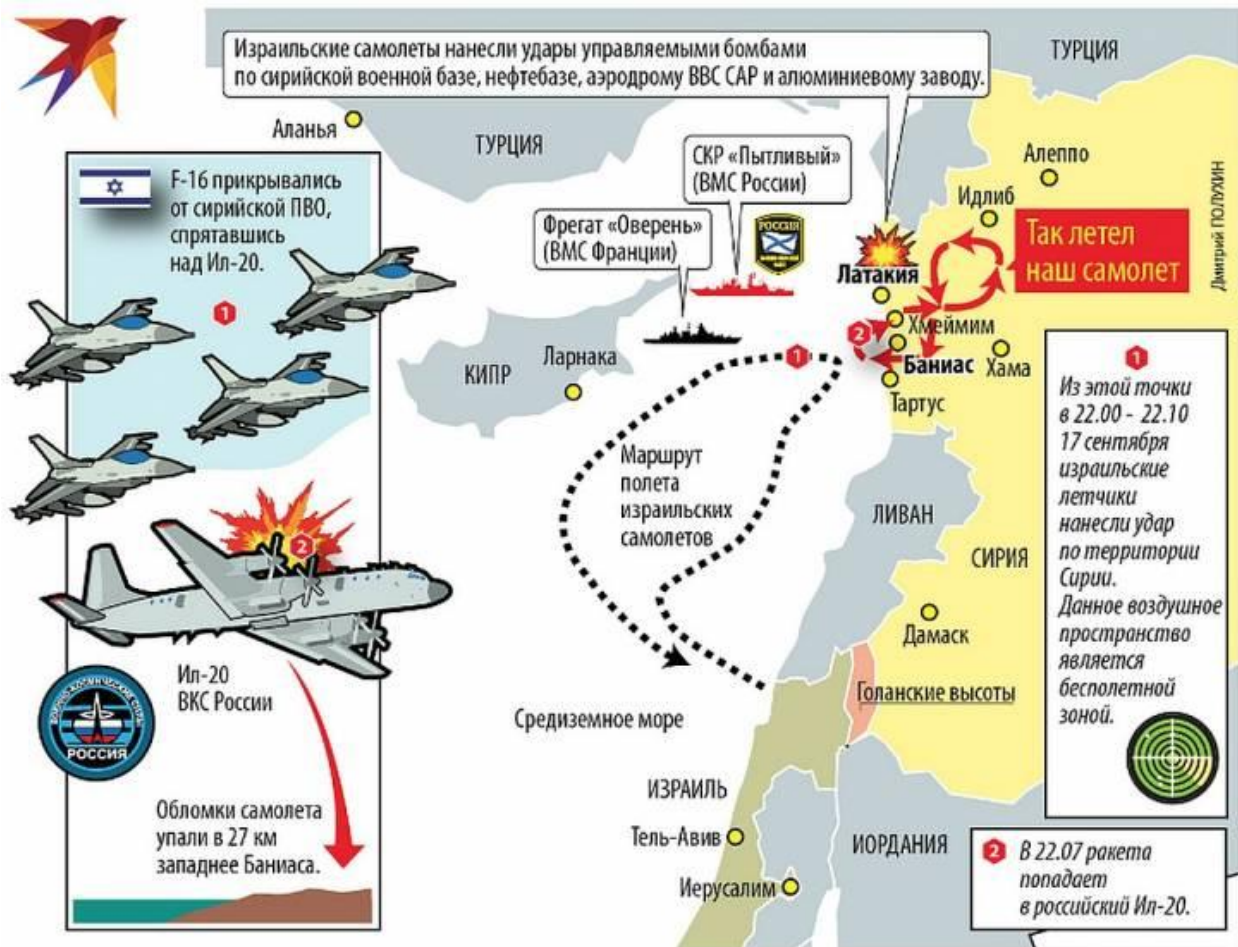


Gog Makes His Next Chess Move!

Part 4

Gog's latest chess move was an act of sheer genius. How so, you might ask? Putin's move was not to take the bait of Israeli IDF forces attacking in the shadow of Russian "eye-in-the-sky" radar aircraft being shot down over northwest Syria. Many pundits said Putin's failure to respond to the shoot-down of the Il-20 was a sign of weakness, failing to stand up to Benjamin Netanyahu.

