

WikiLeaks confirms Fatah sought Israeli-US support for attack on Hamas

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29 December 2010

A classified cable released by WikiLeaks originating from the US embassy in Tel Aviv has revealed how members of Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party asked Israel to attack its rival Hamas, which had won elections in January 2006.

According to the dispatch, dated June 13, 2007, Yuval Diskin, the head of Shin Bet, Israel's security agency, told the US ambassador to Israel at a meeting two days earlier that "demoralised" Fatah officials in Gaza had asked for help against Hamas. Diskin said, "They are approaching a zero-sum situation, and yet they ask us to attack Hamas. They are desperate. This is a new development. We have never seen this before".

He was also quoted as saying, "Fatah is in a very bad shape in Gaza. We have received requests to train their forces in Egypt and Yemen. We would like to get them to get the training they need, and to be more powerful, but they do not have anyone to lead them".

He praised Shin Bet's "very good working relationship" with Abbas's own internal security service and said that the latter shared "almost all the intelligence that it collects" with the Shin Bet. He added, "They understand that Israel's security is central to their survival in the struggle with Hamas in the West Bank".

Diskin was speaking about the events surrounding Fatah's abortive coup, planned by the US and Israel in consultation with Jordan, aimed at overthrowing the elected Palestinian government. The details of the plans were later revealed in *The Gaza Bombshell*, published in *Vanity Fair* in February 2008. The article, based on leaked documents and interviews with key players in the Bush administration, brought to light how the US had plotted the armed overthrow of the Hamas government.

The plan was prepared and implemented at the time

that President George W. Bush publicly professed that the last great ambition of his presidency was to broker a deal that would create a viable Palestinian state and bring peace to the region.

The plan was that Muhammad Dahlan, Abbas's national security advisor and a Fatah strongman, would facilitate the downfall of Hamas with forces armed by Washington. Dahlan, who had worked closely with the FBI and CIA since the 1990s, was publicly described by Bush as "a good solid leader" and privately called "our man".

In other words, Abbas explicitly signed on to a State Department coup against a government in which his own party had been participating, an all-out civil war against Hamas and the suppression of all Palestinian opposition to Israel. In return, he was given a vague promise of support for a non-contiguous Palestinian mini-state.

The plan backfired. Instead of removing Hamas, its effect was to provoke a tragic and ongoing factional struggle between Fatah and Hamas. The conflict brought Palestine to the point of civil war and produced a pre-emptive action in Gaza by Hamas to forestall the coup planned by Fatah in May-June 2007.

Hamas's original aim was fairly limited, to get rid of Fatah's Preventive Security Service. However, when Fatah's forces beat a speedy retreat, Hamas decided to eliminate their opponents once and for all. After five days of ferocious fighting, Hamas took control of Gaza and routed Fatah. The result was another foreign policy debacle for the Bush administration.

The embassy cables confirm what was known at the time. For example, on June 7, 2007, Israel's *Ha'aretz* reported that Abbas and Lieutenant General Keith Dayton, the US security coordinator for the Palestinians—in charge of training Fatah's forces—had

asked Israel to authorise the biggest Egyptian arms shipment yet into Gaza for Fatah supporters.

The WikiLeaks cable exposes Abbas and Fatah yet again as paid subcontractors for Tel Aviv and Washington. Fatah is so loathed and despised that Abbas and his so-called government in the West Bank remain isolated in Ramallah, while Abbas himself lives in Amman.

Another significant cable published by WikiLeaks, concerning a meeting June 12, 2007, just days before Hamas routed Fatah, reports that Amos Yadlin—then head of Israel’s military intelligence—told US embassy staff that Israel would be “happy” for Hamas to take power.

The cable said, “Although not necessarily representing a GOI [government of Israel] consensus view, Mr Yadlin said Israel would be ‘happy’ if Hamas took over Gaza because the IDF [Israel Defence Forces] could then deal with Hamas as a hostile state”.

Yadlin regarded that as preferable to a situation where Israel had “to deal with Hamas as a non-state actor”.

While his position contradicted Israel’s publicly stated policy at the time, the Israeli military did launch an assault on Gaza in 2008-2009 that killed nearly 1,400 people, mainly civilians, after consultation with Abbas and the Mubarak regime in Cairo.

This latter fact is confirmed by yet another leaked cable. It reports on a meeting in June 2009 between Ehud Barak, minister of defence, and a US congressional delegation. This was just days before President Barack Obama’s speech in Cairo, promising a new beginning in US-Middle East relations and a resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Barak said that the Israeli government “had consulted with Egypt and Fatah prior to Operation Cast Lead [Israel’s 2008-2009 assault on Gaza], asking if they were willing to assume control of Gaza once Israel defeated Hamas”. He added that “Not surprisingly, Israel received negative answers from both”.

According to the same cable, Barak also expressed his belief that “the Palestinian Authority is weak and lacks self-confidence, and that General Dayton’s training helps bolster confidence”.

The leaked American cables reveal the degree to which US foreign policy involves intrigues with small cliques, while relying on a servile media to manipulate

public opinion and obscure the real issues. Far from seeking peace, the US and its junior partner Israel actively promote strife in the region in pursuit of their geo-strategic objectives.



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