# Press Review N° 145 - By Gilberte Jacaret

OBAMA AND NETANYAHOU

IsraelValley, 19 May 2009, By Mati Ben Avraham - It was in the air. It is confirmed. Obama Barak and Binyamin Netanyahu is in strong disagreement on key points on the agenda: resolving the Israeli-Palestinian disputation, regional peace and the Iran issue.

Also disagreement regarding the order of priorities: to Netanyahu that gives the solution of the Iranian nuclear priority, Obama up the settlement of Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the top of its concerns.

It is clear that the new U.S. administration does not intend to let them count. It has its own roadmap, which it wishes to apply, with patches if necessary, but minor corrections. The goal, Barak Obama made clear, is the music of the formula two states for two peoples.

It is clear also, the administration proceeded to a rebalancing of relations between Israel and the Arab-Muslim world. The objective is to best support the current pragmatic which has emerged to counter the Islamist threat that could destabilize the region. It is not for nothing that the American president will make his first official outing in the region, Egypt, next month.

This is a fact that Israeli leaders can not do without. Rebalancing U.S. must meet a reassessment of the Israeli side. We will have to decide between ideological principles and political pragmatism.

Beautiful days in perspective, as seems Becket .

Jerusalem Post, May 20 - Clinton demands settlement construction of all types cease - Sharp differences emerged between the US and Israel over the settlement
issue on Wednesday - one day after Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu concluded his first official visit to the White House - with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton calling for an absolute stop to all settlement activity and sources close to the prime minister saying the terms of a settlement freeze still needed to be defined.

IRAN

The Washington Post,  May 20 - Iran says it tests missile, Israel within range - Tehran, Iran - President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Iran test-fired a
new advanced missile Wednesday with a range of about 1,200 miles, far enough to strike Israel, southeastern Europe and U.S. bases in the Middle East.

The announcement will not reassure the U.S. government, coming just two days after President Barack Obama declared a readiness to seek deeper international sanctions against Iran if it shunned U.S. attempts to open negotiations on its nuclear program. Obama said he expected a positive response to his outreach for opening a dialogue with Iran by the end of the year.

"Defense Minister (Mostafa Mohammad Najjar) has informed me that the Sajjil-2 missile, which has very advanced technology, was launched from Semnan and it landed precisely on the target," state radio quoted Ahmadinejad as saying. He spoke during a visit to the city of Semnan, 125 miles east of the capital Tehran, where Iran's space program is centered.

Ahmadinejad is running for re-election in a June 12 vote and has been criticized by his opponents and others for antagonizing the U.S. and mismanaging the country's faltering economy.

Most Western analysts believe Iran does not yet have the technology to produce nuclear weapons, including warheads for long-range missiles. A group of U.S. and Russian scientists said in a report issued Tuesday that Iran could produce a simple nuclear device in one to three years and a nuclear warhead in another five years after that.

The study published by the nonpartisan EastWest Institute also said Iran is making advances in rocket technology and could develop a ballistic missile capable of firing a 2,200-pound nuclear warhead up to 1,200 miles "in perhaps six to eight years."

Iran says its missile program is merely for defense and its space program is for scientific and surveillance purposes. It maintains that its nuclear program is for civilian energy uses only.

The solid-fuel Sajjil-2 surface-to-surface missile is a new version of the Sajjil missile, which Iran said it had successfully tested late last year with a similar range.

Iran's nuclear and missile programs have alarmed Israel, and the country's new prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, pressed Obama to step up pressure on Tehran when the two met in Washington on Monday. Ahmadinejad has repeatedly called for Israel's elimination, and the Jewish state has not ruled out a military strike to deal with the

Iranian nuclear threat.

AFGHANISTAN

New York Times, May 20, 2009 - Arms From U.S. May Be Falling Into Taliban Hands, By C. J. Chivers - Kabul - Insurgents in Afghanistan, fighting from some of the poorest and most remote regions on earth, have managed for years to maintain an intensive guerrilla war against materially superior American and Afghan forces.

Arms and ordnance collected from dead insurgents hint at one possible reason: Of 30 rifle magazines recently taken from insurgents’ corpses, at least 17 contained cartridges, or rounds, identical to ammunition the United States had provided to Afghan government forces, according to an examination of ammunition markings by The New York Times and interviews with American officers and arms dealers.

The presence of this ammunition among the dead in the Korangal Valley, an area of often fierce fighting near Afghanistan’s border with Pakistan, strongly suggests that munitions procured by the Pentagon have leaked from Afghan forces for use against American troops.