The aircraft actually was the result of a French frigate cruising off the coast of Syria, we are told by Russian sources. The incident may be an accident; however, Russia holds Israel responsible for the shoot-down of its radar plane and the loss of 15 crew members. Israel gave Russian command centers a 1-minute warning that it was attacking Syrian targets in areas close to Idlib.



Israel's Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said earlier this year that his country would attack Russian S-300 air defense systems in Syria if they were used against Israeli targets.

His remarks came a day after the Russian newspaper 'Kommersant' reported that Moscow could soon start to deliver S-300 systems to its ally Damascus, and cited a source as warning of "catastrophic" consequences if they were attacked.

"What's important to us is that the defensive weapons the Russians are giving Syria won't be used against us," Mr. Lieberman told the news website 'Ynet'. *"If they're used against us, we'll act against them."*

Russia and Syria signed an accord in 2010 for the S-300 system, but the missiles have not been delivered because of Israeli pressure, according to 'Kommersant'.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said earlier this month that no decision had yet been taken on the S-300 missiles. The Russians have deployed the S-300 around their own Tartus naval base on Syria's Mediterranean coast and the more advanced S-400 at their Hmeimim air base in western Syria.

"We have an open line; we really do have discourse" with the Russians, said Mr. Lieberman, noting that their systems had never been used against Israel. *"For several years we've been constantly in coordination and able to avoid friction with the Russians."*

Israel and Syria are still technically at war, though the armistice line on the sector of the Golan Heights which the Jewish state seized from its Arab neighbor in 1967 was largely quiet for decades until the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011. Today, Russian soldiers patrol the Golan border.

The Israeli side of the Golan has since seen regular spillover fire, and Israel has carried out dozens of air strikes on Syrian armed forces and their allies.

Israel says its strikes aim to stop advanced weapons deliveries to Hizbollah, a Lebanese armed group allied to the Syrian government and with which the Jewish state fought a devastating war in 2006.

Dr. Paul Craig Roberts wrote an op-ed column piece entitled, "Can Russia Survive Her 'Partnerships'? Has Putin Made A Strategic Miscalculation?" His September 18, 2018 column raised serious issues, suggesting future errors, miscalculations, taking the bait can bring on WW3. Dr. Roberts's remarks follow below and should not be discounted, but in fact, could be what brings on WW3.

"In an act of intentional deception, Israel used a Russian airplane to cloak an Israeli attack on a Syrian ground position, with the consequence that Syrian air defense missiles downed the Russian airplane with the loss of 15 Russian military lives."

"In the words of the Russian Ministry of Defense: "The Israeli pilots used the Russian plane as cover and set it up to be targeted by the Syrian air defense forces. As a consequence, the Il-20,

which has radar cross-section much larger than the [Israeli] F-16, was shot down by an S-200 system missile.” Russian Defense Minister Shoigu said: “The blame for the downing of the Russian plane and the deaths of its crew members lies squarely on the Israeli side. The actions of the Israeli military were not in keeping with the spirit of the Russian-Israeli partnership, so we reserve the right to respond.”

“For a few minutes it looked like Israel was finally to be held accountable for its reckless and irresponsible actions, but it was not to be. Russian President Putin contradicted his Defense Minister by declaring the loss of Russian lives to be “accidental,” a result of a “chain of tragic circumstances.”

“One wonders how Israel does it. President Putin covered up for Israel’s destruction of the Russian IL-20 just as President Johnson covered up for Israel’s murderous attack on the USS Liberty that resulted in 208 US Navy casualties. As Israel gets away with everything, including routine massacres of unarmed Palestinian women and children, there is no reason to expect Israel to change its behavior.”

“Putin, however, might have to change his behavior or go to full-scale war. I have long admired and defended Putin’s refusal to escalate conflict by refusing to reply to provocation with provocation. Putin understands that he is dealing with irrationality both in Washington and the West generally and in Israel. He doesn’t want to see this irrationality erupt in nuclear war. Everyone should admire Putin for his rectitude. Nevertheless, when dealing with bullies, which are what Washington and Israel are, there is a downside to Putin’s policy of turning the other cheek. Acceptance of provocations and insults leads to more provocations and insults.”

“Although this is history’s lesson, I learned it from the American TV program, Kung Fu, about a Shaolin priest, Caine, on the American western frontier during the 1800s who ignores provocations until he has no alternative but to fight.”

