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Settlement Monitor

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SETTLEMENT MONITOR

EDITED BY GEOFFREY ARONSON

This section covers items—reprinted articles, statistics, and maps—pertaining to Israeli settlement activities in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Unless otherwise stated, the items have been written by Geoffrey Aronson for this section or drawn from material written by him for Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories (hereinafter Settlement Report), a Washington-based bimonthly newsletter published by the Foundation for Middle East Peace. JPS is grateful to the foundation for permission to draw on its material. Major documents relating to settlements appear in the Documents and Source Material section.

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DISENGAGEMENT AND BEYOND

SHARON PURSUES DISENGAGEMENT, BUSH DEMANDS PALESTINIAN DEMOCRACY

From Settlement Report, November-December 2004.

The government of PM Ariel Sharon, ravaged by defections in the Likud and the ruling coalition, is proceeding undeterred along its established timetable for the evacuation of all seventeen settlements in the Gaza Strip and four others in the northern West Bank by the end of 2005.

On 27 October, the Knesset, by a vote of 67-45, endorsed the Sharon “disengagement” plan that was approved by his cabinet in June. Sharon’s parliamentary victory was an important step closer to an operative Knesset endorsement of the settlements’ evacuation, which continues to enjoy wide popular support. Like the earlier cabinet en-

dorsement, however, the Knesset vote did not explicitly authorize the physical withdrawal of settlements and armed forces from Gaza or the northern West Bank.

Following up on its endorsement, the Knesset passed on 3 November the first (of three) votes on an evacuation-compensation law by a similar margin.

These two votes signal a growing political and operational momentum in favor of the plan’s implementation, a reality that was not lost on the 1,500 settler families who will be forced to relocate by 1 September 2005, whatever their views of the plan. *Ha’Aretz* reported that “many of the [settlements’] residents have begun to look for a solution to the day after [withdrawal]. Even those considered implacable opponents of the plan are today less determined to struggle. ‘Last week,’ one explained, ‘We lost our last opportunity to stop the plan.’”

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In anticipation of the evacuation of settlements, slated to begin next summer, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is devoting considerable resources to planning its operational deployment. These plans include occupying more Palestinian land in order to facilitate the evacuation of settlements and other Israeli-occupied locales. Some weeks ago the IDF presented a plan to create widened "security perimeters" around all settlements slated for evacuation. According to *Ha'Aretz*, "The IDF suggested that it conquer territorial buffers around settlements scheduled for evacuations, in order to remove them from the range of Palestinian fire." IDF maps of these new "security perimeters" were submitted to DM Shaul Mofaz and PM Ariel Sharon, who are reported to have approved the plan.

Meanwhile, the death of PLO chairman Yasir Arafat has raised the prospect of a renewal of negotiations according to the road map, the plan endorsed by the international community as the diplomatic vehicle for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Sharon considers his disengagement plan as an Israeli substitute for what he considers this more onerous initiative. In a 15 September *Yedi'ot Abaronot* interview he explained, "[Labor leader Amram] Mitzna suggested [during his unsuccessful campaign to unseat Sharon] to begin with the evacuation of Netzarim and to continue evacuating [settlements] according to the road map. This would bring Israel to a most difficult situation. To this I did not agree. And today as well we are not proceeding according to the road map. I am not ready for this."

Sharon's public rejection of the road map went unnoticed. His dismissal of the plan, however, was not unknown nor viewed unsympathetically in the Bush administration. Along with the Quartet, Washington is content to marry the disengagement plan to the scheme Sharon meant it to replace. Elliot Abrams, Bush's regional advisor on the National Security Council, was reported on 12 November by *Ha'Aretz* correspondent Aluf Benn to have told a senior Israeli security official in November, "You have to get out of Gaza and then wait ten years for the growth of a new generation of Palestinian leaders." Such views are not inconsistent with the similar if more colorful analysis by former Sharon aide Dov Weisglass, who said that in the wake of disengagement from Gaza, the road map "will be preserved for a very lengthy period . . . in formalde-

hyde" [see Doc. C]. His comments forced Sharon to declare his fidelity to the moribund plan.

