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Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has this week given prominence to accusations that documents seized during the Israeli Defence Force's invasion of the West Bank and Gaza Strip prove a direct connection between Palestinian Authority (PA) leader Yasser Arafat and terror attacks.

With Arafat still trapped in his Ramallah headquarters, the purpose of this latest propaganda offensive is not only to justify Israel's ongoing efforts to destroy the PA but to kill Arafat should it be decided that this is the favoured course of action.

The documents are published in an annotated form on the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) website and were presented to the Knesset by Sharon on April 8.

Sharon said, "The gangs of murderers have a leader... The one who sends them is the head of the Palestinian Authority Yasser Arafat."

As justification Sharon showed the documents alleging that Arafat and Marwan Barghouti, who heads Arafat's Fatah faction in the West Bank, had systematically trained and dispatched terrorists to kill Israelis. "What began as a fear and grew stronger into a suspicion, has turned into a solid fact that no one can deny," he insisted.

The seized documents, typewritten in Arabic on stationery headed the "al-Aqsa Martyrs Troops," were immediately denounced as forgeries by the PA. Senior Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said that Sharon "has asked everyone to help with his public relations campaign and the Israelis are very busy fabricating things." There is every reason to concur with Erekat's supposition. Certainly the "discovery" of the documents is fortuitous for Sharon to say the least. It comes amidst a military campaign against the PA that Israel has justified by alleging that the PA regime sponsors terrorist acts such as suicide bombings, a charge that Arafat has consistently

rejected.

The documents include a letter addressed to Arafat from the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, asking for several thousand dollars to pay for explosives and ammunition for various Fatah militants, as well as a request for funds from Barghouti.

The Bush administration has added the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades to its list of terrorist organisations, so proving a direct chain-of-command link between Arafat, Barghouti and the brigade's funding is central to Sharon's appeal for his offensive against the PA be included under America's umbrella "war against terrorism".

The documents, all said to have been written in September, were allegedly found during a search of the offices of Fuad Shubaki, said to be the chief procurement and finance officer of the Palestinian security services. Making the link to Shubaki is also important for Sharon. In January Shubaki was identified as having allegedly financed and organised the Karine A weapons shipment. The Karine A was seized by Israeli forces and was said by Mossad to contain arms from Iran to the PA.

A military spokesman said, "What we have here for the first time is a document which connects directly those responsible for terrorist activity and their requesting the money from an official person within the Palestinian Authority, and not just any person, but Shubaki."

Shubaki is not only a political ally of Arafat. Crucially for Sharon, he is presently trapped alongside him in the PA's Ramallah headquarters.

A number of additional points must be made on the documents. Firstly, even if they were genuine, there is no reply to the alleged requests by Arafat and no proof that money was ever transferred from the PA to the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade.

Secondly, Israel is raining down tons of high explosive

rockets every single day on innocent civilians and utilising some of the world's most sophisticated US-built helicopters, tanks and other armaments to lay siege to the Palestinians. In light of this, the outrage expressed by Sharon and the IDF at the PA's desperate efforts to secure a few anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons and explosives is obscene.

Israel is insisting on its own effective monopoly on the use of violence, in order to pronounce all acts of resistance on the part of the Palestinians as being tantamount to terrorism.

Accompanying the documents on the IDF website is a statement entitled, "The Palestinian Authority's Possession of Arms in Violation of International Agreements". This lists what it describes as the PA's "Systematic Violation of Agreements", because it should confine itself to internal policing—"maintaining armed forces for internal security purposes". In consequence the PA is only supposed to use "rifles, pistols and machine-guns" and is "not permitted to possess anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapon systems, mortars and ammunition for these systems."

Nothing could better express the real attitude of Israel's ruling elite—past and present—to the question of Palestinian independence. The so-called agreements Sharon is seeking to enforce contain provisions designed to ensure that the Palestinian Authority can only develop as a vassal regime, wholly subservient to its more powerful neighbour. Some form of Palestinian entity will only be tolerated providing it confines itself to suppressing the democratic and social aspirations of the Palestinian masses and poses no threat to Israeli military hegemony. Sharon's efforts to destroy the PA's entire infrastructure is the most brutal and fully developed expression of this consistent policy of the Zionist regime and its imperialist backers in the United States.



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