“This is what Putin is doing. Putin’s disinclination to fight encouraged “Russia’s partner” Netanyahu to demonstrate that Israel has the same power over Russia that Israel has over the US. Netanyahu wasn’t the least bit fearful of sacrificing 15 Russian lives in order to successfully attack a Syrian site. Netanyahu knew that only Putin would suffer any adverse consequences.”

“The consequences for Putin are serious. Russian nationalists, as opposed to the pro-American Atlanticist Integrationists, are angry that Putin will not defend Russia’s honor. The Russian military is incensed that Putin, for Israel’s sake, cut the legs off of the beloved Defense Minister. According to some reports that I cannot verify, confidence in Putin is eroding as Russians hear from the Jewish controlled elements of the Russian media that Putin, by deflecting the murderous incident, is strengthening the Russian-Israeli relationship. One Internet site actually has the headline: “Putin to Powers Attacking Syria: Please Keep Getting My Soldiers Killed, I Won’t Do Anything About It.”

“The consequences for Putin and for Syria could be worse than serious. Putin had just called off the announced Russian/Syrian liberation of Idlib province from the terrorists, euphemistically called “the Syrian opposition” by the Russian government, in a concession to Turkey’s President Erdogan, who also shot down a Russian aircraft. What does this tell Washington and its well-paid terrorist allies?”

“It tells them that Russia is easily stymied and that Idlib is secure in Washington’s hands while forces there are built up for a renewal of the effort to turn Syria, like Libya, like Iraq, like Yeman, like Somalia, into a wasteland.”

“Israel wants Syria as a wasteland, like Iraq, and intends to produce that outcome in Iran as well. Israel wants the water resources of southern Lebanon, but the Hezbollah militia, supported and supplied by Syria and Iran is in the way. Twice the Israeli Army sent to occupy southern Lebanon was defeated and driven out by Hezbollah. Israel cannot risk a third defeat, so Israel uses its American puppet. Indeed, the only reason Washington has been at war in the Middle East for the entirety of the 21st century is because Washington is serving Israel’s agenda.”

“It is difficult to believe that the Russian government is so poorly advised that it does not understand this. The “Russian-Israeli partnership” described by Russian Defense Minister Shoigu can be based on nothing other than Russian ignorance. The two countries have totally different agendas in the Middle East. Israel is attempting to use Washington to eliminate governments independent of Washington’s Israeli-directed foreign policy in the Middle East as these governments are a constraint on Israeli expansion. Russia is attempting to prevent the spread of the US-supported jihadists to Russia’s borders, or so I think or thought.”

“My understanding, however, is being challenged. I am contradicted by Russian nationalists who maintain that Putin, misunderstanding that the jihadists terrorists are an American organized and supported force, went into Syria in order to show his solidarity with “America’s war against terrorism.” I find it difficult to believe that Putin, even surrounded by American-worshipping Atlanticist Integrationists, could possibly be this misinformed. But who knows? When did the U.S. last have an informed president? Informed by the real facts, not by the special interests whispering into his ear.”

“I am concerned that Putin, by giving in to Turkey, by covering up for Israel, by calling off the liberation of Idlib province, and by his previous non-responses has set himself up for his next test, which could be in Ukraine. By his refusal to accept the breakaway Russian republics of Donetsk and Luhansk back into Russia where they belong, Putin has allowed this sore to fester. Washington has used the opportunity to arm its Ukrainian puppet and is betting that Putin will refuse to defend the breakaway Russians just as he refused to defend the Russian military from Israel in Syria.”

“Sooner or later Putin is going to find himself in the identical position as Caine. He will have to fight or surrender. By waiting Putin guarantees that provocations will increase in intensity until

there is no alternative to putting the Russian foot down in a major way. Thus, the avoidance of conflict guarantees the conflict, but a larger, more dangerous one."

"I was astonished to read that the Russian Defense Minister spoke of a "Russian-Israeli partnership." I was even more astonished to learn that Russia, which has been engaged for some years in the liberation of Syria from Western supported terrorists, permits Israel and France to attack Syria. Russia can wipe Israel and France off the face of the earth in a few minutes with zero cost to Russia, but Russia accepts constraints and defeats from insignificant military powers."

"The Russian military reports that, at the same time the Russian aircraft was destroyed by Israeli deception, missiles were fired from the French frigate FS Auvergne, apparently at the same target in Syria's Latakia province that were struck by the Israeli aircraft. What sense does it make for Russia, intent on liberating one province, to allow Israeli and French attacks on another Syrian province?"

