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The worst evils which mankind has ever had to endure were inflicted by bad governments.

– Ludwig von Mises

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Israel's Nuclear Puzzle Resolved: But To What End?

by Ramzy Baroud

The **BBC's striking revelations** regarding the secretive and disconcerting British role in making an Israeli nuclear bomb possible, deserves more than a quick pause and a few dozen news reports. It obliges a thorough investigation coupled with a complete reversal in the double standard that views Israel's fully-fledged nuclear capabilities as a trivial concern.

The BBC program, **Newsnight**, broadcast on August 3, confirmed that Britain was in fact the original source of heavy water, the crucial ingredient that allowed Israel to transform its generic nuclear reactor in Dimona in the Negev Desert – initially developed with French help – into a proficient nuclear manufacturing plant.

It was always assumed, following the dramatic disclosures made by former Dimona technician, Mordechai Vanunu to the British *Sunday Times* in 1986, that the 20 tons of heavy water originated from Norway. Norway chose complete silence regarding the nature of the deal.

But according to the BBC broadcast, the well-guarded deal made with Israel was concealed as a resale to Norway of a heavy water consignment that was of no use to Britain. In turn, the shipment was dispatched to Israel, who, within three years has apparently exhausted much of the 20 tons of heavy water. In 1961, according to the report, Israel asked for more, but the uncovering of Israel's nuclear ambitions by the *Daily Express* newspaper seem to have made any additional sales a complicated matter.

Many years later, thanks to the audacity of Vanunu, the world had a chance to grasp the extent of Israel's perilous experimentations with deadly agents: hundreds of nuclear warheads, by modest counts,

which, according to Western experts, place Israel as one of the world's leading nuclear powers; number six to be exact.

Israel continues to adopt the attitude of not confirming and not denying the increasingly well-documented charges of its nuclear program. Thus, Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres – who was the director general of Israel's defense ministry from 1953-58 and is credited for being the leading architect of the country's nuclear program – refused to comment on the BBC report, **according to the Associated Press** a day later.

The acknowledged involvement of France and Norway, and Britain's recently exposed role in making Israel's nuclear aspirations possible, clearly delineate a European intent on ensuring Israel's "unique military superiority" over its Arab neighbors, which incidentally is a key phrase reiterated by top American officials whenever describing the US commitment to Israel.

While at the time, the US administrations of Eisenhower and Kennedy "strived to stop Israel from going on to build nuclear weapons" – as reported in the *Guardian* – the current right-wing US administration is totally ignoring the Israeli nuclear buildup while considering "all options", including a military intervention, to crackdown on Iran for allegedly endeavoring to develop a nuclear bomb.

Iran, a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, insists that its nuclear ambitions are peaceful and has worked on several diplomatic fronts to resolve its problems with the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Meanwhile, Israel is yet to join the NPT community and is under no pressure to do so. Israel's superior stance continues despite the call made by the IAEA's chief, Mohamed ElBaradei to surrender its nuclear weapons and to sign the non-proliferation treaty.

Israel's unruffled attitude is reinforced by unconditional military and political support pouring from Washington, which views Israel's sins with completely different spectacles than those used to magnify the sins of other Middle Eastern countries.

The mockery becomes almost unbearable when US officials tie their Middle East crusade to Israel's security. In a **January 2005 interview with MSNBC's Imus in the Morning**, Vice President Dick Cheney warned that Iran has a "fairly robust nuclear program," charging that the Islamic republic's prime "objective is the destruction of Israel." He then

appeared to be giving a green light to Israel (with an estimated 200 nuclear heads) to take on Iran, whose nuclear ambitions, according to the IAEA itself, are yet to raise serious suspicions. "If, in fact, the Israelis became convinced the Iranians had significant capabilities, the Israelis might well decide to act first, and let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterwards," **Cheney exclaimed**, in response to Imus's thoughtless inquiry: "Why don't we make Israel do it?"

Only a naïve would argue that perhaps Cheney was not aware of the magnitude of Israel's destructive nuclear capabilities when he made such insolent remarks.

Yet, despite the near complete forgery and endless pretexts used to invade Iraq, victimizing millions of people while further destabilizing an already unstable region, the US government carries on unhindered with the same logic. Now the menacing wolf is Iran and the harmless sheep, unsurprisingly, is the state of Israel.

However, the last piece of the puzzle has been recovered now that the international community knows where Israel's heavy water, used for enriching nuclear fuel, originated from and – thanks to the courageous Vanunu – what has become of it. Even the often weak-willed ElBaradei **had the nerve to tell Ha'aretz** that his agency is operating under the assumption that Israel in fact possesses nuclear weapons.

The concern, and indeed the fear, is that neither the BBC's report nor the outcry of many states in the Middle East and beyond will jeopardize, or for a second, halt the grinding wheel of death and destruction nurtured in Israel, with European help and under American blessings and protection.

It's in fact this duplicity and double standard under which the West continues to operate that makes peace in the Middle East a mere illusion as the furnace of weapons of mass destruction continues to wickedly burn in the doomed Negev Desert.

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