

To Catch A Terrorist

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By Robbie Friedmann

The biggest news in the U.S. today that managed to even overshadow President George W. Bush's visit to Poland, Russia, and the Mideast, is the capture of the domestic terrorist Eric Rudolph seven years after he detonated a bomb in Atlanta's Olympic Park. Ironically, the pathetic figure who was scavenging trashcans for food early in the morning is a far cry from the arrogant individual who inflicted such terror a few years ago. The cost of pursuing him was estimated at \$30 million and it is probably only a matter of time before someone would argue that these funds would have been put to better use particularly since he is not known to have killed anyone since 1998. Yet, there is something reassuring about bringing him to justice after all these years and a lesson for international relations that, if anything, Saddam Hussein should have been stopped years ago. After all, this is a message that President Bush is sending from his visit to Auschwitz. For him it was a visit; to survivors of that camp, my mother among them, it brought back again detailed personal traumatic memories.

Perhaps international terrorists are also pathetic figures although outside of their victims very few view them in that fashion. Take the Saudis; if they were trying to exercise Saudi justice against terrorists it may not have worked very well. Despite lifting hundreds of Al-Qaida operatives from Iran (which of course denied having them) to Saudi Arabia they have probably circulated thousands into Saudi supported terrorist activities ("Saudis airlifted hundreds of Al Qaida from Iran," World Tribune.com, Wednesday, 19 June 2002).

While the Iranians denied having them, and the Saudis acknowledged lifting them, the Syrian president questioned whether they even exist ("Assad Doubts Existence of al-Qaida," The Associated Press, washingtonpost.com, 25 May 2003).

And the Palestinians? Oh, they are busy creating future memories by denying the existence of old ones. They continue in their best tradition to deny that the Holocaust ever took place ("Palestinians Teach Holocaust Denial Again," Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, 29 May 2003). They must have wanted to confuse President George W. Bush into thinking he was visiting a botanical garden and not the site of a Nazi extermination camp (where up to four million people were murdered) when he went to Auschwitz today.

There is little doubt that the Palestinians conduct an effective intensive brainwashing campaign on their own people and a slick PR effort at others. But once in a while some of those who consumed the Palestinian propaganda uncritically are starting to connect the dots, realizing the extent of Palestinian antisemitism, propaganda, and misinformation ("[Whitewashing the Palestinian Leadership - Part I](#)," Francisco J. Gil-White, Arutz Sheva, 26 May 2003).

After three years of relentless terrorism, the Palestinians are winning slowly but surely. They are now again the *peace makers* as they succeeded in forcing Israel - via a seemingly American ultimatum ("U.S. threatened sanctions if Israel blocked 'Roadmap'," World Tribune.com, 28 May

2003) - to accept the Roadmap and render meaningless 14 provisions to it ("Israel accepts 'steps' of 'road map,' qualified by 'remarks'" *israelinsider* staff, 25 May 2003).

Yet, the Palestinian enthusiasm that accompanied their acceptance of the Roadmap (along with general Arab, European, French and U.N. endorsement of it) is met with growing Israeli reservations, concerns, and even objections ("An inauspicious start," Editorial, *The Jerusalem Post*, 26 May 2003) that result in apprehension on one hand together with cautious optimism on the other: "If the U.S. continues to try to prove its evenhandedness by pressuring Israel, and if it continues to shave off its expectations of the Palestinians (as has already happened with the demand for *new leadership*), the Roadmap will fall into the same dust bin as its many failed predecessors. If, however, the U.S. changes tack and places the primary burden on the Arab world to dismantle the edifice of enmity it has built so deep and so high, there is a chance that this inauspicious start could be salvaged."

Some note that the American administration recruited its top (if controversial) diplomat in an attempt to diffuse expected opposition from Israel or the American Jewish community to potential territorial compromises ("Back in Political Forefront: Iran-Contra Figure Plays Key Role on Mideast," Michael Dobbs, *Washington Post*, 27 May 2003).

Others see the American diplomatic moves in the Mideast inconsistent and not firm enough ("Missing Mideast Momentum: The Bush administration needs an assertive policy," Editorial, *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 May 2003) or even as a sort of Affirmative Action that will end up failing the Iraqis as well as the other countries and will clearly doom the Roadmap for the simple reason it does not stress adherence to it ("Affirmative Action democracy - Middle Eastern style," Eli Kenin, *israelinsider*, 25 May 2003).