"In my opinion, Russia's inability to stand firm in the face of Western and Israeli aggression will be the principal cause of World War Three in which we will all die and the planet as well."

Strategies Have Unintended Consequences, as Dr. Paul Craig Roberts points out.

"Since posting my remarks — <https://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2018/09/18/can-russia-survive-her-partnerships-has-putin-made-a-strategic-miscalculation/> — other comments on President Putin's response to the loss of Russian lives have appeared. I am providing links to two of them as examples of the negative consequences for Putin:

<https://www.fort-russ.com/2018/09/the-overarching-strategic-logic-behind-provocations-against-russia-2014-2018/>

<https://russia-insider.com/en/il-20-loss-perfect-opportunity-russia-close-down-syria-israeli-attacks-good/ri24794>

Understand that I am not denigrating President Putin. I understand his strategy and consider his strategy to be moral and responsible. My concern is with the unintended consequences of his strategy."

Since the incident of September 18th, 2018, Russia's navy has since established a permanent presence in Mediterranean Sea. Russian President Vladimir Putin said a naval standing force, including warships with Kalibr long-range land-attack cruise missiles, will be permanently deployed in the Mediterranean Sea. The statement was made at a meeting with top military officials and defense industry leaders that took place in Sochi on May 16.

The Russian Black Sea Fleet has become a much different force in comparison to what it was just three years ago. Since 2015, the year the operation in Syria was launched it has

received 15 new ships, including two frigates and six conventional submarines armed with Kalibr cruise missiles. With S-400 and S-300V4 air defense systems, Krasukha-4 electronic warfare systems and shore-based anti-ship Bastion batteries deployed on the Syrian coast, the ships in Eastern Mediterranean operate in a relatively safe environment. Kalibr missiles have already been fired from frigates and submarines at terrorist targets in Syria.

Last July, a 15-strong Mediterranean Task Force was established to be based out of Tartus, Syria's leased naval facility. The ships provide a buffer on the southern flank of NATO. Russia needs to counter aggressive activities of the bloc in the region, including the Black Sea. Maintaining robust presence in the Mediterranean is the best way to defend Russia's Black Sea borders.

All southern Europe, including such NATO military assets as Allied Joint Force Command in Naples, Italy, Combined Air Operations Centers in Larissa, Greece, and in Poggio Renatico, Italy, Headquarters Allied Land Command and Air Power Command in Izmir, Turkey, NATO Incirlik air base in Turkey, Graf Ignatievo and Bezmer air bases in Bulgaria used by US Air Force as well as a lot of other key NATO defense infrastructure sites happen to be within the range of Kalibr missiles installed on the platforms patrolling the Mediterranean Sea. They'll all be knocked out with first salvos in case a Russia-NATO war starts.

The Fleet's operations are not limited to the Black Sea basin and the Mediterranean. It is on the way of transition from a green-water naval formation to a blue water force, demonstrating the Russian flag as the ships move beyond the Strait of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal on the way to the World Ocean.

The establishment of permanent naval presence in the region can be explained by a number of rational calculations. The Mediterranean Sea is Russia's only exit to the open ocean for the Black Sea Fleet. The permanent presence is a logical step in view of Russia's growing political influence in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Foreign Ministries are not the only ones to shape external policy. Any port call is a diplomat mission, providing an opportunity for official meetings and public diplomacy, with the events covered by media. Take the famous German Kiel Week or Kieler Woche in German, the biggest annual maritime festival and international forum visited by about three million people coming from all over the world. Warships from many countries are an important element of the event. Ships also take part in the Irish maritime festival at Drogheda Port. Russian frigate The Shtandart, a replica of the man-of-war built by Peter the Great in 1703, visited Drogheda on June 10-11 this year.

The naval visits reflect foreign policy trends. In 2017, Russian ships made 46 port calls to drop anchor at 28 ports of 27 countries worldwide. The list includes five Western or West-friendly states: Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, Japan and South Korea, which account for 19% of the countries visited by Russian ships. Nine (33%) of the states on the list belong to the Asia-Pacific region, with other 13 (48%) situated in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. The 81% vs. 19%

ratio illustrates Russia's rebalancing from the "collective" West toward other countries and power poles. The Russian Navy also conducted six international exercises, demonstrating its global presence and power projection capability.

