

Help Consortiumnews with a Donation!

From Journalist Robert Parry: I know this is a busy time of year, but it would be hugely helpful if you could find the time to make a contribution to our 17-year-old journalism project's year-end fund drive. We hope to raise \$25,000.

You can make a tax-deductible donation that will go toward paying our writers for their original work and supporting investigative projects, including one that will examine how Rupert Murdoch used political influence to build his U.S. media empire.

(To donate by Visa/Mastercard/Discover, [click here](#). To donate by check, make it out to Consortium for Independent Journalism [CIJ]; 2200 Wilson Blvd.; Suite 102-231; Arlington, VA 22201. To use PayPal, our account is named after our e-mail address: "consortnew @ aol.com")

Donations of \$100 or more qualify you for an autographed gift copy of my new book, *America's Stolen Narrative: From Washington and Madison to Nixon, Reagan and the Bushes to Obama*. The book corrects some of the key false narratives that the Right has inserted into American history. I have set aside the first 250 copies for this purpose. (If you want a gift copy or one with a special inscription, just send me an e-mail at consortnew@aol.com.)

Also, we will earmark a portion of all sales of *America's Stolen Narrative* toward our goal. In other words, you can help us reach our target by buying the book by [clicking here](#) to purchase it with a Visa, Mastercard or Discover. Or you can mail a check for \$24.95 to The Media Consortium; 2200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 102-231; Arlington VA 22201. (For the rest of 2012, shipping is free.) Or, you can get the e-book version from Amazon.com or barnesandnoble.com.

You also can use the Web site's PayPal account ("consortnew @ aol.com") to buy the book, but please remember to tell us where to ship your order.

As always, thanks for your support.

Robert Parry

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 as the Internet's first investigative magazine. He saw it as a way to combine modern technology and old-fashioned journalism to counter the increasing triviality of the mainstream U.S. news media.

Hamas Speech Dampens Peace Hopes

Between Israel's expansion of West Bank settlements and deepening Palestinian resentments, chances for a two-state solution continue to shrink. The fiery words of Hamas leader Khaled Meshal have only made prospects worse, says ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

What Hamas political leader Khaled Meshal said at a mass rally in Gaza City on Saturday was contemptible. Taken at face value, his words eradicated any distinction between Israeli and Palestinian territory, and any possibility of Israelis and Palestinians living in peace.

"Palestine, from the river to the sea, from north to south, is our land," he said. "Not an inch of it can be conceded," Meshal continued, adding that "Israel has no right in Jerusalem." The words were despicable because they deny the right of Israelis to live in their own state, in their own part of the former mandate of Palestine.

What Meshal said was not only despicable but dumb. His words contradicted the repeated indications from Hamas that it is willing to observe a hudna, or indefinite truce, with Israel if a Palestinian state is created based on the 1967 boundaries and is approved by a majority of Palestinians in a referendum.

Meshal also implicitly contradicted himself by referring favorably in the same speech to Palestinian unity and reconciliation with Fatah, a theme to which he returned in a speech at the Islamic University of Gaza the following day.

Given the now firmly established commitment to a two-state solution by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who only recently received headlines for commenting publicly about how a former refugee like himself will never return to live in what is now the state of Israel, reconciliation can come about only within a two-state framework. And a two-state framework is the only one that can ever enable Palestinian national aspirations to be realized.

Meshal's words were an open invitation to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to respond with an equally hard-line statement that with comments like that from a Palestinian leader then there is no hope for any negotiated peace and no reason for Israel to concede an inch of land either. Which is exactly what Netanyahu did in remarks on Sunday.

Someone with Meshal's background and position ought to be smart enough to

realize all this, and to realize further that there is no such thing as speaking publicly to one audience without having effects on other audiences. In this case the other audiences are not only Israelis but governments and publics elsewhere.

What Meshal was doing on Saturday is what American politicians might call stirring up the base. But he cannot just shake his Etch-a-Sketch and take a more sober posture later without already sustaining diplomatic damage.

