

Israel News from David Dolan

Netanyahu Meets With Obama About Iran And The Peace Process

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Shalom to all!

This month's Israel news and analysis report focuses on the Iranian nuclear threat, and what Israeli leaders might be preparing to do about it. The issue was naturally at the top of concerns that new Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu discussed with American President Barack Obama during their White House summit mid month. To Israel's chagrin, US opposition to any unilateral Israeli military action to deal with the growing threat was underscored during the important Washington meeting. Still, Iran's subsequent test firing of a long range solid fuel missile, closely followed by a dramatic underground nuclear warhead test early this week by its close ally North Korea, seemed to bolster Israel's position that efforts to deal with the issue of a nuclear armed Iran—both diplomatically and possibly militarily—must be stepped up in the near term. Obama's call for a Palestinian state to be established during the next few years, and an immediate halt to Jewish settlement expansion, is also examined.

Switching gears entirely now, I am pleased to announce that I have been asked by an American tourism company, headed by an ex Israeli military leader, to host a 12 day tour to Israel one year from now. The dates of the tour are set for June 1, 2010 through June 12. I will let you know about prices and itineraries next month. As some of you already know, early June is a lovely time to visit the Lord's special land, with hints of spring still usually in the air, but before the full summer heat sets in. The latter spring rains have ended by then, while the days are long, giving more time for sight seeing at a more leisurely pace. I am not one that likes to rush from spot to spot, so we will focus on the quality of each stop more than quantity. However we will visit the most important biblical sights in Jerusalem and around the small country, while also focusing on what is currently going on in the land of promise as well (I am a journalist after all!).

This will not be a "mass tour" involving dozens of buses, as some conduct, but a more personalized smaller tour group that will give each participant a chance to join in the discussions and worship times while getting to know many of the tour participants. Assisting me will be veteran tour leader Bill Sharman (and we hope also his lovely wife Kathy), who has brought groups to the land many times. Bill is a dear friend of many years who worked with me in the early 1980s at the Voice of Hope radio station in southern Lebanon. He will be organizing the tour on the North American end, although I do currently plan to be in the States to

accompany the group from its US departure base of Atlanta. We hope to be able to include folks from other countries as well in the tour, with details to follow.

IRANIAN THREAT TAKES CENTER STAGE

By David Dolan

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu was busy jogging on the diplomatic fast track during May, meeting with two important regional Arab leaders and later with President Barack Obama in Washington. All of the summits included discussions about peace prospects with the Palestinians during the new Israeli government's term in power, along with the looming threat posed to Israel and the entire Middle East by a nuclear armed Iran. The Israeli leader reportedly stressed that significant forward movement on the peace process cannot be expected before Iran's existential threat to the world's only Jewish state is fully addressed.

Just two days after the important White House meeting, Iran's notorious President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced that his country had successfully conducted a live test firing of a new longer range two stage ballistic missile with a reach of at least 1,200 miles, meaning it can easily strike all of Israel, along with southeastern Europe. The Pentagon later confirmed that such a test had indeed occurred, but did not comment on its precise outcome. This came amid press reports that China is involved in negotiations to build a string of nuclear power plants in the rogue Shiite nation.

Meanwhile international media reports said that during a scheduled upcoming early June speech to be delivered in Cairo Egypt, President Obama will outline a new American peace initiative designed to secure the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state abutting Israel before the end of his current term in office, meaning by early 2013. Such a state would be formally demilitarized, at Israel's insistence. Regional Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait would be asked to begin to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel in the interim period. This news came as an Israeli security assessment was released stating that the radical Hamas movement, which violently seized control of the Gaza Strip in 2007, is likely to triumph in any future Palestinian election held in the disputed West Bank.

WASHINGTON SUMMIT

After some anxiety in the run up to the first official meeting at the White House between Barack Obama and Binyamin Netanyahu, Israeli governmental leaders expressed satisfaction over the outcome of the inaugural summit. Just the fact

that the discussions stretched to four hours, beyond their scheduled time frame, signaled that the new American President has a high regard for his Israeli counterpart and his concerns, said many analysts, despite some obvious political differences between the two leaders.

Top aids to Netanyahu told reporters that the Israeli PM had arrived at several crucial understandings with Obama and his senior advisors regarding the burgeoning Iranian nuclear weapons threat. This was considered to be the most important issue discussed during the seminal summit, at least by Israeli officials.

Israeli media reports said Netanyahu actually agreed to hold off ordering a military attack upon Iran's far flung nuclear facilities until at least the end of this year in response to a request to do so by Obama. However his top national security advisor, Uzi Arad, denied that the Premier had agreed to postpone such action, saying he had instead "clarified that Israel reserves operational freedom."

The reported White House request was apparently first delivered directly to Netanyahu during a secret visit to Jerusalem by CIA director Leon Panetta in early May. The American security chief, sent to Israel by Obama, was said to have told Netanyahu that the US will not support Israel if it takes unilateral military action against Iran in the coming months.

The reported clandestine visit was later basically confirmed by Panetta himself. In an interview with an American magazine, he said that while Netanyahu's serious concerns over Iran are quite reasonable, he also "understands that if Israel goes it alone, it will mean big trouble."

Hinting that President Obama might order military action against Iran if negotiations to halt its nuclear program fail, as most analysts expect, Panetta stressed that America's leaders "are not naïve about the challenges posed" by the radical Muslim nation, adding that the Iranian nuclear threat "has our full attention." The CIA chief also stated that "the last thing we need in the Middle East is a nuclear arms race," apparently acknowledging Israel's fears that a nuclear armed Iran will spur other countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia to launch their own nuclear weapons programs.