The growing trade brings to the fore the task of sea lanes' protection. Russia has longstanding economic ties with many Mediterranean states, including Greece, Libya, Cyprus, and Algeria. The relations include defense cooperation.

US Navy deployments in support of ballistic missile defense are viewed as provocative moves to downgrade Russia's strategic nuclear capability. With Russia's continuous presence in the region, Aegis ships as well as aircraft carriers become sitting ducks for state-of-the-art anti-ship missiles. This is why two weeks ago the USS Truman aircraft carrier and battle group support ships did not hang around but for a few days in the Mediterranean Sea, heading back to the expanse of the Atlantic Ocean patrol, only to return to station with the U.S. 6th Fleet should something further abrogate the tense situation. Many believe and surmise that Israel is seeking to provoke a war that will drag the U.S. into the fray and result in the destruction of the two super-powers. Years ago, the military writer Tom Clancy said that Israel had been able to hack the old Soviet Union and U.S. nuclear launch codes, and that it could start a war between the super-powers.

Seymour Hersh's 1991 book *'The Samson Option'* is all about Israel's nuclear power and goes into this potential reality of provoking a war between the U.S. and Russia. According to investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, the "Samson Option" is the name Israel has given to its nuclear arsenal. The title recalls the biblical superhero Samson, who himself was killed when by pulling on the support pillars he brought down the Philistine Temple in Gaza, killing its ruling class.

Beginning with the writing of the militarist Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the image of Samson has been central to construction in popular culture of the modern Zionist identity of "the fighting Jew" who has left exile and subjugation behind forever.

Hersh describes his book of the same name as the story *"of how Israel became a nuclear power in secret."* He continues: *"It also is the story of how the secret was shared, sanctioned, and, at times, willfully ignored by the top political and military officials of the United States since the Eisenhower years."* To these acts abetting Israel's nuclear armament may now be added diplomatic flimflammy to shelter that program from the controls and commitments to disarmament that even the nuclear power states have by treaty placed on themselves.

In recent weeks, the United States, Britain and Canada thwarted the will of 188 other signatories at the ninth quinquennial Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in New York by preventing a consensus to form on the final conference document. Their objection? An Arab proposal for revitalizing attempts at establishing a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East would have put Israel under undue pressure.

In an egregious act of nuclear favoritism, a non-declared nuclear weapons state, which is not a signatory to the NPT, was allowed to remain undisturbed outside the international regime for nuclear disarmament. This took place after Israel, with the threat of war, has labored mightily to prevent Iran from obtaining the bomb. It also came at a time when, despite apparently successful diplomatic negotiations to disable the Iranian program, a race is breaking out among Arab countries to develop their own weapons.

A Middle East nuclear-free zone would have been one way to prevent that arms race, reducing the threat from the spreading disorder in the region, especially since the Arab countries backed the new proposals. The defeat of the nuclear-free zone may well prove a destabilizing factor in the region as a newly assertive Saudi Arabia, feeling that its national security interests in the region have diverged from that of the U.S., carried out its campaign against Iran and Shiite Islam across the region from the Persian Gulf in the east to the Mediterranean in the west and south to the Gulf of Aden.

The nuclear-free zone idea dates back to a proposal at the 1995 NPT Review Conference. Since then, it has been an important part of the nonproliferation architecture and, as even this year's failed review shows, an integral element in international efforts to limit the spread of nuclear weapons.

There are now five such areas: Antarctica, Latin America and the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central Asia. (Mongolia also has declared itself a nuclear-free nation by law.) At a minimum, nuclear-free zones do two things. First, they prohibit the acquisition, testing, stationing, and use of nuclear weapons. Second, they bind the signatory states not to use or to threaten to use nuclear weapons against signatory states.

A Middle East nuclear-free zone has also been on the agenda for two decades. The last review conference in 2010 set in motion initiatives to call a conference to pursue the establishment of such a zone in 2012. But with a conference scheduled for December that year, the United States at the eleventh hour, on Nov. 23, announced no conference would be held "because of present conditions in the Middle East" and lack of agreement on part of nations in the region.

Israel has concurred with U.N. General Assembly resolutions in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 calling for such an agreement. But it seems nothing short of a peace agreement with the Arab countries and Iran would lead Israel -- currently the only nuclear power in the region -- to even engage in negotiation over a conference. With the far rightward drift of Israeli politics, it is hard to imagine Israel allowing a nuclear-free zone to test its will for nuclear disarmament.

