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[Dr. Strangelove, Made in Israel](#)

[By Philip Giraldi | April 15, 2010](#)

One would expect the Air Force's top civilian adviser to be someone who has spent some time in the US military or who has a very particular educational or skills set that brings something special to what is, after all, a very senior and sensitive position. Not so. Dr. Lani Kass, who is the senior Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force General Norton A. Schwartz, was born, raised, and educated in Israel and then served in that country's military where she reached the rank of major. She has a PhD in Russian studies but advises Air Force Generals on Cyberwarfare, terrorism, and the Middle East. And Kass appears to have close and continuing ties to her country of birth, frequently spicing her public statements with comments about life in Israel while parroting simplistic views of the nature of the Islamic threat that might have been scripted in Tel Aviv's Foreign Ministry.

Kass' official Air Force [bio](#), which has been expunged from the Pentagon website possibly due to less than flattering commentary regarding her appointment, indicates that since January 2006 she has been “the principal adviser on policy and strategy and formulates, develops, implements, and communicates the policies, programs and goals of the Air Force.” Another official bio adds that she “...conducts numerous complex, high priority special assignments involving research and fact-finding to develop analyses, position and issue papers, and generate new initiatives based on a variety of strategic subjects of critical importance to the Joint Staff and/or the Joint Force.” There have also been suggestions that Kass has recently become an informal adviser to Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on Middle Eastern policy.

Dr. Lani Kass is married to Norman Kass, a former Pentagon Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, and resides in McLean, Virginia. She has been naturalized as a US citizen and is presumably a dual national who now holds both American and Israeli passports. Her three children were all born in Israel. While it is perhaps not unusual for American citizens to volunteer with the Israel Defense Forces as White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel did in 1991, it would have to be considered unprecedented for a senior Israeli military officer to obtain a high level position at the Pentagon. In fact, it is hard to imagine that anyone carrying out a security background investigation would approve such a transition under any circumstances, suggesting the possibility that Kass's ascent to high office might have been aided or even godfathered by friends in key positions who were able to override or circumvent normal procedures.

Dr. Kass's full first name is Ilana and her maiden name is Dimant. She has a 1971 BA in political-science and Russian area studies, summa cum laude, from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a 1976 joint PhD from the Kaplan School of the Hebrew University and Columbia University in international affairs. She apparently met her husband Norman at Columbia. Both she and her husband are fluent in Russian and Hebrew. After completing her PhD, she served in the Israeli Air Force, achieving the rank of major. For those who are unfamiliar with the military, the rank of major is a senior rank that normally would be awarded to a career officer.

Between 1979 and 1981, Kass worked at the Russian research Center of Booz Allen and Hamilton. Between 1985 and 2005 she held the position of Professor of Military Strategy and Operations of the National War College. In 1992 Dr. Kass obtained a senior position at the Pentagon as Special Assistant to the Director, Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate (J5). Dick Cheney was Secretary of Defense at the time. She returned to the Pentagon under Secretary William Cohen and stayed on during 2000 – 2001 as Senior Policy Adviser and Special Assistant for Strategic Initiatives to the Director, Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate (J5) under Donald Rumsfeld.

In early November 2006, US Air Force officials formed the Air Force Cyberspace Command that had the “authority to launch wars in cyberspace.” The command was reported to be “largely the brainchild of Dr. Lani Kass, director of the Air Force Cyberspace Task Force.”

Dr. Kass’ position and access inevitably raise a number of questions. Her appointment is somewhat unseemly, which even the Air Force appeared to recognize when it removed her bio from the website. Surely there must be qualified Americans who would be both delighted and proud to serve their country in the position she holds. Surely someone in Washington must see the security implications of a former foreign military officer holding a high level post in the Pentagon with full access to classified information. To challenge Dr. Kass’s position is not to question her academic credentials and intelligence or even her ability or integrity, but it is not unreasonable to ask why the Pentagon would appoint to a sensitive position someone who was born, raised, and served at a senior level with the armed forces in a foreign country.

And it is also not unreasonable to stop and consider whether Kass might well be an agent working for the Israeli government, which aggressively spies against the United States. She left Israel and began her journey through the US defense department in 1981, when Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard was still active. Israeli intelligence certainly was then and is now capable of what is referred to in intelligence jargon as a seeding operation in which “a mole” is placed in an innocuous position and expected to rise higher, eventually obtaining access to top secret information and even sometimes winding up in a position in which it is possible to direct policy as a so-called agent of influence. Kass started her ascent by working on Russia for beltway bandit Booz Allen Hamilton, quite likely for completely innocent reasons but also possibly because it was a non-threatening way to ease her entry into the world of government contractors.

