**President Obama Blackmails Israel at the UN**

By Anne Bayefsky

August 2, 2010

Fox News

*http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2010/08/02/anne-bayefsky-israel-hamas-obama-gaza-netanyahu/#content*

President Obama has now blackmailed the government of Israel into submitting its defense forces to the toxic oversight of the United Nations. Today U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon created, with Israel’s approval, a UN investigation of last June’s flotilla incident in which Turkish-backed extremists sought to shatter Israel’s lawful naval blockade of Hamas-run Gaza.

Despite the fact that Israel has already launched an inquiry with international participants, the Obama administration insists that the Israel Defense Forces, and the Israeli legal and political establishment governing their actions, must be subject to UN supervision. U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice welcomed Ban’s announcement.

Obama’s move is a far cry from claims of a recent rapprochement with Israel. Instead of pressuring Israel in front of the cameras, the administration is now using the U.N. as its foil. The sword of Damocles that hung over Prime Minister Netanyahu’s head was withdrawal of American veto protection in the Security Council, a United States sitting on the sidelines in the General Assembly and the other U.N. bodies where new forms of anti-Israel censure are always percolating, and a firm U.S. no to any Israeli military effort to stop an Iranian nuclear weapon.

Even Ban Ki-moon today called the development “unprecedented”. The U.N. team will be second-guessing the actions taken in self-defense by a democratic state, governed by the rule of law and at war with a terrorist entity committed to its destruction -- on account of an undisputed figure of nine deaths. In the course of war, hundreds of civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq have been killed by American and coalition forces, while undemocratic regimes regularly and deliberately murder thousands, without a peep from the U.N.

If the president tried the same stunt in America, ordering U.S. generals to report to Ban Ki-moon and company and to seek their seal of approval, the uproar would be deafening. But this president has evidently embraced the defining attribute of the U.N. approach to Israel -- double-standards.

Obama’s support for the U.N. investigation is part of a major realignment of U.S. foreign policy to synchronize it with an organization dominated by Islamic interests. Within 24 hours of the flotilla incident, the U.S. agreed to a hasty Security Council presidential statement on May 31 that called for "a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards." Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and other State Department officials let it be known that “credible” to this administration meant credible in the eyes of the U.N. In the Israeli case, the United States is prepared to make the requisites of self-defense subservient to the U.N. mob.

In today’s U.N. announcement, Ban Ki-moon named former New Zealand Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer to head his inquiry. Palmer is closely associated with one of the U.N.’s top officials, Helen Clark, who is currently chief of the U.N. Development Program and chair of the U.N. Development Group. Clark was Palmer’s deputy during his time in office and, after becoming prime minister herself, named him to a number of important posts. U.N. officials clearly believe that Palmer shares, or will be influenced by, the biases of those who appointed him. In the midst of the Gaza war in January 2009, Clark blamed Israel for the conflict saying the impact of Hamas rocket attacks “has been but a tiny fraction of that of the Israeli strikes on Gaza.” In August 2006 during the Lebanon war, Clark said she found it “hard to believe” that the accidental Israeli bombing of a U.N. observation post in Lebanon was anything but deliberate.

Today’s announcement does nothing to stop the concurrent U.N. Human Rights Council’s investigation of exactly the same flotilla incident. In June the Council launched an allegedly “independent international fact-finding mission” with a mandate to report on what it had already decided was Israel’s “outrageous attack.” Rice disingenuously claimed today that “The United States expects that the Panel[‘s]…work will be the primary method for the international community to review the incident, obviating the need for any overlapping international inquiries.”

The secretary-general’s announcement says nothing of the kind and she knows full well that the secretary has no power to stop the Council from proceeding, since it is run by states and not the bureaucracy.

Rice also said that the secretary general’s inquiry “will receive and review the reports” of Israeli and Turkish national investigations. For all intents and purposes, therefore, the Israeli investigation has been rendered irrelevant. The international figures who took risks by agreeing to participate on the Israeli inquiry could hardly be blamed for believing they have been double-crossed.

The details of the Ban investigation, including its mandate, have yet to be ironed out. But Ban’s announcement sets a mid-September deadline for an interim report, obviously intending to minimize any further Israeli negotiating room. Regardless of whatever piece of paper materializes,,in practice Israel will not be able to retain control over the scope of the inquiry, or who might be forced to testify, or what information will need to be submitted to satisfy the U.N.

There will be four members of the inquiry including a Turkish and Israeli representative. Should the Turkish member or any of the others at any time believe that they want something that Israel has not provided, or that their mandate is insufficient, all they need to do is to threaten to go public. At that point, either the inquiry will be diminished in U.N. eyes, giving further impetus to actions by the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, or Israel will immediately come under further U.S. pressure to make even more concessions.

Netanyahu apparently believes that falling on the sword erected by the Obama administration and his U.N. cohorts will buy him American goodwill. But this legal and political battle over what counts as legitimate self-defense needs to be fought like any other real war -- to win. Removing the fundamentals of self-defense from Israeli hands is at odds with the very raison d’etre of the Jewish state. This was one demand of a hostile American administration too many.

*Anne Bayefsky is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and director of the Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust.*