

BLAIR SET TO OPEN **WASHINGTON'S ROAD TO** **DAMASCUS. NEXT STOP** **TEHRAN**

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Note from Pastor Kevin Lea follows this article.

The primary object of the new Spanish-Italian-French Middle East "peace plan" is to insert European military forces into the Gaza Strip after establishing themselves in the expanded UNIFIL in South Lebanon. In furtherance of their goal, the European Union endorsed the UN resolution's call Friday, Nov. 17, for Israel to pull out of Gaza, although its withdrawal to the UN-approved line was completed in September 2005.



line.

European assertiveness is coming at the expense of the Bush administration's post-election weakness. Its tenaciously-held premise that the roads to all the region's woes lead back to the Israel-Palestinian issue is already reflected in these two European steps, the first of a systematic campaign of crushing pressure on Israel to fall into

The campaign will peak in the third week of December, when British premier Tony Blair is due to visit Damascus to open the road for Washington (as first revealed in **DEBKA-Net-Weekly 278 on Nov, 17**).

As a down-payment for buying Syrian president Bashar Asad's cooperation on Iraq, Blair will try and coerce Israel to accept talks with Syria for the return of the Golan captured in the 1967 war.

Last Monday, Nov. 13, prime minister Ehud Olmert rather naively claimed he and President George W. Bush were of one mind that Israel must not sit down and talk to Syria until the Asad regime had abandoned its sponsorship of terror.

As he spoke, three high-ranking US officials - David Satterfield, the state department's coordinator for Iraq, J.D. Crouch, deputy national security adviser, and Condoleezza Rice's assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs, David Welch -

were deep in arrangements for the Blair visit to Damascus, which they see as the key for opening the door to direct US-Tehran talks.

The fresh US-European Middle East momentum on the Palestinian issue is being crafted as a positive counterweight to the negative effect of the impending American-British withdrawal from Iraq. The groundwork for this ploy was laid by Blair's senior political adviser Nigel Sheinwald, when he met Asad in Damascus in late October (as first reported by **DEBKAfile**).

He brought back welcome tidings from his meeting: Damascus and Tehran did not see eye to eye on Iraq; Asad said he felt no compulsion to stick to the Iranian line in the embattled country. Reporting this, **DEBKA-Net-Weekly** also revealed that former US ambassador to Syria, Margaret Scobie, would follow Blair to the Syrian capital. Now stationed in Iraq, she was abruptly withdrawn from Damascus in 2005 at the height of the crisis between Washington and Damascus. It is hoped that her return, formally designated as a visit to take leave of old friends in the Syrian hierarchy, will occasion a meeting with the Syrian president. This would be taken as the first sign of a thaw in US-Syrian relations.

The two Damascus visits are meant to be the conduit to the start of Washington's dialogue with Tehran.

Blair's most recent foreign policy statements are at odds with the positions he and Bush have shared - unless seen in the context of these behind-the-scenes diplomatic feelers. Through this prism, they sound like an effort to prepare American and British public opinion for the extreme policy reversal embodied in his impending visit to Damascus in the role of appeaser. The pacifier he means to offer for Syria's cooperation on Iraq: massive Israeli concessions.

In an interview to the Washington Post Thursday, Nov. 16, Prime Minister Tony Blair was suddenly optimistic about progress on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, saying that "sensible Arab and Muslim countries" now see "strategic reasons" for finding a solution and new initiatives could come within weeks.

In a closed-door video conference Tuesday with the US Iraq Study Group, the bipartisan panel in Washington reviewing Iraq policy, Blair said that any solution to Iraq must begin with progress on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That is the one issue, he insisted, that unresolved allows extremists to gain purchase on the more moderate elements of the Muslim and Arab world.

Then, talking to David Frost on al Jazeera's new English language program Saturday, Blair again stressed the importance of progress in the Middle East peace process in winning the "war on terror". But he admitted for the first time that Western intervention in Iraq had "so far been pretty much of a disaster."

DEBKAfile's Middle East sources note that very few people in Washington, London or Damascus understood why President Bush's leading ally in the Iraq war had suddenly turned against him. But Blair's eye, say those sources, was very much on the Damascus ball; he was signaling the Syrian leader that he and Asad were now on the same side: the two leaders should together take a lead role in solving the burning issues of Iraq, the Middle East dispute and Iran. He implied that the US president, whose party had lost control of Congress, like Olmert, who had lost the Lebanon war, no longer held controlling stakes in the most urgent regional issues, whereas Blair and Asad were now in a position to seize the high ground.

The Sheinwald mission in late October tactfully avoided mention of Damascus' role as headquarters for radical Palestinian terrorist groups. Asad was only warned off schemes to topple the Fouad Siniora government in Beirut. Informed that such machinations would bring the new rapprochement to an abrupt halt, Asad is quoted as saying he understands perfectly the fragility of Lebanon's situation.

DEBKAfile's sources note that the Sheinwald likewise avoided referring to Syria's long service to the Sunni insurgents and al Qaeda terrorists as a strategic haven and supply center for fighters and arms. Asad was thus given to understand that for London, the rancor over the Iraq war was water under the bridge and the way forward out of what he later admitted was a "disaster" was the paramount consideration.