In seeking to discover how she wound up where she is now it is fair to ask how exactly she obtained the positions that she has held with the Pentagon and who sponsored her through the bureaucracy. How did she manage to obtain a clearance in spite of the obvious red flags in her background? In light of legitimate security concerns, has she been polygraphed, what questions about her relationship with her former country were asked, and what were her answers? Was any deception indicated? Has she been re-polygraphed recently? This is not intended as harassment or as any accusation against Kass but rather to determine if she has been subject to normal and appropriate security measures. CIA officers are, for example, required to undergo polygraph exams every five years and the questions concentrate on possible unreported relationships with foreign governments.

Critics note that while Kass is genuinely an expert on Russia, she has little background to qualify her as an authority on the currently fashionable Cyberwarfare, where she has somehow turned herself into a major spokesman through mastery of the necessary buzzwords and talking points. Nor does she have any genuine expertise on the Middle East or on terrorism to share with Mullen and others, apart from her own Israeli perspective. Her access to the highest levels of the Air Force also raises the questions of just what is she advising and what does she know? Does she support an air war against Iran, for example, and is she actively promoting that option? Does she know how the Obama Administration will react if Tel Aviv tries to stage a unilateral attack on Iran? Such information would be pure gold for the Israeli government.

There are indications that Dr. Kass is a major player in shaping US security policy. She has been described as a “key participant” in the development of the national strategy for combating terrorism, as well as the national military strategic plan for the Global War on Terrorism. In September 2007, [The Times](#) of London reported that she was a leading participant in “Project CHECKMATE, a “highly confidential strategic planning group tasked with ‘fighting the next war’ as tensions rise with Iran” that was “quietly established” by the US Air Force in June 2007 as a “successor to the group that planned the 1991 Gulf War’s air campaign.”

Also per [The Times](#), CHECKMATE “consists of 20-30 top air force officers and defense and cyberspace experts with ready access to the White House, the CIA and other intelligence agencies.” Its director Brigadier-General Lawrence A. Stutzriem and Kass reported directly to General Michael Moseley, at the time chief of staff of the Air Force. [The Times](#) cited Defense sources saying, “detailed contingency planning for a possible attack on Iran has been carried out for more than two years.” Regarding Iran operations, Kass was quoted as saying “We can defeat Iran, but are Americans willing to pay the price?”

Dr. Kass is not directly linked to any neoconservative groups but appears to be a kindred spirit, possessing a Manichean world view. Her comment cited above about defeating Iran has a dismissive tone to it, as if she is not identifying as an American herself. And she is also reported to have [said](#) “Remember what Israelis tell their children when they cry: ‘Don’t cry — you want to be a paratrooper don’t you?’” Some other public utterances are also revealing, suggesting that if General Schwartz and Admiral Mullen are actually listening to her it is no surprise that some US defense and security policies are largely based on simplistic bumper sticker analysis. In a [speech](#) at Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho on July 9, 2007,

she said radical Muslims hate the western world because Europe took their dominant political position away and they want it back. To support her claim she produced a map taken from an obscure Jihadi website showing the entire world depicted as the “United States of Islam,” in which everyone will have to follow Sharia Muslim law. Kass likes to use the map as a prop in many of her public appearances. In her speech she explained that Muslims hate western culture and want to dominate the world, adding that because radical Islam has a “culture of death” all those who do not submit to Islam must die, an assertion so absurd that one suspects her political analysis derives from the [Free Republic](#) website. She also compared all Americans to sheep and sheepdogs. The former keep their heads down hoping that someone else will be eaten by wolves a.k.a. terrorists while the latter fight back. Kass sees herself as a sheepdog. For her Air Force audience she concluded that the long war against the Islamists will end “when they learn to love their children more than they hate us,” a comment originally attributed to Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir.

Kass’s powerpoint demonstration [“A Warfighting Domain,”](#) dated September 26, 2006, is equally scary, and more than a little Strangelovean in its language and appeal. It includes the map of the United States of Islam and defines the “mission” as “to fly and fight in the Air, Space, and Cyberspace.” She boasts “as Airmen we are the nation’s premier multi-dimensional maneuver force, with the agility, reach, speed, stealth, payload, precision, and persistence to deliver global effects at the speed of sound and the speed of light.” Her objective? To “foster a force of 21st century warriors, capable of delivering the full spectrum of kinetic and non-kinetic, lethal and non-lethal effects in the Air, Space, and Cyber domains.”

Dr. Kass the Kremlinologist might have been a dab hand at interpreting the Nomenklatura standing on top of Lenin’s tomb but her embrace of Cyberwar and her comments relating both to terrorism and the state of the Middle East make one wonder how she has ascended to her lofty perch...and equally why she should remain there. Legitimate security concerns about her possible conflicted loyalty and her intentions should have blunted her trajectory long ago. But on the other hand, the global war on terror is so much of a joke that it perhaps needs someone like Dr. Kass to symbolize its absurdity and to launch the US Air Force on a vital new mission replete with lethal warrior-airmen delivering “global effects” at the speed of light. At an estimated cost of \$100 billion, one might add. Captain Kirk? Are you ready to beam me up? Things are getting kind of strange down here.

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1. quite terrifying -

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