

American Intelligence Chiefs Want More US Pressure on Settlements, Ha'aretz, 11/3/03

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The U.S. Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) has recommended to the Bush administration to apply "clear and intentional pressure" on Israel regarding the settlements, as part of making headway with the Palestinians, as well as helping to calm the situation heating up in Iraq.

The recommendation, which was published last week in Washington, was written by Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research Carl Ford, and was submitted to the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence for discussion. The position of the paper, though couched in less direct words, reflects the position of the director of the CIA, George Tenet.

The four central players in American intelligence - Tenet, Ford, the FBI chiefs and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) of the Pentagon - have drawn up their full written responses in follow-up to their verbal answers to questions from the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence during its annual hearing on "Current and Projected Threats to the National Security of the United States" which was held in February. The original hearing came prior to the Iraq war, and written responses and updates were promised to follow after the war.

Stanley Moskowitz, CIA director of congressional affairs, and a former head of the CIA in Israel, wrote to the senators on behalf of Tenet that an arrangement for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that would be acceptable to the Palestinians and developed Arab states, "such as the plans outlined by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah," are expected to significantly reduce negative feelings toward the U.S. in the region.

According to the CIA, the U.S. policy vis-a-vis Israel and the presence of American forces in the Persian Gulf are the prime cause of negative feeling toward the U.S. in the region. **Ford submitted that the urgency of advancing an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, which necessitates pressure on Israel regarding the settlements, was one of two conditions for stability in Iraq.** The other was visible progress on democracy and welfare in Iraq itself.

Ford expressed doubts over fulfilling these conditions, and described the chance of achieving success on both counts as "a miracle," but that without it, the U.S. should expect Arab and Muslim hostility to increase further, threatening prospects for the future. From the responses of the heads of American intelligence, fears were raised over the stability of the Jordanian regime. The response to a question on this matter, which had referred to an earlier assessment of fears for King Abdullah's government following the U.S. war in Iraq and increasing violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, was left classified. It is reasonable to assume that the response would have been published had the CIA's earlier estimates of fears, expressed in February, been proved false.

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