All this radical shifting around of US and British positions for the sake of an exit from Iraq, coupled with Europe's maneuvering to make hay on the Palestinian-Israeli front, leave the Jewish state prey to crippling pressures as well as dangerously exposed to Iran, whose nuclear weapons aspirations remain unsolved in the stampede to leave Iraq. Tehran's proxy Hizballah, Syria and the Palestinian Hamas will be left in peace to advance on their agenda for rapid armament and preparations for the next war.

There is still a month to go before the British prime minister's projected mission to Damascus, time enough for the notoriously fickle Syrian ruler to change his mind or for the Iranians to derail the plan – unless the ayatollahs are assured they are playing a winner's game.

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Related article:

SYRIA WANTS GOLAN IN RETURN FOR HELPING US

Nov. 19...(Times On Line)

Syria is ready to demand American help in securing the return of the Golan Heights from Israel as the price of co-operation over Iraq. With the White House under pressure to talk to its adversary, President Bashar al-Assad has resolved that his assistance will not be cheap.

Assad has been considering how to respond to an American overture following reports that the Iraq Study Group will recommend that the United States engage Syria and Iran in talks on Iraq, a position backed by Tony Blair last week.

The Syrian president wants America and Britain to use their influence with Israel to raise the return of the Golan Heights, seized by the Israelis in the

1967 war. "It will be the top demand," said Ayman Abdel Nour, a leading reformer in the ruling Ba'ath party. Assad has ruled out co-operating with the Americans in return for the promise of unspecified benefits. "The Syrian leadership is fed up with the Americans and does not trust their word when it comes to future aid for Syria," Abdel Nour said. "Syria will not do anything unless it has secured guarantees from Washington and London that every action Damascus takes to help them will be reciprocated. It will be a step by step scenario: these actions for those actions," he added.

Assad also insists that any help must be dependent on a timetable for US troop withdrawals, a move resisted by President George W Bush. Shaul Bakhash, an expert on the Middle East at George Mason University, Washington, said: "Neither Iran nor Syria will do a favor for the US without wanting something back, and what both countries want are things that the US is not willing to give them." The Syrians believe they are in a position of strength. "Already there is talk that Syria is the winner and will set the new rules of the game in the region," Abdel Nour said.

Note from Pastor Kevin Lea:

When Jesus stood before Pilate on the day He was crucified, Pilate marveled that Jesus did not seem to appreciate his power to let Jesus go or to crucify Him. Jesus responded to Pilate by saying,

"You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar." John 19:11-12.

Pilate was on a collision course with prophetic history, and there was nothing he could do about it because he lacked the courage to do what was right. He knew that if he let Jesus go, Caesar would be informed and Pilate would lose his job and possibly his life. So he did what any self-serving coward does, he washed his hands and condemned the innocent to death.

As a side note, we should be glad he did because Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He came to die on the cross and God was accomplishing His plans to save mankind by using the known weaknesses of those in authority. But this fact did not let Pilate off of the hook (Matthew 18:7); neither will the current world leaders escape the wrath of God for their treatment of Israel, unless they repent.

I believe those who are in power now are in the same predicament today as Pilate was then. God is bringing on the “last days” leading up to the second coming of Jesus. The prophets foretold the second coming would be preceded by the nations ganging up on the Jews living in a restored nation of Israel.

The Bushes and Blaires of the world may not want to sacrifice the five million Jews and the state of Israel to the crude- oil gods, but they lack the courage to do otherwise. In order to maintain peace with the oil rich Arab nations (even though it will only be an illusion), they are again trying to come up with another peace plan demanding that Israel give up the Golan to Syria, and more of Judea (southern Israel), Samaria (West Bank) and half of Jerusalem to the “Palestinians.”

Everyone who knows the Islamic mindset realizes that these land concessions will not satisfy the Muslim Arabs nor will it result in true and lasting peace in the region. The Muslims will simply use these newly acquired lands to launch even more missiles and terror cells into the ever shriking target of the state of Israel.

If not for the God of Israel, the outcome would be very predictable. One billion Muslims with the backing of all but a handful of nations (who stubbornly remain sympathetic to Israel) will ultimately succeed in “wiping Israel off of the map” and finishing what Hitler started, the complete annihilation of the five million Jewish people living in Israel, followed by the elimination of all Jews in the world.

But there is a God of Israel, He does not sleep or slumber (Psalm 121:4), He cannot lie (Titus 1:2), and therefore His promises to Israel will be fulfilled (Jeremiah 31:35-37). That is, although the nations plot against Israel, they will not succeed ([Psalm 83](#), [Isaiah 17](#), [Ezekiel 38-39](#), [Zech 12-14](#), [Revelation 19](#), etc.).

It is clear from the following prophetic scriptures that the last-days nations will be trying to divide Israel up. It is also clear that those who do so will be judged by God. Since these land deals are being discussed now, we must be getting close.

*Dan 11:39 "Thus he [the coming Antichrist ruling over a global government] shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, **and divide the land [of Israel] for gain.***

Joel 3:1 "For behold, in those days and at that time, when I

*bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, 2 I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; **they have also divided up My land.** (NKJ)*

*Zech 12:3 "And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, **though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.** (NKJ)*

In light of the soon approaching last days, I pray that the reader has already surrendered to the ultimate will of God, which is to bow the knee to Jesus, repenting of sin, believing in Jesus as your savior and worshiping Him as your Lord, because He is coming soon for those who love Him. Those who don't will be plunged into the great tribulation and the second death.