More significant, President George W. Bush himself still seems convinced that the democratic bone fides of a Palestinian regime, rather than its territorial dimensions, are the key point of departure for U.S. policy. Asked at a 12 November White House press conference with British PM Tony Blair about U.S. interest in a settlement freeze, Bush replied with numerous variations on the need for "a free, truly democratic society in the Palestinian territories that become a state" [see Doc. D5]. Blair's response evinced even less interest in the territorial dimension of Palestinian statehood: "What we're really saying this morning is that [a] viable state has to be a democratic state."

ISRAEL PROPOSES A SEPARATE ROAD NETWORK FOR PALESTINIANS

From Settlement Report, November-December 2004.

Israeli PM Ariel Sharon is determined to leave a legacy maximizing Israel's territorial interests that his successors will have no choice but to sustain. Settlement expansion throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem remains his enduring trademark. The disengagement plan for the Gaza Strip is another element in this strategy, as are the separation barrier, the emasculation of the Palestinian Authority, and the closure economy imposed after Israel's military re-occupation of areas A and B in the West Bank in April 2002.

In recent months, the Sharon government has without fanfare proposed yet another element in this design—the "Continuous Movement Plan" for Palestinians, which like the others noted above, aims at consolidating Israel's permanent hold on about half of the West Bank and its strategic domination of the remaining territories conquered in June 1967.

The plan is meant to answer the strategic problem inherent in the territorial framework defined in the Oslo II agreement and exacerbated by the heightened security needs of many West Bank settlements resulting from the four-year-old Palestinian intifada—how to enable Palestinians to travel between the territorial islands formalized by Oslo—areas A and B, comprising about 40 percent of the West Bank—on roads not used by settlers. Sharon has described his objective as assuring "transportation continuity" for Palestinians in these areas, where

Israel favors a form of Palestinian self-rule and ersatz independence.

Sharon's new plan for a separate Palestinian network outlines fifty-two possible road projects and sixteen new crossroads and junctions, including bridges and underpasses spanning settler thoroughfares. Israel describes it as "a social-political stabilizer [that] creates an environment for support of the disengagement plan."

The plan reveals Sharon's intention to remain in all West Bank settlements with the exception of four small localities in the Jenin area that are slated for evacuation in 2005 as part of the disengagement plan. Turning a tactical decision to deny Palestinians use of many West Bank roads into a permanent strategic objective is yet another element in Israel's ever-evolving strategy of creating facts on the ground.

The road network in place when Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967 ran north-south down the region's hilly central spine. Lateral roads ran off this central artery—Route 60—from Jenin to Hebron. Ninety-three percent of all roads were paved. This transportation network reflected the requirements of the Palestinian community rather than those of an occupying army embarking upon creation of scores of Israeli civilian settlements. In 1970, Israel began the construction of roads running east-west, as part of an integrated security package that aimed at connecting Israel with new Jordan Valley settlements and facilitating its military control of the Jordan Valley.

Settlement expansion during the 1970s concentrated on establishing settlements in strategically and historically significant locales. The success of this program led in 1984 to the publication of Road Plan 50, the crystallization of Israel's intention to construct a dedicated network of roads to facilitate settlement expansion.

In an unsuccessful objection to the plan before Israel's High Court at the time, Palestinian attorney Raja Shehadeh argued that "the way the roads have been designed means that Palestinian towns and villages will be greatly restricted in their development, with many roads creating tight rings around their existing boundaries."

Israel did not attempt to establish a security rationale for the plan in its arguments before the court. Indeed, the court ruled, however improbably, that the proposed network of bypass roads would benefit the local population.

The Palestinian rebellion against Israeli rule that erupted in 1987 focused on attacking settler vehicles with stones. By 1990, Road Plan 50 had evolved into the "intifada bypass" road plan. The uprising fortified the Israeli view of the necessity to create a transport network for a growing settler population separate and distinct from the one serving Palestinians.

In 1990, 100 kilometers of new roads were paved in the West Bank alone to serve settlements including Beitar, Dolev, Hermesh, Karnei Shomron, Kedar, Otniel, Revava, Shani, and Talmon B.

By 1992, the Ministry of Housing and Construction's Great Roads Plan (the new name given to Plan 50) outlined 400 km of new West Bank roads, including bypasses around Halhul, Hebron, Nablus, and Ramallah.