Israel's reluctance to engage in dismantling a nuclear arsenal it doesn't even admit exists is understandable. But the decision of the North Atlantic powers, including non-nuclear and often peace-leaning Canada, to run interference for a nuclear outlier that is not a signatory of the NPT is hard to understand, unless perhaps this is part of a U.S. quid pro quo with Israel in exchange for giving the nuclear deal with Iran a chance.

Rose Gottemoeller, the U.S. undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, said the proposal was "incompatible with our long-standing policies." She went on to say that the U.S. has always stressed "that the initiative for the creation of such zones should emanate from the regions themselves, and under a process freely arrived at and with the full mutual consent of all the states in the region."

The NPT is a compact between nuclear weapons states and non-possessing states. The vast majority of states participating in the review conference supported the nuclear-free zone proposal, and its failure weakens the NPT system. The collapse of the conference also reinforces the perception that the nuclear states dominate the process without regard for world opinion and show favoritism when it suits their interests.

With the NPT crippled in its ability to advance the project of international disarmament, it is not surprising to see various coalitions of states looking for alternative means to advance the cause. The series of three conferences in Oslo, Norway; Nayarit, Mexico; and Vienna on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons was the last such effort. Future efforts are less likely to coddle the super-sensitivities of uncooperative nuclear powers.

With the collapse of the 2015 review conference, it is not unreasonable that the non-nuclear states who have abided by their agreements should look for mechanisms outside the NPT to ban nuclear weapons. The NPT has proved a one-sided bargain, and the assumption that the only way ahead is to have the assent of nuclear powers, declared and undeclared, at every step of the way is outmoded.

The rejection of the Middle East nuclear-free zone proposal should be a watershed. The non-nuclear powers can't bind the nuclear powers to move ahead on disarmament on the current diplomatic assumptions. Perhaps with other methods, the global majority will be able to persuade and shame the possessing states and their protectorates -- however grudgingly -- into joining the global agenda for nuclear peace.

With American bombing raids into Afghanistan and a tough President Bush intimating more of the same for other terrorist-harboring nations, experts and armchair war-watchers are inserting nuclear powerhouse Israel into the calculus of potential Armageddon in the Middle East.

Adding yet other variables, a defiant Saddam Hussein issued an ominous warning in late August, just weeks before the terror attacks on New York City and the Pentagon: "The battle [against the U.S.] continues on the economic, political and military fields. We are convinced we will be victorious."

All that the sabre-rattling Iraqi dictator left out of this latest diatribe was a bold repeat of his 1991 pre-Desert Storm boast that if America attacked, the first to feel his wrath in the "mother of all battles" would be Israel.

After decades of living among hostile neighbours Israel has yet to be attacked by an enemy using nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. One reason may be the horrific plan some claim Israel drew up to prevent such an attack. The plan was called the Samson Option. An astute investigative journalist and student of history chalked a dramatic potential solution to the volatile equation on the blackboard - a decade ago.

"Should war break out in the Middle East again and should the Syrians and the Egyptians break through again as they did in 1973 [Yom Kippur War], or should any Arab nation fire missiles again at Israel, as Iraq did [in the 1991 Gulf War], a nuclear escalation, once unthinkable except as a last resort, would now be a strong possibility."

Pulitzer Prize-winning author ("My Lai 4") Seymour M. Hersh made this hypothesis in his 1991 best seller *'The Samson Option'*. Captured and cruelly maimed, the book's biblical namesake uttered the ultimate fighting words, *"Let my soul die with the Philistines."*

That said, the divinely empowered Samson pushed apart the temple pillars - collapsing the roof and killing himself as well as his enemies.

In his exposé of Israel's clandestine nuclear arsenal, Hersh suggested that in the early days (late 1960s) of crude big-flash-and-bang nukes, one defensive option to counter an attack on Israel with weapons of mass destruction was for the beleaguered nation to mimic Samson and grimly trade holocaust for holocaust.

Hersh's 1991 prognostication of a "strong possibility" of the use by Israel of nuclear weapons rested on his knowledge that by the mid-1980s, Israeli technicians at the super-secret Dimona nuclear plant had produced hundreds of low-yield neutron warheads capable of destroying large numbers of enemy troops with minimal property damage.

Israel's ability to use nukes tactically and surgically, however, has evolved a great deal since the Samson option was still realistically an option.

