

# GulfWire

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## Perspectives



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### **MODE RAP: COMMENTARY ON MIDEAST PEACE PROSPECTS**

By John Duke Anthony

The night before last, GulfWire Publisher Dr. John Duke Anthony was interviewed by British Broadcast Corporation's BBC World News on the modus operandi for the so-called Mideast Peace Road Map. The interview was conducted by Alistair Yates. The program was aired live at 8.00 p.m., and re-aired at 10.00 p.m. on Public Broadcasting System's outlet, WLIW, of New York. BBC's World Service News claims an international viewership of 254 million, 90 million of whom are in North America. Following is an unofficial and edited transcript of the interview.

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**BBC:** Tentative steps in the Road Map to peace in the Middle East ... There are signs of movement in the Middle East peace process after talks between the Israeli and Palestinian prime ministers in Jerusalem. Both sides are under pressure to make progress ahead of the summit with President Bush next week. Ariel Sharon has renewed his offer of partial withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian areas, and Mahmoud Abbas says he thinks he can persuade the militant group Hamas to make a ceasefire with Israel.

Let's go live to Washington to Dr. John Duke Anthony of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations.

**Dr. Anthony:** Welcome to BBC World News. Why is this Road Map likely to work when there have been so many other peace initiatives that have failed in the past?

**JDA:** Well, if you look into the rear view mirror, it will be seen that there's very little ground for optimism. On the other hand, hope springs eternal, and not only on this side of the Atlantic but at the eastern end of the Mediterranean as well. In this instance, what we have is an American president who is at least rhetorically committed to seeing a two- state solution in which a secure and economically viable state of Palestine exists side by side with a secure and recognized

Israel.

The rhetoric is inspiring. However, the challenge is to implement it. It will not be easy for President Bush. It will not be easy for Israeli Prime Minister Sharon. And it will be especially difficult for the Palestinian leadership.

**BBC:** How important do you think it is that President Bush's involvement be essential?

**JDA:** It's absolutely critical. Of course, among Israel's national leaders there are those who would argue the opposite. They would claim that previous progress has been made only when there was an absence of outside intervention in the form of mediators, third parties, and others using their [diplomatic] good offices. However, this is an issue of immense importance to nearly everyone on the planet. It's one of the world's longest unresolved international conflicts. It's also the single oldest, largest, and most pervasive obstacle to sustaining Arab goodwill towards the United States and towards the achievement of U.S. national security and related interests.

**BBC:** The big question of course is, if the "Road Map" is to be implemented, what will be its implications for the Israel settlers and for the Palestinian refugees?

**JDA:** You asked THE question. As it is, the Israeli government, by its own admission, acknowledges that there are some 200,000 settlers [on Palestinian territory]; it does not recognize as settlers the 170,000 Israelis who have settled in East Jerusalem [which Israel seized by force and, in defiance of the United Nations, U.S. policy, and international law, has occupied since the June 1967 war]. More objective accounts by Israelis, however, admit to a minimum of 370,000 settlers.

Try to put yourself in the situation of an Israel national politician or major military strategist and ask: How is one likely to get 370,000 settlers to withdraw peacefully and effectively? The last time this happened was in the aftermath of the [1979] Camp David Treaty [ending the conflict between Israel and Egypt, which Israel invaded and occupied in 1967], when Israeli settlers had to withdraw from the Sinai [Peninsula]. At the settlement of Yamit, for example, the settlers had to be dragged out. Force was used. It was not a pretty sight. This time around, it would be easier to imagine evacuating, say, a tenth rather than ten-tenths of the 370,000 settlers - and this is only to underscore what lies in front of the Israeli side alone.

**BBC:** Thank you.

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**Dr. John Duke Anthony** is President and CEO, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations; Publisher of GulfWire; and Secretary of the U.S.-GCC Corporate Cooperation Committee. All three are Washington, D.C.-based non-profit and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to educating Americans and others about the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world.

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