

Bright Star

1985

Since the beginning of the eighties, the US has been conducting military maneuvers in the Arab homeland under different names (Bright Star and Wind of the Sea) and in different locations. These maneuvers have been carried out by the Rapid Deployment Forces, in conjunction with troops from the participating Arab countries.

The striking feature of these year's maneuvers, which started in Egypt on August 3rd, is their scale in terms of the number of troops and countries involved, and their timing. The Bright Star 85 maneuvers have been conducted simultaneously in Egypt, Somalia, Jordan, 'Israel' and the Sultanate of Oman. Oman's participation was however kept under the rug in order not to anger its neighbors and stir their objections to US military presence in the area. Sudan, four months after Numeiri's overthrow, decided not to participate to ward off domestic protest and out of consideration for its neighbors, Ethiopia and Libya. Thus, the Egyptian regime lost a strategic ally.

In Egypt, the number of participating US troops reached the unprecedented level of nine thousand soldiers. This surpasses the total number of US troops that participated in Bright Star 81, Bright Star 82 and the Wind of the Sea maneuvers, added together. For the first time in the history of US maneuvers in the area, there were drills and operations in amphibious landing, employment of offensive weaponry and chemical warfare. It is noteworthy that the very same US troops that took part in Bright Star 85 in Egypt, carried out similar maneuvers in 'Israel' under the same name.

The timing of Bright Star 85

Judging from the magnitude of these maneuvers, they were intended to carry special weight. Obviously, Washington wants to send an unequivocal message to the parties involved in the Arab-Zionist conflict, as well as to the Soviet Union. The timing of the maneuvers coincides with accelerated moves to broaden the base of the Camp David process. On the Arab level, this much talked about «peace» process



Hawk anti-aircraft missile in Gallant Eagle '84 - US military exercises simulating fighting in the Middle East.

is being promoted via the Amman accord and Mubarak's initiative. Although the facade of this scenario is Arab, the theme is American - joining US solutions for the area. Holding the emergency Arab summit on August 7th, in Casablanca, was intended to confer the blessing of Arab reactionary consensus on the Amman accord, as a preface to implementing it. Hence, the extensive US muscle-flexing in the form of military maneuvers aimed at bringing pressure to bear on the Arab summit, to have them go along with the US «peace» plans. The Bright Star 85 maneuvers also coincide with the visits of Murphy and Whitehead to the Middle East. These political and military moves stand as a new reminder that Camp David was never, as purported, a peace plan, but designed to insure imperialist dominance in the area.

In relation to the international arena, Bright Star 85 aimed to threaten the Soviet Union, being conducted not far from its southern borders. This is part of Reagan's overall anti-communist crusade, and moreover intends to target the social community's principled and substantial aid to the Palestinian and Arab liberation movement. The maneuvers were conducted prior to the Reagan-Gorbachev summit scheduled for Geneva in the autumn. In this content, they were designed to give the impression that the US has a free hand in the

Middle East and holds the key to solving its problems. The maneuvers were intended as concrete evidence that, in the last analysis, the area is a US sphere of influence. On this basis, the US will continue trying to block the Soviet Union from any meaningful role, for this would strengthen the Arab/Palestinian side, and prevent the US and 'Israel' from imposing their views unilaterally. In line with this, the US may try to avoid discussion of the Middle East at the Geneva summit or disarmament talks.

Message for the Arab summit

The fact that the biggest maneuvers were conducted on Egyptian soil shows that, among the Arab states, the US attaches greatest importance to Egypt. The Egyptian regime being the only one to have signed an accord with 'Israel', the US views its role as pivotal in furthering the Camp David process to include other Arab partners. The message for the Casablanca summit was that they should pay equal attention to the Camp David regime, by restoring official ties with it. It is evident that despite Washington's spurious reservations vis-a-vis Mubarak's initiative and the joint Jordanian-Palestinian moves, the US is in fact quite interested in such moves and encourages their continuation.