The Oslo process dressed up the original bypass road plan in politically correct clothing but changed neither the plan's dimensions nor its objectives. What did change was the public rationale. No longer were these bypass roads justified by Israel for their value to Palestinians. Indeed there were suggestions that Palestinians would be prohibited from driving on them altogether. The bypass road plan became part of the Oslo "peace" package, intended to increase settlers' sense of security. This idea was now viewed positively by some Oslo supporters as a confirmation of Israel's disengagement from parts of the West Bank. The Clinton administration considered these roads security-related expenditures and refused to deduct Israel's investments in these roads from its loan guarantees.

Veteran Israeli columnist Nahum Barnea reflected the views of those who rejected this complacent assessment. He observed in a 7 October 1994 article in *Yedi'ot Abaronot* that the plan was an "absurd Israeli idea [that] shows how very deep Israeli pessimism runs concerning the entire peace process. Israeli faith that any coexistence will be established is so small that the Israeli establishment does not even believe that Jewish settlers and Palestinians can share the same road."

The al-Aqsa intifada accelerated the separation inherent in the original Road Plan 50 and its successors. The extensive new Israeli network constructed during the 1990s failed to make settlements entirely independent of the historical network of West Bank roads. During the intifada, in order to maintain a normal, everyday life for settlers, Israel has restricted and sometimes prohibited

Palestinian travel on many of these roads, a key feature of the "closure economy." In order to protect settlers, Palestinians have been separated not only from the new bypass road network, they have also been denied use of other preexisting roads.

Israel's solution to this untenable situation establishes yet another milestone along the long road of occupation. Having constructed, at a cost of more than \$2 billion, a bypass road network, which now includes major sections of the historical system, most notably large sections of Route 60, the Sharon government in August presented a plan for foreign donors to finance the rebuilding, construction, and establishment of underpasses, overpasses, junctions, and roads throughout the West Bank as alternatives to routes on which the IDF has forbidden Palestinian traffic and to others cut by the separation barrier.

Like the original Road Plan 50, today's Continuous Movement Plan is presented as beneficial to Palestinians. The Israeli plan—which Palestinians have had no role in preparing—is portrayed as an instrument of Palestinian economic revival made necessary because of the inadequacy of existing infrastructure. No mention is made that the existing infrastructure is inadequate principally because of Israel's draconian closure policy, demolitions, and the denial of Palestinian use of major segments of the road network improved for settlers.

There is no more revealing commentary of the plan's intent than the matter-of-fact claim that "Wadi Nar is the main route connecting the north of the West Bank to the south." Implicit in this observation is the Israeli view that Route 60—the core north-south transit way through Jerusalem, and a long-sought-after objective of settlements along its route—is now closed to Palestinians. The Wadi Nar route, which runs from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, is a dangerous, narrow two-lane road that Palestinians are forced to use to travel north from Bethlehem.

Creation of separate road networks for Palestinians and settlers is yet another element of a longterm program aimed at the permanent physical division of the West Bank. It aims at subordinating Palestinian national and economic development to the maintenance of an expansive and unrestricted program of Israeli settlement in 60 percent of the West Bank, and undermining the prospect of a territorially coherent state of Palestine.

There is no doubt that a continuous, unobstructed transport network is vital to

Palestinian political and economic life. A rational plan would modernize the venerable Route 60 as the key to a regional road network. The ever-growing demands of the West Bank settlement enterprise, however, preclude this logical option. Instead, Israel is demanding the creation of an inferior system at great expense. The high price that Israel is demanding from the international community, which Israel expects to fund this enterprise, and from Palestinians who are expected to permanently accommodate their daily lives to Israel's settlements, leaves one breathless.

"STATE LAND" LOOPHOLE ALLOWS APPROPRIATION

These excerpts are from Aluf Benn's article, which appeared in Ha'Aretz on 26 September 2004. The full text is available online at www.baaretz.com.

Since the start of 2004, some 2,200 dunams of land in the West Bank have been declared state lands. These include land in Givat Eitam in Ofrat and land designated for use as the Border Police headquarters in Metsudat Adumim.