Israelis seem to be far more apprehensive about the prospects of the Roadmap than they were about Oslo simply because true even-handedness (problematic in Israel's case under any circumstances) has been replaced by outright support for the Palestinians and blatant anti-Israeli positions in many diplomatic, journalistic, commercial and academic circles ("The European road map," Editorial, *The Jerusalem Post*, 28 May 2003): "The Roadmap that Israel has now accepted calls for Quartet members to monitor Israeli and Palestinian implementation of the plan. But if they are to play any kind of role, Paris, Berlin, and London must signal that they are as serious about Palestinian commitments as they so evidently are about Israeli ones."

Indeed, nowhere is it more visible than in France. Despite the attempts by the Bush administration and Israel to isolate Arafat, the French Foreign Minister paid a pilgrimage to Arafat's terror headquarters last week and France utilizes a different term of reference to the Roadmap that could only be translated as a *travel warrant* or marching orders ("Marching orders from Paris," Michel Gurfinkiel, *The Jerusalem Post*, 28 May 2003). In short, the French are not even embarrassed by the outright stench that emanates from their diplomacy. They probably consider it the most fitting perfume to appease the Arabs and delude themselves that they are freshly clean.

Not surprisingly, the *New York Times* pays lip service to the need to curb terrorism but also implies that as a major financial supporter of Israel the U.S. can pressure Israel to accede to

various Palestinian demands or do whatever is needed to have some placidity in the Mideast ("[The President's Mideast Vision](#)," Editorial, *The New York Times*, 25 May 2003). After all, if Israel will be damaged - or destroyed - because of the latest diplomatic efforts, all the *New York Times* will do is report on it as it did on the Holocaust. For the paper, whatever happens is a win-win situation. Oh, yes, and Tom Friedman might even write a scathing column or even a mea culpa after lunching with the new ruler of Saudi Arabia (who might be Osama bin Laden).

As if the journalistic myth of the *New York Times* is not crumbling, and in total oblivion to realities on the ground, Thomas Friedman actually continues with his irresponsibly egregious commentary, this time comparing the arch-terrorist Osama bin Laden to no other than the Soviet dissident [Andrei Sakharov](#) ("[Hummers Here, Hummers There](#)," Thomas L. Friedman, *The New York Times*, 25 May 2003): "...I fear that Osama bin Laden is just the evil version of Andrei Sakharov the dissident Soviet scientist who exposed the system from within."

It is beyond any acceptable stretch of the imagination to classify the two as dissidents (even when adding the qualifying *evil version*. Perhaps next Friedman will *feel* he needs to compare Dr. Albert Schweitzer to Adolf Hitler. After all, both were Germans. Sort of. Hitler was an Austrian and Schweitzer was born in Alsace (which was German then French) and both could be considered under Tom Friedman as great humanitarians (with Hitler being the *evil version*).

He could have compared bin Laden with Arafat as the latter is a Nobel Peace laureate (and bin Laden might be), but Friedman had to be more intellectual than that. Perhaps Friedman ought to check his dictionary or history books before making such comparisons again. But no, he was obviously on a roll. He now *feels* that the U.S. has more passion for peace than the parties to the conflict in the Mideast ("[Passion for Peace](#)," Thomas L. Friedman, *The New York Times*, 28 May 2003).

To suggest that anyone wants peace more than the Palestinians is a no-brainer; to suggest that anyone wants peace more than Israel is nothing but sheer chutzpah (see "When Hitler became Abu Ali," Julian Schvindlerman - 7 June 2002; note the last paragraph) unless of course I missed all the extensive reporting on the Egyptian/Iranian/Libyan/Saudi/Syrian/ and similar *peace now* movements and demonstrations that accompanied the numerous murderous attacks on Israeli and American civilians.

Yet, time and again, the Israeli voices that on one hand realize that the U.S. is probably the last remaining life-line for the country and are appreciative of its support also question the wisdom and intent of the Roadmap ("Place not your trust in princes," Isi Leibler, *The Jerusalem Post*, 27 May 2003): "The Roadmap as endorsed this week by the Cabinet does not warrant painful sacrifices, for it has the potential of evolving into an inferior recycled version of the Oslo Accords which have already cost us too much blood." Others are even harsher in their view of the pressure applied on Israel ("Washington's Betrayal," Caroline B. Glick, *The Jerusalem Post*, 30 May 2003).