Probably he got swept up in the mood of the moment, all those people, all those green flags, and the euphoria stemming from the belief (which Hamas has done its best to promote) that Hamas was a winner in the recent armed clash with Israel.

If Meshal was partly trying to sustain that euphoria, he overplayed his hand; politicians have been known to do that in euphoric moments. He probably undid some of the sympathy that Gazans received as they sustained the latest pounding from Israel.

Then there are the circumstances more personal to Meshal. This past week was the first time he had ever set foot in, and kissed the ground of, the Gaza Strip. He also is someone whom the Israelis have tried to assassinate. It probably doesn't take much in the way of momentary moods to cause someone in such a situation to go over the top in talking about his would-be assassins.

There is plenty of reason to believe that Hamas leaders, including Meshal, still favor the indefinite hudna based on 1967 borders. There are far too many indications of that to be outweighed by emotional comments at a rally.

That formula also offers the politically ambitious Hamas leadership the only chance that they will ever govern anything other than the miserable little corner of Palestinian territory that is the Gaza Strip (and given Israel's continued strangulating control over the Strip, it is a stretch to say that Hamas "governs" even that).

Everybody, including Israel, Abbas and the United States, ought to eschew general labels and categorizations when responding to Hamas. It accomplishes nothing simply to call the group a bunch of terrorists or a bunch of heroes and to assume that everything flows from that. The proper response is to react to specifics, whether negative or positive.

When a Hamas leader says what Meshal said on Saturday, the remarks should be condemned (and Abbas was delinquent in not doing so). When they say instead what they have said more often about accepting a peace based on 1967 borders, they should be told that they are on the right track. They should be led to understand that the former approach will mean nobody will have reason to have anything to do with them, but with the latter approach they will be accepted as

an important interlocutor.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared as a [blog post](#) at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)

US Nuke Test Draws Few Protests

The United States and Israel have threatened war against Iran if it crosses some "red line" in nuclear capability, yet these two nuclear-armed states are rarely criticized for their own nuke arsenals. A recent U.S. nuclear weapons test attracted almost no public attention, notes William Boardman.

By William Boardman

When the United States conducted a non-explosive nuclear weapons [test](#) in Nevada in early December, there was little public fanfare, less national [media](#) coverage, and only a smattering of international protests suggesting the test violated the spirit of the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban [Treaty](#), if not the letter. The Treaty bans "any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion."

President Bill Clinton signed the treaty in 1996, but Congress has consistently refused to [ratify](#) it, and explicitly voted it down in 1999. In April 2009, in Prague, President Barack [Obama](#) promised serious effort on reducing the nuclear danger:

"To achieve a global ban on nuclear testing, my administration will immediately and aggressively pursue U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. (Applause.) After more than five decades of talks, it is time for the testing of nuclear weapons to finally be banned.

"And to cut off the building blocks needed for a bomb, the United States will seek a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials intended for use in state nuclear weapons. If we are serious about stopping the spread of these weapons, then we should put an end to the dedicated production of weapons-grade materials that create them. That's the first step."

On Dec. 5, the National Nuclear Security Administration ([NNSA](#)), part of the U.S. Department of Energy, carried out a "subcritical experiment" code-named [Pollux](#)

that used non-nuclear explosives to test the ongoing “safety and effectiveness of the nation’s nuclear weapons,” according to the agency.

Subcritical Tests Not Nuclear Explosions

NNSA conducted Pollux, its 27th subcritical explosion test, at its Nevada National Security Site near Las Vegas, Nevada. The most recent, previous subcritical test in this series, code-named Bartolo B, took place Feb. 2, 2011, said an NNSA press release, further explaining that:

“Subcritical experiments examine the behavior of plutonium as it is strongly shocked by forces produced by chemical high explosives. Subcritical experiments produce essential scientific data and technical information used to help maintain the safety and effectiveness of the nuclear weapons stockpile. The experiments are subcritical; that is, no critical mass is formed and no self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction can occur; thus, there is no nuclear explosion.”

