

Focus On Israel

Pentagon — Up in Arms

By Kenny Gross

From recent statements made and letters leaked (from senior Marine officers in Lebanon) it would seem that some of the occupants of the Pentagon are more than somewhat upset at Israel's army and leadership. This reaction, of course, pleases the Secretary of Defense, who takes a particular delight in besmirching Israel and who waits impatiently for an opportunity to put those pushy leaders into their rightful place at the back of the line. Remember how much trouble they stirred up with the Saudi AWAC's deal and who knows what will happen when the Jordan arms promises are brought up for Congress confirmation.

Likewise the media, especially the T.V. networks, lose no opportunity of striking back at the feisty Menachem Begin, who survives and thrives, despite their best undermining efforts. In his testimony recently given to a Senate Committee, Thomas A. Dine, Executive Director of AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee), included the following:

"A realistic American policy is one that works with Israel, not against her. The administration must stop conducting Guerilla Warfare against Israel on the front pages of our daily newspapers. The United States must strive to restore the mutuality of the relationship and correct the harm that has been done by past pressures, not sink deeper into the quagmire."

I am sorry Mr. Dine omitted reference to prime time T.V. news network broadcasts. I am constantly struck by the unusual failure of the interviewers to quote Israeli sources in regard to the pattern of repeated confronta-

tion with Marines in Lebanon. Why only one side—the complaining generals? Perhaps the truth of the lack of liaison, in a cheek by jowl physical situation, would demolish these complaints; especially as this deliberate non-communication with the Israel forces, on the part of the Marines, would be shown up in an absurd light from a daily practical point of view.

The strategy of the Administration is to pressurize Jews in the United States (by this continuous trade) in order for them, in their turn, to pressure Israel to agree with the Reagan Peace Plan, pull out of Lebanon and stop building on the "West Bank," for this would suit the State Department's book right now, and not because it would be best for Israel. Why can't the stubborn Israelis understand that the Administration knows what's good for them?

The old argument of substituting United States guarantees as against Israel occupation and control! This will never be acceptable to any government in Israel, in the light of past experience (1956 and 1967) and because of the realities of the situation in the Middle East—5000 miles away from Washington D.C.—the first war Israel loses would be its last.

The Administration's bitterness was highlighted by the "Captain Johnson" incident, when a Marine officer who was of the opinion that 3 Israeli tanks were heading towards Marine territory, decided to show those Israelis who were in command and to stop their progress by brandishing a pistol. This was right up the Pentagon's alley. A deluge of headline articles appeared. I summarize a few:

Feb. 3: *Washington Post* - "Marine Raises Gun to Stop Advance of 3 Israeli Tanks."

Part of content: Military command in Tel Aviv said the tanks were patrolling 600 yards inside the Israeli zone.

Feb. 3: *Washington Post* - "Incident Most Serious Between Two Forces"

Part of content: Col. Stokes, a U.S. Commander of the Marine contingent, "I've got some pretty cocky Marines here who think that no matter where they go, nobody really is going to be shooting at them and the shooting is going to stop." He indicated that some Marines were restless to go to areas where fighting continues in this war-torn nation. The attitude he said was "come on Colonel, let me get out and go stop this crap."

Feb. 4: *Washington Post* - "U.S. Rhetoric Cools On Incident In Mideast"

Part of content: The Reagan Administration yesterday cooled its rhetoric....as influential lawmakers expressed deep concern and raised the possibility of an on-the-spot Congressional investigation in Beirut. Alan Romberg, State Dept. spokesman: "We thought the situation was clear (operational areas for U.S. and Israeli forces) obviously it wasn't."

Feb. 4: *Philadelphia Enquirer* (Associated Press) - "Close Encounter"

Part of content: Col. Rafi, the Israel tank Commander, said the Marine officer had panicked and that he had been "rather amused" when he pulled out a pistol after an altercation he invited the officer to "Bring me your superior officer so that we can talk" as they were in disagreement about whose territory they were in. He refused. The Marine had "grabbed my arm and told me: Stop him, stop him" (A second Israeli tank). He was very panicky. He gave the Marine a little push to free his arm.

Feb. 5: *The Sun* - "Pact Allows Israelis To Patrol Conflict Site"

Part of content: The State Dept. yesterday acknowledged that under an agreement reached with Israel, Israeli forces will operate without

challenge in the area where a U.S. - Israel armed confrontation took place.

Feb. 5: *Washington Post* - "Israelis Say They Were Right In Confrontation"

Part of content: Defense Secretary Weinberger was blamed for "blowing this completely out of proportion" and for suggesting a commendation for the Marine Captain. We find this surprising that a soldier who draws a gun on an ally should be commended with a medal. Asked for the reason for the confrontation: "Maybe they (the Americans) didn't know the facts or maybe they have other reasons."

Feb. 7: *Los Angeles Times* - "Beirut Incident Refuses to Die. Israelis Won't Seek Apology."

Part of content: Israeli military sources confirmed a frontpage story in Tel Aviv newspaper "Haaretz" that the commander of the Israel patrol, Col. Rafi, asserted that the Marine officer "smelled of alcohol" during the mid-morning confrontation. He was not accused of being drunk but that it is clear he was drinking while on duty.

At last a clearer picture! Howard W. Squadron, President of the American Jewish Congress, had this comment on Weinberger's

congressional testimony: (*Washington Post*)

"The anti-Israel theatrics of our Secretary of Defense over a minor incident in Lebanon is dismaying....."

"Rushing to a Senate (sic) Committee to escalate an insignificant happening on the ground into an international incident of major importance makes us question his sense of proportion as well as his motives."

"There is every reason to believe that the Secretary's account of the affair was inaccurate and distorted....this behavior is inexcusable."

Looking back at the series of daily distortions we wonder "what ails Secretary Weinberger and the Pentagon?" The answer lies in the Mideast position. Begin has come out of the commission strong and firm. Saudi Arabia is not the force they had assessed. Recent OPEC meetings have shown this clearly. They will not be able to buy Arafat nor Jordan's Hussein: Jordan's arms promises (by Weinberger) are soon to be brought to Congress. Who will sponsor and who will pay? Reagan's Peace Plan is drifting. Scapegoat Sharon is gone. They cannot fault Moshe Arens. They even give him faint praise.

The former Bechtel Boys are in problems!



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