Indeed, some suggest that it is not only bad for Israel, it is bad for the U.S. and it is bad for President George W. Bush ("[Political and literal suicide](#)," Zev Chafets, *Jewish World Review*, 27 May 2003): "Even if Bush survives his road trip to the Middle East, he is doomed to fail - which

is what the Go, George, Go crowd really wants. The Arab League dictators will once more be able to consolidate power by exploiting indignation at America's latest treachery. France and Russia will use it as an opportunity to increase their influence in the Islamic world at the expense of the U.S. Meanwhile, at home, Bush's Democratic rivals can blame him for a diplomatic fiasco. Under the circumstances, it is hard to think of a worse presidential trip to make. If I were Bush, I would fire the travel agent who tried to talk me into it."

And along the same lines others argue that this Roadmap is a trap for the U.S. as well not because peace is a bad idea but because the establishment of a Palestinian state is ("Road trap' for America, too," Frank J. Gaffney, Jr., TownHall.com, 29 May 2003). This because of three key reasons: 1) Terrorism pays ("The strategy of suicide," Sean Gannon, *israelinsider*, 26 May 2003); 2) It would weaken one of America's most important allies - Israel - in the war on terror; and 3) It would undermine the moral imperative behind this war: Nations that are the targets of terror are not morally equivalent to the terrorists. Therefore, "Abandoning the precondition that Palestinian terror must stop before there is a Palestinian state certainly risks material, and possibly existential, harm to Israel. Even if that reality were not grounds enough for the United States to eschew an unaltered *road trap*, the fact that it will also cause material harm to U.S. interests should be."

One - still plausible - explanation for unfolding the Roadmap (and Israel's reluctant acceptance of it) is to offer a last chance to the Palestinians, a chance that is not necessarily indicative of being duped by any confidence games they might be playing ("One last opportunity for the Palestinians," Uri Dan, *The Jerusalem Post*, 28 May 2003).

Yet, it is not clear what constitutes a last chance and if after this one there may not be another. After all, they had numerous chances before. What is clear is that the Palestinians are not banking on any chances. They steadily erode Israel's position and enhance theirs as today they are closer to establishing a Palestinian state without declaring an end to the conflict and without removing major obstacles such as their *right of return*. It is also not clear what exactly will happen if this last chance is to be abused by the Palestinians. Dan provides an implied outcome: "If the Palestinians fail, no Israeli leader will give them another chance, certainly not in this generation. Furthermore, Sharon himself will make sure that the Palestinians have their license taken away for many years." This may be a fairly dangerous gamble and clearly, a dangerous game to play as its outcome may be more of wishful thinking than anything guaranteed or permitted.

It appears that for those determined to follow the Roadmap there is one *bump* that actually also constitutes an important support base for President Bush. Yet for those who are concerned about the Roadmap this bump could become an important traffic cop to stop the vehicles traveling on the road charted on this map before they fall to the abyss. That group consists mostly of evangelical and neo-conservative Christians who strongly support Israel for religious reasons ("A Very Mixed Marriage: Evangelical Christians lining up to fight for Israel may be an unmovable obstacle to Bush's 'road map'," Howard Fineman and Tamara Lipper, *Newsweek*, 2 June 2003).

Capturing Rudolph and bringing him to justice is an important victory in the fight against terrorism. He may be the one speeder caught while many are still speeding. Yet, in the same

manner that the search for him has never stopped (even if efforts were downsized) it is important to send a message to the terrorists that they will have no shelter anywhere (and no, not all of them are willing to commit suicide). But it is far more important to send another message that terrorism will fail as a bullying strategy to obtain diplomatic advantages. For this reason alone it is important to carefully watch the development in the Mideast. Any *agreement* short of dismantling the terror infrastructure is doomed to fail.

The new Palestinian *prime minister* says he does not wish to start a Palestinian *civil war* and would like to achieve a *cease fire* (with and from the terror groups - some of which are under his control) via an agreement. It looks like it is much easier for the Palestinians to start an uncivil war against Israeli civilians. Any such agreement will give the terrorists another chance to regroup and attack when convenient. Therefore, perhaps he does need to resort to such a "civil war" to establish new realities on the ground that have some chance for peace to last longer than it takes for the ink to dry on a hollow agreement.