However, a formal objection to the NNSA nuclear weapons test came from the Japan Council Against A & H Bombs (Gensuikyo), which sent a note of protest directly to President Obama, saying:

“Whether it involves an explosion or not, nuclear testing runs counter to the spirit of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the agreement of achieving the “peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons” reached by the 2010 NPT [Nuclear Proliferation Treaty] Review Conference.

“Your administration seeks non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. But your position of urging most others to renounce nuclear weapons, while continuing your own nuclear tests, does not stand by reason nor is it supported by the world public.

“In the name of the A-bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and on behalf of the people of Japan, the only A-bombed country, we call on you to cancel all plans of nuclear testing and make a sincere effort to achieve a total ban on nuclear weapons and a world without nuclear weapons.”

The White House has apparently not yet responded.

On Dec. 5, Gensuikyo wrote the Government of North Korea, urging it to cancel its planned launch of a satellite rocket. North Korea conducted the most recent known nuclear test explosion on May 5, 2009.

Only Iran Joined in Protest

Iran’s foreign ministry also issued a statement of protest against the U.S.

test, blaming the U.S. for “inattention to full disarmament which is a deep-seated demand of international public opinion.”

The Iranian government also pointed out that one of the country’s leaders, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei declared in a fatwa in 2005 that nuclear weapons are against the principles of Islam, adding that Iran “will pursue the supreme leader’s fatwa regarding the prohibition of production, storage or use of such weapons until it has been fully realized.”

Iranian political scientist Kaveh Afrasiabi pointed out, in a half-hour interview on Iranian Press TV English-language news, that “this could be a cover for computer simulations for advancing new nuclear warheads. We don’t know that because the U.S. program is shrouded in high secrecy.”

Iranian Press TV also reported that the mayor of Hiroshima had also condemned the American subcritical explosion test.

The White House has apparently not yet responded to Iranian comments. The Obama administration is on record favoring restraints on nuclear weapons and has taken leadership in helping to control weapons-grade uranium, plutonium and other fissile nuclear materials around the world.

The administration has also increased U.S. budgets for nuclear weapons maintenance and delivery systems, as well as overall military spending.

A Moribund Issue in U.S.?

Last October, NNSA administrator Thomas D’Agostino published a letter in the New York *Times* defending his agency’s work on nuclear weapons against criticism in one of the paper’s editorials:

“Last month we marked 20 years since the United States last conducted an underground nuclear test. The National Ignition Facility is an investment in the future, one where we never again have to perform explosive testing on nuclear weapons, one where we have a greater scientific understanding of fusion and one where the president has no doubt that our nuclear weapons will work when needed.

“The consistent support the facility has seen from the Obama administration and Congress represents a shared belief in that vision for the future. To abandon it now after only a few years of effort, even while the facility is already paying dividends, would be an irresponsible disservice to national security and scientific discovery.”

NNSA has 93 videos posted on YouTube, including a 30-second clip of the Pollux experiment that shows a containment vessel in which a very brief explosion

occurs out of sight.

The agency also maintains a presence on its [blog](#), as well as on [Facebook](#) (“NNSA is responsible for the management and security of the nation’s nuclear weapons, nuclear nonproliferation, and naval reactor programs. It also responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the United States and abroad,” [Twitter](#) (“Pantexans assist in gathering food for families @PantexPlant”), [Tumblr](#) (“Supercomputer simulations of blast waves on the brain are being compared with clinical studies of veterans suffering from mild traumatic brain injuries”), and [Flickr](#).

According to its [website](#), NNSA has about 3,000 employees and more than 30,000 contractors. NNSA has asked for a 4.9 percent budget increase, to a total of \$11.5 billion for fiscal year 2013. Although the agency’s mission is primarily military, its expenditures are not counted as part of the defense budget:

“Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, reliability and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear testing; works to reduce global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad.”

William Boardman lives in Vermont, where he has produced political satire for public radio and served as a lay judge.
