«Israel»
Prototype for the RDF

This is a continuation of the study on US—Israeli relations and the Zionist state's role in the Middle East.

The US—Israeli 1983 memorandum of understanding was a concrete working program for strategic military cooperation, providing for: coordination of objectives, strategies and tactics; prepositioning US military equipment, ammunition and fuel in 'Israel'; US use of Israeli hospitals in an emergency; use of Haifa port by the US 6th fleet; US air force use of Israeli runways and ground support, and the construction of a special facility for US Strategic Projection Force aircraft; shipment of US supplies to the Lebanese Army overland via 'Israel'; intelligence-sharing; Israeli maintenance and overhaul of US aircraft and ships in the eastern Mediterranean; cooperation in anti-submarine warfare; «anti-terrorist» cooperation; coordinated air and naval maneuvers; coordinated defense industry planning, and research and development; and joint economic and security projects in 'third world' countries.

In the main, the 1983 agreement represented institutionalization of military cooperation that has evolved over the years, based on the imperatives of imperialist strategy in the Middle East, and the Zionist leadership's efforts to assert its ability to further these imperatives. An earlier installment of this study dealt with this agreement in terms of US objectives (see *Democratic Palestine* 18:«Israel: *Nom de Guerre* for US Military Base»).This article will examine the special operations undertaken by 'Israel' to attain its status as the local power most capable of projecting US imperialism's force in the area.

Although the Zionists usually emphasize Israeli «defense and security» needs, the reality is that few if any of the state's military operations can be justified in terms of defense. In addition to expansionism, an overriding aim of Israeli wars and special operations has been to attain recognition that 'Israel' is imperialism's most valuable ally in the region. Long before the US conceived the Rapid Deployment Force (now the Central Command) or began building its own bases in the Middle East, 'Israel' was serving as a *de facto* RDF for imperialist endeavors. In 1966, an Israeli official told the *New York Times*, «The US has come to the conclusion that it can no longer respond to every incident around the world, that it must rely on a local power... as a first line to stave off America's direct involvement... Israel feels that she fits this definition» (cited in *Palestine Focus*, May-June 1987). The US's tendency to use its own military power in the Middle East over the past decade has not diminished the Israeli role, but rather had led to more advanced cooperation between the two states.

TERROR AND DISINFORMATION

It was 'Israel' that staged the world's first hijacking in December 1954, capturing a civilian Syrian aircraft to get hostages to exchange for Israeli soldiers who had been captured infiltrating Syrian territory. In 1958, the Zionist state provided logistical support at Haifa port for the landing of US Marines in Lebanon to prop up Camille Chamoun's pro-imperialist government. This set the precedent for May 1983, when the USS Savannah docked at Haifa to take on supplies

for the 6th fleet anchored off Beirut, in the failed attempt to shore up Amin Gemayel's reactionary government. Later the same year, the memorandum of understanding was signed, making such US naval visits routine. As reported by the *Jerusalem Post*, April 4, 1986, US ships have anchored in Haifa 221 times since 1977, including twelve visits by aircraft carriers.

As fighting erupted between the Jordanian regime and the Palestinian revolution in 1970,'Israel' eyed the chance to prove its credentials in Washington once again, and possibly expand its own territory eastwards. The Israeli intelligence claimed Syria had invaded Jordan with a massive force on the side of the Palestinians - a claim which the US was obviously unable to verify. 'Israel' claimed it would take both the army and air force to deal with this. Though nothing materialized, Rabin, then Israeli ambassador to the US (currently Defense Minister), recorded the Israeli gains in his memoirs as he asserted had been related to him by Kissinger: «The President (Nixon) will never forget Israel's role in preventing the deterioration in Jordan and blocking the attempt to overthrow the regime there. He (Nixon) said the United States is fortunate in having an ally like Israel in the Middle East. These events will be taken into account in all future developments» (quoted in Seymour Hirsch, *The Price of Power* and cited in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* 54, Winter 1985).

SETTING PRECEDENTS FOR BLACKMAIL

'Israel' has staged a series of spectacular 'firsts' to establish its reputation as a 'superman' able to deal with 'terrorists' (read: anti-imperialists) and to battletest military equipment and techniques for itself and its allies. In 1968, Israeli war planes attacked Beirut airport and destroyed 13 civilian airliners. In 1972, the Mossad arranged the carbomb assassination of Palestinian writer and PFLP leader, Ghassan Kanafani. In 1973, an Israeli commando force killed three PLO leaders in Beirut - Kamal Nasser, Kamal Adwan and Abu Joseph Najjar - in an operation similar to the recent assassination of Khalil Al Wazir in Tunis (see article in this issue). In the same terrorist tradition, the Mossad has murdered a series of Palestinian patriots abroad, while in the autumn of 1985, the Israeli air force staged a long-range bombing attack on the PLO headquarters in Tunis.

According to Amos Perlmutter, Michael Handel and Uri Bar-Joseph, authors of *Two Minutes Over Baghdad* (1982), all of whom have close ties to the Israeli military establishment, the 1976 Israeli raid on Entebbe, Uganda, was the first long-range «rescue» operation of its kind. The 1981 attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor was the first «pre-emptive» action against a nuclear installation in history - something previously considered by the US against Soviet facilities - and the longest bombing raid in Israeli history. Begin bragged, «This will be my Entebbe» - anticipating greater popularity as crystallized in his subsequent election victory.