Last year 1,700 dunams of land in the West Bank were designated state lands, such as the area between the Palestinian village of Bayt Iqsa and the settlement of Givat Ze'ev. The authorizations given by [PM Ariel] Sharon and [DM Shaul] Mofaz were made after preparatory work was presented to them by the assistant to the Defense Minister for settlement affairs, Ron Shechner.

The Sharon government made a commitment to the Bush administration in 2003 that construction in the settlements beyond existing building zones would be placed on hold, and it is now in negotiations with the U.S. administration over the territorial limits of the settlements.

The Israeli promise to the U.S. includes a commitment not to expropriate territory for construction, but it does not relate in any way to designating areas as "state lands." The "state lands" designation has consistently served the governments of Israel in establishing and expanding settlements. In the late 1970s the Supreme Court forbade the expropriation of private Palestinian property for settlements.

The then director of the Civil Section at the State Attorney's office, Felia Albak, developed a legal mechanism that relied on Ottoman Land Law and permitted the designation of extensive tracts of land in the

West Bank as state lands, allocating them to the settlements.

There are currently 700,000 dunams—13 percent of the West Bank before 5 June 1967—under different stages of “review,” according to nongovernment sources collecting data on the Israeli activities in the territories. At the end of the “review” process it is possible to designate these lands “state lands.”

The majority of these tracts are in southern Mount Hebron, in the area of Gush Etzion, and on both sides of the trans-Samaria highway. . . .

Many of the illegal outposts in recent years were set up in the West Bank on “survey lands,” as part of an effort to alter their status at a later date to state lands and therefore legalize the establishment of the outpost.

Data made public by B’Tselem two years ago, between 1967 and 1979, shows that approximately 700,000 dunams were designated “state lands” in the West Bank, most in the Jordan Valley.

In legal steps undertaken by Albak during the years 1980–84, an additional 800,000 dunams were selected and declared “state lands,” serving as the main source of land for the establishment of settlements.

Since, the designation of state lands has slowed down significantly, but never completely ended.

THE FUTURE OF JERUSALEM

NUMBER OF JEWS IN CAPITAL LOWEST SINCE 1967

This article by Etgar Lefkovits appeared in the Jerusalem Post on 2 September 2004 and was circulated by the American Task Force for Palestine.

The percentage of Jewish residents of Jerusalem is at its lowest since the reunification of the capital in the 1967 Six Day War, the city’s main annual survey released Thursday showed, with the author of the statistical yearbook saying that a likely redrawing of the city’s municipal borders in the coming years will be a major force to reverse such a trend.

At the end of 2003, 67 percent of Jerusalem’s 693,000 residents were Jewish, while 33 percent were Arab, according to the *Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem* put out by the prestigious Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies.

Since 1967, when 74 percent of the city’s population was Jewish, the Arab population of the city has grown by 225 percent,

compared to 135 percent growth among the Jewish population, the annual survey shows.

“We see a continuing trend in the survey whereby the Arab population of Jerusalem continues to grow, and the Jewish population of the city continues to drop,” said the editor of the annual yearbook, Dr. Maya Choshen, in an interview.

While tens of thousands of Jerusalem Arabs are increasingly moving back into the city—especially in the wake of the security barrier being erected along the rim of the capital—thousands of Jewish residents (especially secular young residents) in search of better paying jobs in central Israel continue to leave Jerusalem each year for more affordable housing and better quality of life that the capital’s suburbs offer them.

In all, some 13,200 Jewish residents left Jerusalem last year, while 8,200 Jews (including 3,000 new immigrants) made Jerusalem their home, the statistics shows, as a 15-year pattern of Jewish migration from the city, if somewhat diminished compared to a year before, continues unabated.

With young Jewish couples leaving the city, and young Arabs determined to remain on the Israeli side of the security barrier going up continuing to move in, the Jewish population of Jerusalem is increasingly getting older, while the Arab population is both younger, and more fertile, Choshen said.

Last year, for example, 61 percent of the 19,000 babies born in the city were Jewish, and 39 percent were Arab, while 78 percent of the 3,200 people who died in the city were Jewish and 22 percent were Arab.