The scope of that diversion remains unknown, and the 30 magazines represented a single sampling of fewer than 1,000 cartridges. But military officials, arms analysts and dealers say it points to a worrisome possibility: With only spotty American and Afghan controls on the vast inventory of weapons and ammunition sent into Afghanistan during an eight-year conflict, poor discipline and outright corruption among Afghan forces may have helped insurgents stay supplied.

PAKISTAN

Spiegel, May 24 - Interview with Red Cross worker in Pakistan - 'Nobody Can Assess the Magnitude of the Catastrophe' - The fighting in northwestern Pakistan is forcing more and more people from their homes. In a single day, the United Nations registered 160,000 additional displaced persons. Spiegel Online spoke with the Red Cross's Sébastien Brack about the dire situation in the region.

Pakistan and Taliban Battling for Key City - Islamabad, Pakistan - The Pakistani military said Saturday that its troops had entered Mingora, the largest city in the contested Swat Valley, in an effort to wrest the city from Taliban hands.

Calling it the most important part of the recent offensive against the Taliban in the region, military officials said they were bracing for an intense, bloody fight. Seventeen militants were killed in clashes as troops entered the city over the last 24 hours, according to a spokesman for the Pakistani Army, though the claim could not be

independently verified.

The New York Times, May 18 - Pakistan Is Rapidly Adding Nuclear Arms, U.S. Says - By Thom Shanker and David E. Sanger - Washington - Members of Congress have been told in confidential briefings that Pakistan is rapidly adding to its nuclear arsenal even while racked by insurgency, raising questions on Capitol Hill about whether billions of dollars in proposed military aid might be diverted to Pakistan’s nuclear program.

Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed the assessment of the expanded arsenal in a one-word answer to a question on Thursday in the midst of lengthy Senate testimony. Sitting beside Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, he was asked whether he had seen evidence of an increase in the size of the Pakistani nuclear arsenal.

“Yes,” he said quickly, adding nothing, clearly cognizant of Pakistan’s sensitivity to any discussion about the country’s nuclear strategy or security.

Inside the Obama administration, some officials say, Pakistan’s drive to spend heavily on new nuclear arms has been a source of growing concern, because the country is producing more nuclear material at a time when Washington is increasingly focused on trying to assure the security of an arsenal of 80 to 100 weapons so that they will never fall into the hands of Islamic insurgents.

The administration’s effort is complicated by the fact that Pakistan is producing an unknown amount of new bomb-grade uranium and, once a series of new reactors is completed, bomb-grade plutonium for a new generation of weapons. President Obama has called for passage of a treaty that would stop all nations from producing more fissile material — the hardest part of making a nuclear weapon — but so far has said nothing in public about Pakistan’s activities.

Bruce Riedel, the Brookings Institution scholar who served as the co-author of Mr. Obama’s review of Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, reflected the administration’s concern in a recent interview, saying that Pakistan “has more terrorists per square mile than anyplace else on earth, and it has a nuclear weapons program that is growing faster than anyplace else on earth.”

Obama administration officials said that they had communicated to Congress that their intent was to assure that military aid to Pakistan was directed toward counterterrorism and not diverted. But Admiral Mullen’s public confirmation that the arsenal is increasing — a view widely held in both classified and unclassified analyses — seems certain to aggravate Congress’s discomfort.

Whether that discomfort might result in a delay or reduction in aid to Pakistan is still unclear.

The Congressional briefings have taken place in recent weeks as Pakistan has descended into further chaos and as Congress has considered proposals to spend $3 billion over the next five years to train and equip Pakistan’s military for counterinsurgency warfare. That aid would come on top of $7.5 billion in civilian assistance.

None of the proposed military assistance is directed at the nuclear program. So far, America’s aid to Pakistan’s nuclear infrastructure has been limited to a $100 million classified program to help Pakistan secure its weapons and materials from seizure by Al Qaeda, the Taliban or “insiders” with insurgent loyalties.

But the billions in new proposed American aid, officials acknowledge, could free other money for Pakistan’s nuclear infrastructure, at a time when Pakistani officials have expressed concern that their nuclear program is facing a budget crunch for the first time, worsened by the global economic downturn. The program employs tens of thousands of Pakistanis, including about 2,000 believed to possess “critical knowledge” about how to produce a weapon.

The dimensions of the Pakistani buildup are not fully understood. “We see them scaling up their centrifuge facilities,” said David Albright, the president of the Institute for Science and International Security, which has been monitoring Pakistan’s continued efforts to buy materials on the black market, and analyzing satellite photographs of two new plutonium reactors less than 100 miles from where Pakistani forces are currently fighting the Taliban.

