



# The Heritage Foundation Executive Memorandum

No. 893

July 24, 2003

## ROAD MAP TO PEACE REQUIRES AN END TO PALESTINIAN TERRORISM, NOT JUST A CEASE-FIRE

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The visits to Washington of Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas on July 25 and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on July 29 will focus the attention of the Bush Administration on the lagging Israeli–Palestinian peace negotiations. President Bush’s ambitious “road map” for peace, which calls for a series of confidence-building measures as a prelude to creation of a Palestinian state and a final peace agreement by 2005, is beset by diplomatic gridlock. As it seeks to break the logjam, the Administration should maintain its moral clarity and adhere to its principled stand against terrorism of any stripe. It should press Prime Minister Abbas to dismantle Palestinian terrorist groups, which pose the biggest obstacle to peace. As long as those terrorists remain free to organize attacks, the road map will lead to little more than a fragile cease-fire, not a genuine and lasting peace.

**Diplomatic Stalemate.** Sharon and Abbas, both of whom accepted the road map in principle, made little progress at a tense summit meeting on July 20. Abbas pressed for further Israeli withdrawals from territory occupied after the September 2000 onset of the intifada (uprising), release of the estimated 7,700 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, and the dismantling of unauthorized Israeli settlements. Sharon, who has withdrawn Israeli forces from parts of Gaza and Bethlehem and agreed to release several hundred prisoners, is dragging his feet on further withdrawals and prisoner releases until the Palestinian Authority cracks down on terrorist groups as required by the road map.

Abbas has publicly pledged to stop terrorism but has avoided a direct confrontation with Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad, and the Al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades, which have spearheaded the terrorist war against Israel. Abbas persuaded the three groups to commit to suspend terrorist attacks for at least 90 days (the Al Aqsa Martyr’s brigades pledged a six-month cease-fire). Yasser Arafat, the President of the Palestinian Authority, ostensibly “banned” terrorist organizations by a decree issued on July 20. But this was merely a re-issuing of a toothless 1998 ban on “illegal organizations that encourage violence.” Arafat did little to follow through on the decree then and is unlikely to follow through now.

To salvage the floundering road map peace plan, the Bush Administration should:

- **Pressure the Palestinian Authority to systematically root out terrorism.** The road map clearly calls for Palestinians to take concrete action against terrorist groups, not merely proclaim a cease-fire. Such a temporary measure only allows the terrorists to re-organize, re-arm,

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Produced by the  
Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis  
Institute for International Studies

Published by  
The Heritage Foundation  
214 Massachusetts Ave., NE  
Washington, D.C.  
20002-4999  
(202) 546-4400  
heritage.org



This paper, in its entirety, can be  
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and recover from Israeli counter-terrorism measures.

- **Marginalize Arafat.** No Israeli government will take further risks for peace unless the Palestinians comply with their commitments to halt terrorism. Arafat, who has made a career of terrorism, has repeatedly demonstrated that he cannot be trusted to do so. Arafat has sought to undermine Abbas's authority and has criticized him publicly for failing to extract more concessions from Israel. To strengthen Abbas relative to Arafat, Washington should encourage all Western and Arab aid donors to earmark their aid for Prime Minister Abbas's Ministry of Finance, which has made great strides in cleaning up the corruption of Arafat's cronies, not to Arafat's office. Washington also should press European and Arab leaders to downgrade their relations with Arafat, who was excluded from recent summits, and upgrade relations with Prime Minister Abbas to bolster his international standing.
- **Remain steadfast to the principles outlined in President Bush's June 24, 2002, speech on Middle East peace.** The road map is more of a wish list of negotiating goals than a blueprint for peace. Much arduous diplomatic spadework is needed to flesh out the details. President Bush has promised to "ride herd" on the process to keep it going. But he should refrain from intervening unless absolutely necessary and put the burden on Israel and the Palestinians to work things out. Meanwhile, Bush must ride herd on the three other members of "the quartet" that proposed the road map: Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations. All three are to varying degrees pro-Palestinian and will seek to redraw the road map to ingratiate themselves with the Arab world. The Bush Administration must stick to principles laid out in the President's June 24, 2002, speech, which declared that the violence had to end before peace could be nego-

tiated and stressed the importance of developing a Palestinian leadership untainted by terrorism and committed to the rule of law.

- **Rule out the commitment of American peacekeeping troops.** Several proposals have been made for the deployment of American peacekeeping troops to enforce a peace agreement. But such peacekeeping troops would not be able to halt terrorism and could become a lightning rod for terrorist attacks. Moreover, the United States can ill afford to undertake another open-ended peacekeeping mission when its armed forces are stretched thin in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the war on terrorism.
- **Drop unrealistic negotiating deadlines.** The target date for achieving phase I of the plan already has been missed, just as almost every deadline for the Oslo peace process was missed. The negotiations should not be constrained by artificial timetables. Peace will take a generation to build. It is unrealistic to compress negotiations into a three-year window.

**Conclusion.** Although a cease-fire is a welcome step, a much more robust Palestinian policy is needed to disarm and dismantle terrorist groups to give peace a chance. Prime Minister Abbas currently does not have the will or capability to crack down on terrorist groups and needs the support of Arab states and the West to isolate them and sideline Arafat.

This requires more time. The Bush Administration should keep its eye on what needs to be done to secure a genuine peace—the dismantling of Palestinian terrorist groups—and not bend its principles to prop up a tenuous cease-fire.

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