The editor of the annual survey—which is partially funded by the Jerusalem municipality—noted that a recent study carried out by prominent Hebrew University demographer Prof. Sergio Della Pergola predicts that if the situation on the ground remains unchanged, by 2020, 60 percent of the city residents will be Jewish, and the remaining 40 percent Arab.

Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski has recently warned that the number of Jews and Arabs living in Jerusalem could reach parity within 20 years unless major planning changes and government-sponsored economic incentives are carried out.

Until today, however, Lupolianski has failed to make public—let alone propose—any such longterm planning changes, with his spokesman recently saying that the expansion of Jerusalem eastward was “a sensitive political decision to be made by the government.” [Lupolianski unveiled a plan

soon after on 13 September; see Baker article, which follows.]

"The big question is whether the borders of Jerusalem will change," the editor of the annual survey said, noting that in the coming years the government could cede certain Arab neighborhoods of east Jerusalem to the Palestinian Authority, as recently proposed by Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and/or expand Jerusalem city limits eastward up to the nearby West Bank settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, which both the current and past government has said will be included within several settlement blocs in any final peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Choshen said that it wasn't the nearly 30,000 residents of Ma'ale Adumim—the largest settlement in the West Bank—which were critical to the city's demographics under such a scenario, but rather the "vast potential of empty land" that lies between Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim, which could be used to build major new housing communities.

"By 2020, my guess is that several things will happen in Jerusalem," Choshen concluded.

THE SILENT PLAN FOR JERUSALEM

These excerpts are from an article by Jobarab Baker that appeared in Palestine Report on 29 September 2004. The full article can be obtained from Palestine Report at www.palestinereport.org.

[On 13 September 2004,] the West Jerusalem municipality . . . released its new plan for Jerusalem . . . which, among other points, calls for the "rehabilitation" of the Old City.

According to a report published in the Israeli daily *Ha'Aretz* on 14 September, the plan proposed by West Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski, city engineer Uri Shitrit, and head of the planning team Moshe Cohen calls for "massive intervention" to prevent overcrowding in the Old City.

The report said that government funds would be used to offer alternative housing outside the Old City walls to interested residents. Shu'fat Refugee Camp, the only refugee camp in East Jerusalem, which the municipality promised to rehabilitate, was proposed as an alternative residence.

Palestinians, who consider Jerusalem as the capital of any future Palestinian state, quickly shot down the plan, dubbing it as just another ploy by Israel to impose its sovereignty over both sectors of the divided city.

"This plan is not new," says head of the Jerusalem Center of Social and Economic Rights (JCSER), Ziad Hammouri. "This has been Israel's 'silent' plan ever since 1967, and it is aimed at consolidating Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem while creating the least amount of tension."

Hammouri argues that Israel has pursued a policy of Judaization of Jerusalem since it conquered the eastern sector of the city in 1967, demolishing whole sectors of the Old City such as the Sharaf neighborhood, which is now the Jewish Quarter and confiscating vast areas of land while making others "green areas." The end result, he says, is that Palestinians were left with approximately 14 percent of the land of East Jerusalem to live and build on.

This new plan, Hammouri believes, is aimed at thinning out the Arab presence in East Jerusalem and the Old City in particular to make way for more Jewish settlers, so Israel will be able to tip the demographic scales further in its favor. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem already constitute a minority, at approximately 33 percent of the population. According to the JCSER's statistics, there are around 32,000 people in the Old City, 29,000 of whom are Palestinian. "What Israel ultimately wants is for no more than 15,000 to 20,000 people to live inside the walls."

The Old City is crowded and Palestinians do not deny it. Because of lack of horizontal space, homes are built skyward, with floor upon floor like card houses. According to West Jerusalem municipality sources, there are 119.5 people per dunam in the Old City, 10 to 20 times higher than in other areas in Jerusalem. . . .

Sandwiched between the Jewish settlements of Pisgat Ze'ev to the right and French Hill to the left, Shu'fat Refugee Camp has had its own share of problems. With 38,000 people currently living in the camp, on an area of no more than 210 dunams, there is hardly any room for newcomers. . . .

Building is vertical here most of the time for lack of horizontal space and construction licenses are extremely difficult as well as very expensive to come by. According to Hammouri, a building license can cost up to \$25,000 to \$30,000 and can take three to five years to obtain it, if ever.