“The Bush administration turned a blind eye to how this is being ramped up,” he said. “And of course, with enough pressure, all this could be preventable.”

As a matter of diplomacy, however, the buildup presents Mr. Obama with a potential conflict between two national security priorities, some aides concede. One is to win passage of a global agreement to stop the production of fissile material — the uranium or plutonium used to produce weapons. Pakistan has never agreed to any limits and is one of three countries, along with India and Israel, that never signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Yet the other imperative is a huge infusion of financial assistance into Afghanistan and Pakistan, money considered crucial to helping stabilize governments with tenuous holds on power in the face of terrorist and insurgent violence.

Senior members of Congress were already pressing for assurances from Pakistan that the American military assistance would be used to fight the insurgency, and not be siphoned off for more conventional military programs to counter Pakistan’s historic adversary, India. Official

confirmation that Pakistan has accelerated expansion of its nuclear program only added to the consternation of those in Congress who were already voicing serious concern about the security of those warheads.

During a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday, Senator Jim Webb, a Virginia Democrat, veered from the budget proposal under debate to ask Admiral Mullen about public reports “that Pakistan is, at the moment, increasing its nuclear program — that it may be actually adding on to weapons systems and warheads. Do you have any evidence of that?”

It was then that Admiral Mullen responded with his one-word confirmation. Mr. Webb said Pakistan’s decision was a matter of “enormous concern,” and he added, “Do we have any type of control factors that would be built in, in terms of where future American money would be going, as it addresses what I just asked about?”

Similar concerns about seeking guarantees that American military assistance to Pakistan would be focused on battling insurgents also were expressed by Senator Carl Levin of Michigan, the committee chairman.

“Unless Pakistan’s leaders commit, in deeds and words, their country’s armed forces and security personnel to eliminating the threat from militant extremists, and unless they make it clear that they are doing so, for the sake of their own future, then no amount of assistance will be effective,” Mr. Levin said.

A spokesman for the Pakistani government contacted Friday declined to comment on whether his nation was expanding its nuclear weapons program, but said the government was “maintaining the minimum, credible deterrence capability.” He warned against linking American financial assistance to Pakistan’s actions on its weapons program.

“Conditions or sanctions on this issue did not work in the past, and this will not send a positive message to the people of Pakistan,” said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because his country’s nuclear program is classified.

ANTI-SEMITISM

May 18 - Crif in Action - Calls to boycott Israel: “The fixation against Israel is anti-Semitism” according to Prasquier - Once and for all, these operations are illegal, insists Richard Prasquier, president of the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF)”. In an interview published on the French website ‘rue89’, he was referring to calls being made in France to boycott Israeli products, a favourite theme among pro-Palestinian anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic movements.

The most recent such campaign, launched in February by Europalestine, is targeting the Carrefour hypermarket chain and is adopting a strategy of offensive communication via the Internet. A dozen or so operations have already been carried out by the association, mainly in the Carrefour superstores of the Greater Paris Region. The images filmed in the Aulnay-sous-Bois superstore and broadcasted on Dailymotion and YouTube have been viewed over 450 000 times, according to the association. Such a situation worries and appals the president of CRIF.

Euronews, May 20 - European Jewish News,  May 19 - Argentine Jews baffled by anti-Semitic attacks - Buenos Aires - (AFP) - A leader of Argentina's Jewish community on
Tuesday said he was baffled by a recent anti-Semitic attack from what appears to be a extreme-left militant group.

Police arrested five people after some 20 hooded thugs armed with clubs and knives attacked a crowd of members of the Jewish community marking the 61st anniversary of the creation of the state of Israel on Sunday.

Around 300,000 Jews live in Argentina, the largest Jewish community in Latin America…..

HUMAN RIGHTS

Euronews, May 20 - Aung San Suu Kyi trial opened to foreign observers - The military rulers of Myanmar appeared to bow to international
pressure today, by opening the trial of Aung San Suu Kyi to foreign journalists and diplomats. The junta accuses her of breaching the terms of her house arrest, by colluding with an eccentric American who swam across a lake and entered her home uninvited.

Security was tight around the court at Yangon’s notorious Insein jail, for a trial denounced even by Myanmar’s usually-close mouthed neighbours. In a rare critical statement, the Association of South-East Asian Nations called for Suu Kyi to be released.

Less-restrained protests erupted across the region. In Bangkok, Buddhist monks besieged the Myanmar embassy calling for her freedom.

Suu Kyi has been under arrest for 13 of the past 19 years. Her democratic opposition party won Myanmar’s last election in 1990, but the junta ignored the results.