In 1997, *'Jane's Intelligence Weekly'* examined satellite photographs of what it described as an Israeli military base at Kfar Zechariah, concluding academically, "Israel's nuclear arsenal is larger than many estimates."

According to *Jane's*, the site was said to house about 50 Jericho-2 missiles, believed to have a maximum range of about 3,000 miles with a warhead of about 2,200 pounds. Israel had at last report by *Jane's* 250 of the Jericho missiles: 100 Jericho-1; 100 Jericho-2; and 50 of the Jericho-3 versions.

According to the report, the installation contained nuclear bombs, configured for dropping from bombers. Furthermore, five bunkers at the site were cited as capable of safeguarding 150 weapons.

"This ... supports indications that the Israeli arsenal may contain as many as 400 nuclear weapons with a total combined yield of 50 megatons," the report concluded.

In 1998 the New York Times reported a Rand Corp. study commissioned by the Pentagon that opined Israel had enough plutonium to make 70 nuclear weapons. More light was shed on the issue in February of last year when the Israeli Knesset (parliament) held the first public discussion on the country's nuclear arms program.

Issam Mahoul, an Arab Israeli MP and member of the Hadash (Communist) Party, petitioned that country's Supreme Court to force the government to permit a parliamentary debate on the forbidden subject.

The upshot of this bold and generally unpopular tactic was an unprecedented televised session of the Knesset at which Mahoul stated that, according to experts' estimates, Israel had stockpiled huge numbers of nuclear warheads.

This had increased to what he described as the "insane amount of 200-300." The weapons had been developed with the help of the South African apartheid regime.

Working up a head of rhetorical steam, Mahoul grandly alleged that three new German-built submarines just purchased by Israel were to be fitted with nuclear weapons.

Their stated purpose, he said, was "to cruise deep in the sea and constitute a second strike force in the event that Israel is attacked with nuclear weapons."

Mahoul also announced what was hardly a news bulletin - Israel was producing "biological warfare" weapons at the government's Biological Institute in Ness Ziona.

The obstreperous MP concluded that the government's official policy of "nuclear ambiguity" was the height of self-delusion. *"All the world knows that Israel is a vast warehouse of atomic, biological and chemical weapons that serves as an anchor for the Middle East arms race,"* he said.

Despite the bristling inventory of nukes, the Israelis have a laudable history of restraint in brandishing, much less using, and these most destructive of all weapons of mass destruction.

In fact, for most of the latter half of the 20th century, the Israeli Bomb remained invisible and unacknowledged. Israel's official position was to neither confirm nor deny its nuclear status, only pledging on the record *"not to be the first to introduce nuclear weapons to the Middle East."*

According to Hersh, the best example of Israeli restraint in the face of great provocation came during the Gulf War.

On the second day of the American invasion, Saddam Hussein fired eight Scud missiles at non-combatant Israel. Two of the conventionally armed missiles landed on Tel Aviv. Then Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir responded by ordering mobile missile launchers armed with nuclear weapons moved into the open and deployed facing Iraq.

The Samsonesque strongman of the Middle East had stirred - and the world held its breath. Promising Patriot missile batteries and loads of future aid, the United States pressured Israel to keep cool. After all, the allied coalition included a number of Arab nations, and the U.S. feared that dramatic Israeli retaliation could fragment the fragile alliance.

By the end of the Gulf War, Israel had dutifully absorbed 26 Scuds - none armed with biological or chemical weapons. And therein lays the rub. What if the missiles had featured biochemical agent warheads? Israel's prime ministers have plenary jurisdiction over their country's nuclear activities.

The refrain used consistently by the Israeli leaders has been and remains an unqualified: *"Israel reserves the right to retaliate if attacked."* Traditionally, Israeli leaders have pigeonholed nuclear weapons as a psychological insurance policy for unthinkable contingencies, under the heading of "last resort."

The hope of those in the inner sanctums of national security is that the exigencies of America's New War send no such unthinkable contingencies in the direction of America's quiet ally.

New York radio talk-show host Hal Turner reported that the highest ranking members of Israeli military travelled to Moscow to explain and talk about the shoot down of a Russian IL-20 Electronic Intelligence Aircraft during an Israeli attack upon Syria. The Israelis wanted to meet with President Putin and Russian military leaders to explain what THEY say took place. It didn't go well. President Putin refused to meet the delegation.

