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US Building \$100-Million Underground Bunker at Secret Israeli Missile Base

By Richard Silverstein

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Walter Pincus reported in *The Washington Post* a few days ago that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has put out a request for proposals, seeking contractors with top-secret clearances to develop a \$100-million underground military facility for the Israeli army. Here's the project description:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to supervise construction of a five-story underground facility for an Israel Defense Forces complex, oddly named "Site 911," at an Israeli Air Force base near Tel Aviv.

Expected to take more than two years to build, at a cost of up to \$100 million, the facility is to have classrooms on Level 1, an auditorium on Level 3, a laboratory, shock-resistant doors, protection from nonionizing radiation and very tight security. Clearances will be required for all construction workers, guards will be at the fence and barriers will separate it from the rest of the base.

The article also notes that in the past the Corps has built facilities for Israel's nuclear missiles. So it should come as no surprise that a highly placed Israeli source tells me that the site for this project is the top-secret Israeli missile base Sdot Micha, located near Beit Shemesh (about 15 miles from Jerusalem). That's where the country's ICBM (nuclear-armed Jerichos) fleet is housed. The site is so hush-hush that a 2010 article about it in *Yediot* had passages censored from

it that came directly from the widely accessible Global Security website. Censors are often not known for subtlety or even common sense.

The U.S.-built underground site is to be nuclear-hardened so that it can withstand a WMD attack from an Israeli enemy. This would allow Israel's missile command-and-control system to continue operating despite a potential massive and devastating attack. According to this source, the IDF already has a nuke-proof command center under the Kirya, its Tel Aviv headquarters.

Since we know that Israel and the U.S. both spy on each other, I find it extraordinary that Israel would trust the U.S. to build one of its most sensitive military facilities. In fact, I know personally that the FBI bugged the Washington, D.C. Israeli embassy over a period of years. The Mossad has for decades operated here. Why doesn't Israel fear the U.S. would do the same with these facilities?

One answer may be that the project is financed under the U.S. Foreign Military Sales program, meaning our government is financing the project gratis to the Israeli taxpayer. For Israel, economy trumps self-reliance.

One has to ask: which enemy is Israel defending against in building this complex? Since the project will take two years to complete, that would be around the time a number of analysts believe that Iran could have nuclear capability should it choose to create a weapon.

There appear to be two considerations here:

1. Israel anticipates that Iran will have WMDs by 2014.
2. Israel anticipates attacking Iran at some point after the underground bunker is completed.

There's only one reason to build such a facility: you are guarding against an enemy attack. There is only one enemy that comes close to offering Israel such a threat: Iran. It alone among Israel's current enemies (aside from Syria, which is distracted by a few domestic problems of its own) has the capability to lob long-range missiles at it. Though it currently cannot arm them with a nuclear warhead, conceivably (in Israel's estimation) that could change. That's why it's critical that Israel maintain its own nuclear capability to launch an attack and/or respond to an enemy one.

Since it seems extremely unlikely that Iran's leaders would mount a preemptive strike against Israel, certainly not a nuclear strike, construction of such a fortress indicates that Israel anticipates mounting such an attack and needs to ensure its critical military forces will remain intact after an Iranian response.

Though the code name for the project, 911, may be coincidental, the sense of looming Armageddon is palpable. It should also be noted that all three of Israel's most formidable enemies, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iran, have substantial underground military complexes. Gilad Shalit may have been kept in such bunkers during his captivity, and Hamas's senior leadership retreats to such complexes during Israeli attacks like the one we saw last month.

One of Hezbollah's most effective tactics was using tunnels that the IDF was not aware of to attack Israeli troops from various angles to devastating effect. Iran, too, has buried its advanced Fordow uranium enrichment facility under 300 feet of mountain. This hardening prevents Israel from destroying the site unless it gets U.S. 30,000-pound bunker-buster bombs. Thus Israel, along with its adversaries, is placing its most critical military infrastructure and weapons system underground so that they can withstand either sabotage or full-frontal attack.

Pincus notes some truly bizarre religious injunctions that are called for in the request for proposals. It specifies mezuzas:

The Corps offered a lengthy description of the mezuzas the contractor is to provide "for each door or opening exclusive of toilets or shower rooms" in the Site 911 building. A mezuzah (also spelled mezuzah) is a parchment which has been inscribed with Hebrew verses from the Torah, placed in a case and attached to a door frame of a Jewish family's house as a sign of faith. Some interpret Jewish law as requiring — as in this case — that a mezuzah be attached to every door in a house.

These mezuzas, notes the Corps, "shall be written in inerasable ink, on ... uncoated leather parchment" and be handwritten by a scribe "holding a written authorization according to Jewish law." The writing may be "Ashkenazik or Sepharadik" [sic] but "not a mixture" and "must be uniform."

Also, "The Mezuzahs shall be proof-read by a computer at an authorized institution for Mezuzah inspection, as well as manually proof-read for the form of the letters by a proof-reader authorized by the Chief Rabbinate." The mezuzah shall be supplied with an aluminum housing with holes so it can be connected to the door frame or opening. Finally, "All Mezuzahs for the facility shall be affixed by the Base's Rabbi or his appointed representative and not by the contractor staff."

Frankly, I've never heard of any difference between Sephardic and Ashkenazi mezuzas, nor have I heard of any difference between writing styles from one tradition to the other. This appears to be based on either inaccurate information about Jewish rites or misinterpretation of something the Corps was told by the IDF.

Further, I feel confident knowing that God, through these powerful religious amulets, will be protecting the Jewish people and its military defenders. Now the only question is whose divinity is more powerful: the Jewish Yehovah or Iran's Shi'ite Allah? But didn't Moses offer the Israelites a single God? If only he could see his people now creating a God for Us and a God for Them. I hope it might horrify him half as much as it does me.