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## **Israel's Open Secret - Nuclear Armed And Dangerous**

By Stephen Lendman

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For many years, Israel's open secret is that it's one of eight known nuclear powers, including America and Russia with about 97% of the world's arsenal according to Helen Caldicott in her book "Nuclear Power Is Not the Answer." The others are Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, and Israel - North Korea a declared but unverified one.

In her January 20, 2009 Canadian Medical Association Journal article titled, "Obama and the opportunity to eliminate nuclear weapons" Caldicott wrote:

"The Cold War is over, but the threat of nuclear war is not. Little progress has been made since 1989 when the Berlin Wall collapsed. In fact, the threat of nuclear annihilation has escalated. In 1972, when 5 nuclear nations....signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, they agreed to rapidly disarm. They have done the opposite," resulting in a greater than ever threat, the Pentagon's new Nuclear Posture Review and US-Russia deal doing nothing to reverse it.

See <http://sjlendman.blogspot.com/2010/04/obamas-brave-nuke-world.html>.

In his 1991 book, "The Samson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and America Foreign Policy," Seymour Hersh discussed its strategy to launch a massive nuclear counterattack if it felt its existence threatened, the stark message being the next regional war may be nuclear.

In his 1997 book, "Open Secrets: Israeli Nuclear and Foreign Policies," Israel Shahak said that, helped by the Israeli Lobby (and Christian Zionists), "Israel (is) clearly prepar(ing) itself to seek overtly a hegemony over the entire Middle East (with no) hesitati(on) to use for the purpose all means available, including nuclear ones."

Shahak also explained that Israel regards "the launching of missiles (onto its territory) as 'nonconventional' regardless of whether they are equipped with explosives or poison gas." In turn, Israel's nuclear doctrine dictates that a "nonconventional" attack requires one in response, meaning a nuclear one, the foundation of its grand strategy, according to Shahak.

According to Hebrew University's Professor of Military History Martin Van Creveld, "We have the capability to take the world down with us. And I can assure you (it) will happen before Israel goes under."

Israel maintains a double standard. It won't let another Middle East state acquire nuclear weapons, but will never give up its own or the right to use them preemptively.

### Background on Israel's Nuclear Development

It began with its 1948 founding, David Ben-Gurion (Israel's first prime minister) having told Ehud Avriel, a European operative and later MK, to recruit East European Jewish scientists who could "either increase the capacity to kill masses or to cure masses; both are important."

One was Avraham Marcus Klingberg, later an Israeli chemical and biological weapons (CBW) expert and deputy director of the Israel Institute of Biological Research in Ness Ziona, south of Tel Aviv. More on Israel's CBW program below.

Another was Ernst David Bergmann, "father of the Israeli bomb" in charge of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC). Ben-Gurion was determined to have a "nuclear option" and other "non-conventional" weapons (WMDs) to counter the Arabs' numerical advantage. In his farewell address to the Israeli Armaments Development Authority (RAFAEL), Ben-Gurion defended the strategy saying:

"I am confident, based not only on what I heard today, that our science can provide us with the weapons that are needed to deter our enemies from waging war against us."

Ben-Gurion and later prime minister Shimon Peres became the leading forces behind Israel's nuclear and CBWs programs.

In the late 1940s, Israel and France began collaborating, at the time the IDF Science Corps searched the Negev desert for recoverable uranium. In 1952, the IAEC was established. The Dimona Nuclear Research Center/reactor was secretly completed in 1964 near Bersheeba in the Negev - a heavy water moderated, natural uranium reactor/plutonium reprocessing plant to make nuclear weapons. Designed as a 24 megawatt facility, its cooling system had far more capacity than needed, none for electrical generation, and its plutonium reprocessing capability signified an intent to produce nuclear weapons.

After the 1967 Six Day War, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan ordered full-scale production, averaging 4 - 12 bombs per year. US presidents since Lyndon Johnson supported the program. At the same time, it's believed testing took place in the Negev, jointly with France in Algeria, later in the Indian Ocean, and perhaps elsewhere.

By the early 1970s, Israel had advanced nuclear technology, world class scientists, and several dozen bombs ready to launch. Today it's believed it has hundreds and a delivery system able to hit distant targets accurately.

Earlier, with inadequate uranium supplies, it acquired some clandestinely, and by the late 1960s through close collaboration with South Africa - supplying technological expertise in return for the needed material, the arrangement lasting until apartheid ended in the early 1990s.

France and South Africa were Israel's main collaborators, but also America by going along, staying silent to this day, and initially providing a 5 megawatt highly enriched uranium research reactor as part of Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" program. According to journalist Mark Gaffney, Israel's program "was possible only because of (its) calculated deception....and willing complicity on the part of the US."

Israeli scientists were trained at US universities and had access to domestic weapons labs. Since the early 1970s, advanced technology transfers were made, including supercomputers able to design sophisticated nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Mordechai Vanunu's mid-1980s documented revelations provided proof.