For Shu'fat, this problem is compounded by the fact that the original camp is under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, which means that this area cannot be expanded further

than the plot on which it was founded in 1964. Therefore, any proposed transfer of residents from the Old City to the camp area seems illogical from more aspect than one. Still, Hammouri is not sure that Old City residents, weary of living in cramped quarters and unaware of Israel's longterm plans, will not take the bait. "Because of people's low economic status and the extreme overcrowding in some quarters, some may fall into their trap," he says. "Israel has used deceptive ways for years to gain control of property inside the Old City, and people are not always aware of what they are facing."

Hammouri is referring to the Jewish settlement takeover of houses and properties in the Old City, which is currently inhabited by some 3,000 Jewish settlers. "They forge documents, intimidate people and encourage them to sign legal papers. By then it is too late and the owners cannot afford the legal costs of taking the case to court."

Not surprisingly, Israeli officials in Jerusalem deny there is any foul play where Palestinian Jerusalemites are concerned. "This is sheer nonsense," says Jerusalem city planner, Uri Shitrit, in reference to any plans to transfer Old City residents to other areas. "There are no plans to evacuate residents and certainly no compensation is being offered to those who leave. These methods have been gone for a long time."

Rather, Shitrit says the plan calls for the rehabilitation of certain quarters and a limitation on further expansion and also includes increased construction in certain sectors of East Jerusalem.

This all sounds well and good, if it were not for other statements, which were released just days after this master plan was announced. On 24 September, West Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski announced in a letter to the Israeli Housing Ministry that he wants to rezone a neighborhood of the Wadi al-Juz region in East Jerusalem for the purpose of settling Jews.

Lupolianski said that this move would "contribute significantly to the unification of the city because it lies between Mount Scopus and the Old City."

Already, this area has been severed by the Ma'ale Adumim tunnel, which connects between this major East Jerusalem settlement and West Jerusalem. The tunnel effectively cuts the city in half and has created a purely Jewish pocket in the midst of East Jerusalem.

With Jerusalem already ringed by Jewish settlements and settlers steadily creeping into the eastern sector, it is no surprise that

Palestinian residents of Jerusalem are squaring their shoulders for a new demographic battle. Many are optimistic that in spite of the odds stacked against them, they have "steadfastness" on their side.

OFFICIAL STATEMENTS ON SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN ADAM ERELI

From Settlement Report, September-October 2004.

On 17 August, State Department deputy spokesman Adam Erel was asked if the U.S. considered Israeli plans for additional housing in Israeli settlements in the occupied territories to be inconsistent with Israeli pledges to freeze settlements.

Israel has been expanding its settlements for almost four decades. To the extent the U.S. has opposed this effort, it has been singularly unsuccessful. There are now almost one half million Israelis living on territories conquered in June 1967. It would seem self-evident that continuing expansion in the context of an Israeli commitment to the U.S. not to would call for U.S. censure. Instead, journalists were treated to a tortured, if informative and revealing, example of the Bush administration's attempts to downplay the Sharon government's failure to uphold its commitments to the president.

The Israeli Government invited construction bids for 1,000 new homes in the West Bank. An Israeli official said that it's within the guidelines of the government and the agreements with the Americans. What's your comment on that?

Our comment is that we are studying the details regarding the tenders that have been issued by the Government of Israel. Our concern is to determine whether these tenders are consistent with the Government of Israel's previous commitments on settlements.

Adam, it seems pretty clear this is not consistent with the Government of Israel's previous statements. There seems to be a fairly obvious case to be made that this is a violation of their road map commitments. Why is it that you can't say that?

Because I'm not in a position now to say that any specific action is a violation of commitments. I'm just not—we're not there yet.

Well, hold on. The commitment—well, the road map says, "freeze all settlement

activities." Okay? And that is what it says, right?

Freeze settlement activity, including natural growth.

Okay. This is a tender for 1,000 new houses in the West Bank. It seems absurd that that's not a violation, or that there is anything to study here.

Right. I would say we've got to look at where these tenders are, what previous discussions were, what these tenders are for, what specific commitments were made, and then based on those discussions, I would perhaps be more comfortable telling you more.

