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Iraq, the Arabs, the U.S., and Israel Is there linkage between Kuwait and the "West Bank"?

Iraqi aggression against Kuwait and its designs on Saudi Arabia have startled the world. When asked to relinquish his conquest, President Saddam Hussein said that he would consider doing so, provided that Israel would withdraw from the administered territories of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and from the Gaza strip. Is that a proposal that should be considered? Would such linkage be conducive to the welfare of the United States and the rest of the world?

What are the facts?

■ Some believe that the strategic value of Israel had been diminished in the wake of the "luke-warming" of the cold war with the Soviet Union. The aggression by Iraq against Kuwait and its threatening posture against Saudi Arabia show the fallacy of such thinking. The U.S. has committed (so far) over 300,000 personnel and untold military assets in the area. Saudi Arabia having purchased close to \$100 billion of the world's most advanced weaponry, has been found to be totally impotent, even before the first lunge of the Iraqi aggressor and has asked for the protection of the United States. Kuwait, overrun in less than 24 hours by a small contingent of the Iraqi military, also had acquired tens of billions of dollars of sophisticated armament. All of it was "liberated" by the Iraqis. The most sensitive military secrets fell into enemy hands.

■ In order not to "offend" the Arabs, the United States Administration has asked Israel to "lie low" in this present conflict. Though highly classified and politically sensitive intelligence is provided by Israel to the U.S., Israel is indeed on the sidelines. It will in all likelihood remain in that posture unless it finds its own security threatened. And that could very easily come about, because Hussein, feeling cornered, may attempt an attack on Israel. He would do that in the quite justified expectation that those Arab states that are now "allied" with the United States would promptly switch their allegiance. Because even though the Arabs hate each other, they are all united in their greater hatred of the Jews.

■ The U.S. carries most of the financial and military burden of the Middle East action. The Administration has decided that it is politically advisable to involve the Arab nations in this enterprise. We thus find ourselves with

such unpleasant associates as, for example, Syria. Its president, Hafez Assad, though the mortal enemy of Saddam Hussein, is equally unsavory. He has slaughtered his own citizens by the tens of thousands, he is a terrorist leader specializing in killing Americans (remember PanAm 103?), and he knows the use and value of hostages. All these Arab countries are likely to ask for a "reward" for their "cooperation" with the United States. And, the world already knows what "reward" will be expected: More pressure on Israel to yield Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza strip for a Palestinian independent state.

■ It is estimated that the cost of this present conflict is on the order of \$50 million per day during the non-shooting stage. The cost is estimated to escalate to \$1 billion per day if open hostilities break out. It is well to keep these figures in mind when discussing military aid to Israel. At present, Israel gets \$1.2 billion per year in U.S. economic aid, almost all of which is repaid to the United States as service on debt. Israel also gets \$1.8 billion per year in military assistance. Virtually every penny of it is spent in the United States. Compared to the cost of the present Mid-East operation, compared to the \$130 billion spent each year on the defense of Europe, and compared to the \$30 billion spent yearly in Japan/Korea, the contribution to Israel is a defense bargain. And there is an additional "bonus": Over 300,000 American soldiers are stationed with NATO, over 30,000 in the Far East, and close to 400,000 by now in Saudi Arabia. But there is not a single American soldier stationed in Israel and none will be requested. If and when the crunch comes, Israel will know how to inflict intolerable damage on Iraq or to any other enemy of the Judeo-Christian civilization, of which Israel is the only defender in that part of the world.

Israel is America's only reliable ally in the Middle East. Its undiminished strength and ability are of greatest political and military importance to the U.S. Nothing must be done to diminish Israel's military potential. Yielding the "West Bank" to the hostile "Palestinians", Saddam Hussein's fanatic supporters, would be a suicidal move for Israel and a military catastrophe for the United States. One hundred retired U.S. generals and admirals are agreed that Israel must retain the Jordan River as its defense border. Those who consider Saddam Hussein's preposterous proposition that, in exchange for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, Israel should withdraw from the "West Bank" do not understand the political and military realities of the Middle East.

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