Mordechai Vanunu - Heroic Whistleblower/Victim of Israeli Retaliatory Viciousness

A Dimona nuclear technician, he smuggled out dozens of photos and scientific documents, published by the London Sunday Times on October 5, 1986, headlined:

"Revealed - the secrets of Israel's nuclear arsenal/Atomic technician Mordechai Vanunu reveals secret weapons production," saying:

"THE SECRETS of a subterranean factory engaged in the manufacture of Israeli nuclear weapons have been uncovered by the Sunday Times Insight team.

Hidden beneath the Negev desert, the factory has been producing nuclear atomic warheads for the last 20 years. Now it has almost certainly begun manufacturing thermo-nuclear weapons, with yields big enough to destroy entire cities."

The Times named Vanunu as its source, having worked at Dimona for nearly 10 years in "Machon 2 - a top secret, underground bunker built to provide the vital components necessary for weapons production...."

Nuclear experts examined Vanunu's documents, called them genuine, and concluded that Israel's sophisticated technology enabled it "to build up a formidable nuclear arsenal."

According to Theodore Taylor, a world expert at the time:

"There should no longer be any doubt that Israel is, and for at least a decade has been, a fully-fledged nuclear weapons state....considerably more advanced than (earlier) indicated...."

Other top nuclear scientists agreed - Israel was, and today is, a world nuclear power, possessing sophisticated technology and weapons. Vanunu's revelations cost him dearly. On October 12, 1986, The Times headlined his September 30 disappearance, five days before his story broke.

Mossad lured him to Rome, then beat, drugged, and kidnapped him. He was secretly tried in 1986-87, and sentenced to 18 years in prison for espionage and treason - in harsh isolated confinement in a six square meter cell.

Released in 2004, his behavior and movements were restricted. As a result, harassing arrests followed after giving foreign journalists interviews and trying to leave Israel. He said he suffered "cruel and barbaric treatment" in prison, no surprise since torture is official Israeli policy, usually for Palestinians, but for anyone security services target.

On July 2, 2007, Vanunu was again imprisoned for six month for speaking to foreign journalists, later reduced to three months by the Jerusalem District Court "In light of (his) ailing health and the absence of claims that his actions put the country's security in jeopardy."

Daniel Ellsberg called him "the preeminent hero of the nuclear era." He says "I am neither a traitor nor a spy, I only wanted the world to know what was happening." On December 28, 2009, he was arrested again following his alleged meeting with his girlfriend, a Norwegian national, then transferred to house arrest.

On April 14, 2010, Vanunu said "The restrictions, not to leave the country for one more year (were) renewed. Now 7 years since my release AFTER 18 years in Israel PRISON."

He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize each year from 1988 - 2004. In March 2009, he asked the Nobel Committee to remove his name from consideration, and in February 2010 again declined the honor, most often given war criminals.

In 1979, he was awarded the Right Livelihood Award, the alternative Nobel Prize, "for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people," and in 2001, Norway's University of Tromsø honored him as a Doctor Honoris Causa (History).

John Steinbach on Israel's Nuclear Program

In 2009, The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR-[nuclearfiles.org](http://nuclearfiles.org)) published Steinbach's paper titled, "The Israeli Nuclear Weapons Program," saying:

"With several hundred weapons and a robust delivery system, Israel has quietly supplanted Britain as the world's fifth largest nuclear power, and now rivals France and China in terms of the size of its nuclear arsenal," despite an official ambiguity about an advanced sophisticated program. As a result, a combination of expert analysis and whistleblower revelations provided what's known. Also occasional slips, like in December 2006 when Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told Germany's Sat. 1 channel:

"Iran, openly, explicitly and publicly, threatens to wipe Israel off the map. Can you say that this is the same level, when they are aspiring to have nuclear weapons, as America, France, Israel and Russia?" Backtracking after a meeting with Chancellor Angela Merkel, he said:

"Israel has said many times - and I also said this to German television in an interview - that we will not be the first country that introduces nuclear weapons to the Middle East....That was our position (earlier). That is our position (now) - nothing has changed."

Since the 1970s, Israel's official position is that it chose "an option to produce electricity using nuclear reactors. (This) requires promoting nuclear knowledge and research, preparing sites suitable for building nuclear power plants," and weighing the economic benefits.

According to Steinbach:

"Despite this claim, an exhaustive search of publicly available sources indicates the existence of no meaningful Israeli civilian nuclear energy program, past or present....From its inception, the Israeli nuclear program has centered on developing a nuclear weapons program, with any other nuclear program being incidental."

Steinbach also cites estimates of Israel's arsenal at "from 100 to over 400 bombs," there being "little doubt that (its) weapons are among the world's most sophisticated, and largely designed for war fighting." They include:

-- "boosted fission weapons and small neutron bombs, designed to maximize deadly gamma radiation while minimizing blast effects and long-term radiation - in essence designed to kill people while leaving property intact;"

-- long range ballistic missiles;

-- sophisticated aircraft able to deliver a nuclear strike;

-- cruise missiles, artillery shells, and land mines with the same capability;

-- "In June 2000, an Israeli submarine launched a cruise missile that hit a

target 950 miles away, making Israel only the third nation (besides) the US and Russia with that capability;"

-- Israel maintains triad strength, including strategic bombers, ballistic missiles, and submarines, able to strike well beyond the Middle East; and

-- overall, Israel's capability "is much greater than any conceivable need for defensive deterrence;" like America, it's for preemptive offense, and given both nation's belligerence, some day they may launch them aggressively without cause, claiming, of course, it's defensive.