Adam, I'm sorry, that just does not fly. The commitment that the Israelis made was "freeze all settlement activity." So isn't this—this is not freezing all settlement activity; in fact, this is the exact opposite of that.

Yeah, I can't go further than that, Matt. I'm sorry.

Adam, you're saying you're studying where these new homes would be. Why would that make any difference that the road map says there cannot be in the occupied areas new settlement activity?

Yeah. Well, let me just leave it where I left it. What I told you is, frankly, what I'm comfortable saying and I don't want to, really, from the podium, at this time, to get into a discussion with you of the specifics of these tenders because, frankly, I don't have the exact specifics of the tenders; and pronounce to you, at this time, whether or not we think it is a violation of commitments.

What I would say to you is: (a) we've made clear to Israel what we think it's committed to; (b) our view is there should be in no doubt about what our views are; (c) that we continue to have discussions with the Government of Israel on this issue; and finally, at this point, I'm not going to tell you that these tenders do or do not violate those commitments.

How would it be possible to build these houses and not be in violation?

No. I cannot do that.

Don't you think it's a bit unrealistic to say that the Israeli government should be—have no doubt about what your position is on their commitments when you're unable to say right now that this is inconsistent with their commitments? If you're trying to parse the phrase in the road map that says "no new settlement activity" or "a halt to settlement activity," you can't do that. It's black and white. It says it right there.

Yeah.

I realize—I appreciate that you're on a kind of a tight rein on what you can say and what you can't say here, and you don't want to go beyond it, but it needs to be pointed out, I think, for the record, that you guys are very wishy-washy on this right now.

I would point out a couple things. Number one, not everything we say to the Israelis is on the record. So we have discussions with the Israelis. As I said, we've had discussions most recently with our ambassador and the senior National Security Council officials about our concerns in this area. We continue to have discussions with the Israelis about our concerns in this area.

Obviously, this issue—these tenders, as well as previous tenders at Ma'ale Adumim, are subjects of those discussions and we've been very clear with the Israelis about what our views and what our understandings are.

Now, just because I'm not going to—I'm not in a position to speak to those from the podium right now doesn't mean that it's not something we've talked to the Israelis about.

Well, when you say that not all your conversations with the Israelis are on the record, are you suggesting—because it sure sounds like it—that in a closed-door meeting someplace someone is saying, "Okay, well, we realize that you signed up for this halt on all settlement activity, but—wink, wink, nudge, nudge—you can add a few here and there and we won't say anything"?

No, I don't mean to suggest that at all.

Well, it certainly sounds like it.

Given that, to most people, there isn't a gray area here and this does contradict the formal agreement you have, can you explain what understandings the housing—the Israeli housing minister thinks he has with Washington that he thinks that—he said publicly this new settlement activity adheres to understandings he has with Washington?

No, I can't speak for the Israeli housing minister.

Well, perhaps you can speak for the United States. What understandings do you have with Israel regarding this? It sounds precisely what I just said, that behind the scenes you guys are saying, "Well, you know, we're not really going to hold you to it."

No. We are, I think, very clear both publicly and with the Israelis.

Well, not today you're not.

Let me be clear, if there's any misunderstanding or lack of clarity. We are clear with the public and with the Israelis that they have made a commitment to freeze settlement activity, including natural growth, and that is the position—that is the commitment they have made, that is what we are working with the Israelis to follow through on, both publicly and privately.

Well, if that's the case, then how can you not see this as just a giant slap in the face from Sharon?

That's as much as I can do for you. I'm sorry.

Adam, how much money does the United States give Israel every year? It's 3—it's a little over \$3 billion. You're saying that you have zero influence now?

No, I'm not saying we have zero influence. I'm saying that we are working with the Israelis to see that they fulfill their commitments that they've made.

Well, that would mean, then, does not that necessarily mean that you're telling them, "Stop, take back these tender offers"?

I'm not going to get into the details of what we're discussing.

U.S. DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE RICHARD ARMITAGE

These excerpts from Armitage's 10 September 2004 interview on Egyptian television were reproduced in Settlement Report, September–October 2004.

So are you against what the Israelis call "natural growth" in settlements?