Russian Military leaders listened to Maj. Gen. Amikam Nurkin, Israel's Air Force chief and, my covert Intelligence Sources tell me, *"the Russians got almost immediately ticked-off."* My former Intel Colleagues (from my years with the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force) said *"The Major-General from Israel immediately went into "deflection mode" trying to blame the Syrians for what the Israeli's did. The Major-General decried the Syrians as almost incompetent in the way they use their air defences, and condescendingly expressed surprise they haven't actually shot down more planes by accident."* When the Russians heard that, it was all but "game over" for the Israeli delegation.

The Major General from Israel apparently didn't realize (or perhaps didn't care) that when he said such things about the Syrians, he was actually insulting the Russians because he made it appear that the Russians didn't train the Syrians properly! It went over like a lead balloon.

Making matters worse, when Russian military members began asking Maj. Gen Nurkin specific questions, he was completely unprepared to answer them, saying he would have to check with his government first. This was the actual end for the meeting as Russians decided the Israelis had come to propagandize instead of answer questions. It seemed to the Russians that the Israelis were trying to blame anyone but themselves for what took place.

The Russians then abruptly interrupted. They told the Israelis the Russian plane was only 3-1/2 MINUTES away from landing at Hmeymim air base in Syria when the shoot-down took place. They told Israel that Israeli fighter jets "sneakily shadowed" the much larger Russian aircraft to use it as radar cover for Israeli missile launches. They said the Israelis did this on purpose; then threw the Israelis out of the meeting after a grand total of . . . 21 minutes.

The Israeli military members described the meeting as "tense and very threatening." Suffice it to say there is REAL trouble between Russia and Israel. The media of Israel is already "spinning" the meeting as having lasted for "hours." That's flatly wrong. From start to finish, the meeting lasted twenty-one minutes.

With the new Russian-imposed "no fly" zone for Israeli aircraft over Syria, along with the Russian Navy presence stronger than ever, Putin has thrown down the gauntlet, and raised the level of tension for the ongoing conflict.

Over the past 24 hours the Internet, have been flooded with opinion on what everybody and anybody would do if they were in Putin's boots. Proposals range from declaring a no-fly zone over Syria to, I kid you not, send a couple of Russian SSBNs (subs which carry intercontinental ballistic missiles) off the coast of Israel. Furthermore, since Putin has failed, at least so far, to implement any retaliatory measures, the usual chorus of "Putin is a traitor" has been swamping my poor mods with sanguine expressions of disgust about Putin, Russia.

I do realize that nothing I say would change the minds of this latter group, but for the rest of us in the real world, a short reality check might be helpful. So, here it is a short bullet-point format.

1. Putin is absolutely right to take his time and not announce any immediate measures. Not only is this region of our planet extremely dangerous, he also needs the inputs of all the experts. In Russian we say that "haste is only needed when catching fleas".
2. Furthermore, there are questions which need to be investigated. For example, the Russians have declared that the Russian air defences and the Syrian ones have now been integrated. Most people don't realize that an S-200 battery does not just fire by itself or by the decision of the crew. At the very least, this decision is taken by an air defence command post which evaluates the threats and allocates targets. There is a high probability that Russians were also involved in the chain of events which lead to the downing of the II-20.

3. Declaring a no-fly zone over all of Syria is simply not in the current Russian capabilities. Like it or not, that is a fact. However, declaring an air exclusion zone over Khmeimim and Tartus is something the Russians could do especially with the help of the Russian Navy ships near the Syrian coast and the Russian AWACS in the air (putting a pair of MiG-31BMs on combat air patrol over northern Syria would also be an option). The size of such an air exclusion zone over Russian forces would have to be very carefully agreed upon with all the relevant experts and lawyers (yes, Russia does care about international law).

So let's not speculate about all this and wait for the Kremlin to take some kind of decision. Then we can evaluate it. Right now all these speculations are just a waste of time.

Also, speaking of Syria: has anybody noticed that the agreement between Turkey and Russia has removed any justification for a US attack on Syria and that the Israelis have organized their latest little bloody stunt right after this deal was announced? As concluded here, Putin made his next chess move by not taking the bait of Israel to provoke an attack on the French frigate that would have required NATO countries to come to the aid of the French ship had Russian missiles blew it out of the water. Bet you never thought the game of chess would be so nerve-wracking!

Blessings,

Pastor Bob Reid
EvanTeachr@aol.com