According to Jane's Intelligence Review, Dimona's reactor "is suffering severe damage from 35 years of operation," worrisome enough for Israeli nuclear scientists to call for its shutdown to avert a potential catastrophe. Also at issue are internal radiological hazards, revealed on a March 2003 BBC program with five Dimona workers discussing the effects on their health.

### Israel's Chemical and Biological Weapons (CBW)

Israel signed the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) but didn't ratify it. It refused to sign the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and maintains a policy of CBW ambiguity. It's not known but believed that its Nes Tziyona Biological Institute produces sophisticated chemical and biological weapons and state-of-the-art delivery systems.

However, in 1993, the US Congress Office of Technology Assessment WMD proliferation assessment included Israel as a nation having undeclared offensive chemical warfare capabilities. In 1998, former Deputy Assistant Defense Secretary Bill Richardson said:

"I have no doubt that Israel has worked on both chemical and biological offensive things for a long time. There's no doubt they've had stuff for years."

It's also believed it has a sophisticated BW capability, and is likely producing, maintaining, and updating its stockpile.

On August 7, 2006, Paola Manduca's Global Research article headlined, "New and unknown deadly weapons used by Israeli forces: 'direct energy weapons, chemical and/or biological agents, in a macabre experiment of future warfare.'"

It referred to the summer Lebanon/Gaza offensives, citing reports of "New and strange symptoms....reported amongst the wounded and the dead.

Bodies with dead tissue and no apparent wounds; 'shrunken' corpses; civilians with heavy damage to lower limbs that require amputation, which is nevertheless followed by unstoppable necrosis (dying cells and living tissue) and death; descriptions of extensive internal wounds with no trace of shrapnel, corpses blackened but not burnt, and others heavily wounded that

did not bleed."

On July 11, 2006, Ma'an News Service cited the Palestinian health ministry saying Israel used a new type explosive in Gaza, containing "toxins and radioactive materials which burn and tear the victim's body from the inside and leave long term deformations."

On July 11, 2006, Gulf News said a Palestinian doctor "accused Israel of using a type of chemical ammunition which causes burns and injuries in soft tissue and cannot be traced by X-ray." Severe internal wounds were reported.

Since the second Intifada's inception, reports cite "unknown gas" attacks, possibly a nerve agent, anyone breathing it losing consciousness immediately for about 24 hours with high fevers and rigid muscles. Some needed urgent blood transfusions. Asked but not known is whether this is chemical/and or biological warfare.

International law bans these weapons. Israel tests new ones in conflict zones - in 2006 in Lebanon and Gaza and against Gazans during Operation Cast Lead.

Treating the victims, Norwegian Dr. Mads Gilbert cited white phosphorous that burns flesh to the bone. Also depleted uranium and a new close-range explosive causing severe injuries, including battlefield amputations. Children, he said, had their legs cut off, abdomens sliced open, or simply killed outright.

### Final Thoughts

On September 9, 2004, Haaretz (by DPA) headlined, "ElBaradei: Israel's nuclear arms blocking Mideast peace," quoting him from the Sydney Morning Herald saying:

Addressing Israel's nuclear arsenal must be part of a peace process settlement. "This is not really sustainable that you have Israel sitting with nuclear weapons capability there while everyone else is part of the non-proliferation regime....It is a very emotional issue in the Middle East."

While Israel maintains ambiguity and world leaders keep mum, Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Erdogan, not shy about confronting Israel, said this before attending Obama's nuclear summit:

"We have yet to see an international community, which is so sensitive about Iran's nuclear program, taking a firm stance against Israel," a notorious nuclear outlaw. "We do not want to see nuclear armament in our region. Our policy on this issue is very clear no matter which country has it. That could be Israel or Iran or any other country."

On April 14 in Paris, Erdogan called Israel the biggest threat to Middle East peace, not just because of its nuclear arsenal, but for its disproportionate

force against Palestinians. His comments came a day after Israel compared him to Libya's Gaddafi and Venezuela's Chavez, a sign of continued frayed relations between the two nations, including an angry exchange with Israeli President Shimon Peres at the January World Economic Forum.

He's now confronting Israel's nuclear threat, a real one under its first strike doctrine to destroy the entire region if threatened. With its history of open belligerence, the possibility is too great to ignore, and too important not to confront given the consequences if initiated.

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago and can be reached at [lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net). Also visit his blog site at [sjlendman.blogspot.com](http://sjlendman.blogspot.com) and listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network Thursdays at 10AM US Central time and Saturdays and Sundays at noon. All programs are archived for easy listening.

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