It depends on what the definition of "natural growth" is. There are some questions that will be raised when settlements are settled to the tune of 30 percent to 35 percent. It doesn't seem reasonable to have those that expand [*sic*]. But there has to be a definition of natural growth before I can answer your question.

So you are not really unequivocal on this?

Well, I'm being equivocal because I'd like to see the definition to which all people can agree of natural growth, and then I can answer your question. But since I haven't seen that, I can't answer your question.

But Israel, actually, is using this to expand settlements in the area.

Now, we have spoken to our Israeli friends about this, and our view is, as the President put forth, all settlement activity must stop.

Okay. But when you say "all," this should include natural growth.

Well, I say, what is the definition of "natural growth"? If you have settlements that already exist and you put more people into them but don't expand the physical sort of area, that might be one thing. But if the physical area expands and encroaches, and it takes more of Palestinian land, well, this is another. So to say that, it depends on the definition of natural growth.

EUROPEAN SPECIAL ENVOY MARC OTTE

This quote by Otte appeared in Ha'Aretz on 29 September 2004 and was reproduced in Settlement Report, November–December 2004.

The settlement outposts worry us a great deal, and we were happy to let the Americans lead the dialogue with Israel regarding upholding its commitments in the framework of the road map [evacuating all of the settlement outposts built since March 2001]. But not a thing happened. Ignoring for a moment the expansion of construction in Ma'ale Adumim, how is it possible to build a two-state model at a time that Israel is building infrastructures for additional settlements, paving a road from Ariel to the Jordan Rift, and linking Ma'ale Adumim to the Ben-Gurion Airport highway? How is all this compatible with the principle of a Palestinian state that is territorially contiguous?

SETTLEMENT GROWTH STATISTICS

From Settlement Reports, September–October 2004 and November–December 2004, citing statistics from Peace Now.

PM Ariel Sharon is presiding over a wide-ranging program of settlement expansion in most areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as ground is broken on the thousands of units approved by Sharon and his immediate predecessor Ehud Barak. This program belies claims by government officials that settlement expansion is confined to areas within Israel's national "consensus," such as Ma'ale Adumim and the Etzion bloc, or that the Sharon government is focusing its settlement efforts in those "settlement blocs" said to be included in U.S. president George W. Bush's April 2004 declaration acknowledging the eventual annexation of some settlements to Israel.

Details of ongoing settlement expansion have been reported by the Israeli organization Peace Now, which in recent months has begun comparing on a regular basis aerial imagery for every settlement. This data enables a detailed review of the type and extent

of settlement activity being undertaken in each settlement.

Based upon an aerial survey in June, settlement expansion activity is under way at 73 of 211 locations, including 12 of Gaza's 21 settlements. The total area involved in this expansion is close to 500,000 square meters and includes new and continuing land development for settlement, new infrastructure, new and continuing construction, internal road works, and the placement of new caravans.

Based upon an aerial survey in August, settlement expansion activity is under way at eighty West Bank settlements where 3,700 dwelling units are under construction. The total area involved in this expansion is about 808,000 square meters, a 60 percent increase from a June survey, and includes new and continuing land development for settlement, new infrastructure, new and continuing construction, internal road works, and the placement of new caravans.

SETTLEMENT EXPANSION
MARCH–JUNE 2004

Settlement/Council	Expansion (m ²)
Mount Hebron	1,861
Ariel	2,841
Jordan Valley	9,935
Beitar Ilit	11,211
Alfe Menashe	15,325
Ma'ale Adumim	20,738
Etzion Bloc	33,990
Benjamin	64,413
Shomron	138,182
Gaza Strip	191,302
Total	489,798

SETTLEMENT EXPANSION
JULY–AUGUST 2004

Settlement/Council	Expansion (m ²)
Jordan Valley	1,755
Alfe Menashe	8,909
Ariel	21,438
Ma'ale Adumim	30,790
Mount Hebron	42,820
Beitar Ilit	48,700
Etzion Bloc	62,358
Shomron	105,169
Gaza Strip	202,490
Benjamin	283,822
Total	808,251



A Palestinian walks near the perimeter wall surrounding Neve Dekalim settlement in southern Gaza, 8 November 2004. (Mahmud Hams/AFP/Getty Images)