

CONSOLIDATION OF STAND OF ISRAEL IN EAST AFRICA *

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In recent years, Israel has increased its infiltration to the East Africa. With the foundation of new state South Sudan in 2011 new possibilities in the region were opened up to Israel. Allied relations between Israel and South Sudan gained rapid development.

The most important reason for this - the desire of Israel to block the delivery of weapons to Palestinian militants of Hamas and paramilitary political group "Islamic Jihad". Israel can use the territory of South Sudan for the deployment of its forces relatively close to Khartoum and the caravan routes in the Sudan, using which Iran supplies weapons to Palestinians.

Israel has previously taken steps to establish monitoring of situation near the Sudanese coast. Thus, the largest base of naval forces of Israel outside its territory was constructed on two Islands of Eritrean archipelago Dahlak (Fatma and Dahlak Kebir). Israeli radar station to track the Sudan, as well as the water area of the Red Sea, has been deployed on Dahlak.

In addition, Israeli submarines and drones that observe the Iranian Navy and the Sudanese armed forces are in the Red Sea.

Main sea gate of Sudan - Port Sudan - is the point of unloading of Iranian medium-range missiles "Fajr", where they are delivered by caravan routes to the Gaza Strip. These missiles were used by based in the Gaza Strip Palestinian militants during the clash with Israel in November 2012. In January 2009, during the Operation "Cast Lead", the Israel-Egyptian air force destroyed big convoy with weapons in the area of Sudanese-Egyptian border, which was on its way from Iran to Gaza Strip. In December 2011, Israeli aircrafts made at least two strikes on the same convoy. In May 2012, the head of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, Ali Karat accused Israel of undermining of smugglers' car in Port Sudan, which was used to deliver weapons and ammunition to the Sinai Peninsula, from where they are transported to the Gaza Strip.

In October 2012, the Israeli air force bombed the ammunition plant "Yarmouk" in a suburb of Khartoum. Relations between Israel and Sudan after the application of an air strike were on the verge of war. Sudan has officially announced that the explosion was caused by Israeli air attack and threatened with retaliatory actions. Israel for its part, refused to comment on the allegations. Struck plant was producing short- and medium-range missiles, the buyer of which was Hamas.

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In addition, the Israeli attack on the Sudanese plant can be considered as an act of armed support of Juba by Tel Aviv as its ally.

Allied relations between Israel and South Sudan are also manifested in the support, training and equipping of South Sudanese army. Israel is extremely beneficial to have trained and well-armed ally in the region as a counterweight to the hostile state, or to weaken it in case of joint actions during the armed conflict. On the other hand, Juba and Khartoum still have many unresolved contentious issues which can cause clashes with further escalation into full-scale war. Therefore, the South Sudan is extremely interested in military cooperation with Israel.

Thus, in December 2011, Israel sent army brigade to South Sudan, the purpose of which, according to Israeli statements, was the preparation of visit of the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the country. However, in fact, the Israeli military took part in the preparation of South Sudanese army.

In April 2012, at the airport of Rubkona in the north of South Sudan, Israeli aircraft with weapons, equipment and African mercenaries had landed. Israel continues to arm the South Sudanese military forces, as well as to supply them and provide instructors.

Israel's actions on preparation of the South Sudanese army couldn't help causing the response of the Sudanese side. In December 2012, the Sudanese President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir allowed Iran to construct the military base on the territory of the state. In turn, the Iranian side is quite interested in this base, as missiles are supposed to be placed there, so this will allow to hit targets in southern and central Israel, as well as to threaten the communications of Saudi Arabia and the United States in the waters of the Red Sea.

In addition to the fight against terrorism, Israel seeks to gain maximum benefit from the relationship with South Sudan in various fields. So, having limited natural resources, Israel is interested in getting South Sudanese oil, in January 2013, several Israeli companies have signed agreements with Sudan on oil supplies. The fact, how the oil supplies from South Sudan will be carried out remains unclear, because the country doesn't have an outlet to the sea. The agreed volumes of "black gold" are also not disclosed. 80% of the oil fields of the Republic of Sudan which existed until 2011 now are on the territory of South Sudan.

High tariffs set by Sudan for South Sudan for oil transit forced the government of South Sudan to look for other ways of transporting the main riches of their country. In February 2012, the Ambassador of South Sudan in the UN, said that his country would like to build a new pipeline through Ethiopia and Djibouti, or through Kenya for the transportation of oil by sea. There is a project of a pipeline through Kenya to the Indian Ocean cost of which is approx. \$2 billion, its length numbers approx. 1.600 km. This option is the most convenient and plausible, as Kenya is a reliable partner in the region as for Israel as for South Sudan. Israel for its part, in November 2011, offered Kenya to help in protection of its borders from Somali islamist movement "As-Shabab".

South Sudan, which is located in the upper reaches of the Nile Basin, plays a key role in the distribution of its waters, which allows to put pressure on Egypt. The Israeli leadership is interested in this lever of influence in case of complications in Israeli-Egyptian relations. In turn, South Sudan is interested in Israeli technologies for the use of water resources and supplies of drinking water for people and agriculture. In this regard, in July 2012, Israel and South Sudan signed the first economic cooperation agreement in the field of water management aimed at support of development of South Sudanese irrigation systems, water desalination and purification.

On the other hand, the Israeli-South Sudanese relations problem requires a phased solution. Israel is one of the first states to recognize the independence of South Sudan. Leaders of South Sudan announced the establishment of diplomatic relation with Israel in full two weeks after the declaration of independence in July 2011. This was one of the reasons for the fact that Israel became a haven for thousands of the immigrants from South Sudan. Benevolent rhetoric of the Israeli leadership regarding South Sudan gives hope to its citizens for the better fate in Israel. Their stay in Israel is a heavy burden for Israeli taxpayers. Therefore, during the official visit of the President of South Sudan Salva Kiir Mayardita to Jerusalem in December 2011 held bilateral negotiations, one of the main topics of which concerned the fate of thousands of African immigrants illegally staying on the territory of Israel. The head of Israeli government Netanyahu presented to Kiir the program of construction of "absorption camps" on the territory of South Sudan for departed from Israel immigrants. The project is being financed by the Israeli side. Solving the problem of illegal immigrants requires significant expenses from the Israeli side.

It's worth noting that in 2012 the branch of human rights organization Amnesty International held a protest outside the Russian Embassy in Tel Aviv. The rally was participated by approx. 80 people, including South Sudanese illegal aliens. The demonstrators called on the Russian government to stop supplying arms to the government of al-Bashir. The Director General of this branch Jonathan Herr said that UN had imposed arms embargo on Sudan, but Russia continued selling weapons to this country and hence, in his opinion, armed groups were able to continue committing war crimes in Dafur.

Thus, the interests of Russia in East Africa will face the interests of Israel in the nearest future, taking in account, that the Jewish state is developing its cooperation with South Sudan and Moscow relies on the preservation of relations with the Republic of Sudan. Inter-Sudanese conflicts may affect the plans on arms deliveries to the region, including Russian, hence Russia and Israel are the competitors in this sphere.