Netanyahu's reported agreement to delay any military action until at least next year would give the Obama administration time to proceed with its declared desire to attempt to engage Iran's militant Islamic clerical and political leaders in what Obama called "serious discussions" regarding their openly acknowledged nuclear program. While rejecting what he termed as "artificial deadlines," the US President also stated during a post summit question time with American and Israeli reporters that "we are not going to have talks forever," adding that "by the end of this year, I think we should have some sense as to whether or not these discussions are starting to yield significant benefits."

Israeli officials have long made clear that they regard international negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program, which were initiated by the European Union over six years ago, as a waste of time. The futility of such talks has apparently been confirmed time and again as the extremist Iranian regime repeatedly defied United Nations calls for a suspension of its threatening nuclear program, despite the imposition of economic and political sanctions.

SLAP IN THE FACE

A mere two days after Barack Obama defended his decision to pursue diplomacy with Iran—maintaining he could “make a persuasive argument” to Iranian leaders to get them to halt their internationally censured nuclear program—Mahmoud Ahmadinejad poured scorn on the American leader by announcing the successful test firing of a solid fuel ballistic missile he called the Sajir 2. Experts say it was the longest flying missile Iran has ever fired, with a range of at least 1,200 miles, and possibly up to 1,500 miles, meaning it could strike the entire Middle East where many American forces are stationed, along with parts of North Africa and southeastern Europe, India, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

“The Sajir 2 missile, which has an advanced technology, was launched today,” Ahmadinejad proudly proclaimed during an election campaign rally held in a northern Iranian city. He maintained that the missile “landed exactly on its target”—a claim that was not independently verified. He added defiantly that “In the nuclear case, we send them a message: Today the Islamic Republic of Iran is running the show.”

While the timing may have been just a coincidence, many Israeli security analysts said the Shiite regime probably pre-planned the missile test to coincide with the end of the White House summit, knowing that the subject of Iran’s nuclear program would be discussed by the American and Israeli leaders and thus be in news headlines around the world.

Iran’s latest test firing was especially significant in that the Sajir 2 is the first long range solid propellant fueled rocket fired by the theocratic country. Experts say such missiles, based on North Korean technology, can be prepared for firing weeks or months in advance and then transported to hidden silos in preparation for future launch. By comparison, liquid propellant missiles, which Iran also possesses, must be fueled and fired fairly quickly say rocket experts, meaning they would be much easier to detect by American or Israeli spy satellites if an attack involving them was pending.

Iran's latest missile test firing occurred less than one month before the country holds new presidential elections, with polls predicting that Ahmadinejad will triumph once again after several relatively moderate candidates were eliminated by Shiite clerical election officials. In a campaign speech delivered on May 21, the belligerent leader said it was “disgraceful” that his predecessor, the relatively

moderate Mohammad Khatami, had reached a deal with European leaders in 2003 to suspend Iran's uranium enrichment program, a key component in producing nuclear bombs. He averred that Iran's "enemies designed colonial policies" that resulted in the "disgraceful agreement," implying once again that he will never give in to Western pressure to halt his nation's threatening nuclear program.

Ahmadinejad's comments came as a team of American and Russian scientists who work with the renowned East-West Institute issued a chilling report stating that Iran will be capable of constructing some sort of nuclear weapon as early as next year. However they added that the development of a warhead designed to deliver such a deadly weapon to its intended target will take longer, possibly up to five years.

Israeli experts point to substantial evidence that Iran is farther along the nuclear warpath than most international analysts believe. Advanced Chinese technology has been secretly incorporated into their program, some suspect. Meanwhile the *New York Post* reported that Communist Chinese leaders—thirsty for Iranian oil—are currently negotiating a deal with the Shiite government in Tehran to build up to 20 nuclear power plants throughout Iran in the coming years. Experts point out that fuel for nuclear weapons can also be obtained from such plants.

PREPARING FOR WAR

Signs that the Netanyahu government may be preparing the country for a possible military strike against Iran were evident in May. A major test of Israel's air force capability to deal with massive rocket launches from Hizbullah militiamen in Lebanon and from neighboring Syria and the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip was conducted mid month, according to Israel's Channel 10 television network. Iranian President Ahmadinejad has declared several times that Syrian, Hizbullah and Hamas leaders have pledged to back his country militarily if its nuclear sites are hit by Israel or the United States.

Hundreds of airborne military and cargo jets tested the air force's ability to simultaneously attack mock missile sites on several different war fronts. Missile defense systems were also activated during the week long war drill, according to the news report. While not publicly acknowledging that such a drill had taken place, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak did tell reporters that Israel has "a strong air force, which gives us all a sense of security."

Military analysts say intense rocket assaults from Syria, Lebanon and the Gaza Strip upon Israeli civilian population centers will undoubtedly quickly follow any Israeli air force and/or long range missile strike against Iran's nuclear targets. In light of this disturbing prospect, all residents living in Israel, along with visiting tourists, will be asked in early June to participate in the largest ever civilian war drill. Air raid sirens will sound throughout the country, with everyone asked to

head to bomb shelters or anti-chemical sealed rooms in their homes, or if they are out or tourists staying in hotels, to nearby public shelters. Citizens will be instructed by army personnel via radio and television to prepare emergency food and medical supplies in advance as if an enemy attack was actually imminent.

OBAMA TOUTS PALESTINIAN STATE"

PM Netanyahu stated quiet clearly during his first days in office that he would focus his attention on the Iranian nuclear threat, putting the internally divisive issue of peace talks with the Palestinians on the back burner. Despite this declaration, President Obama focused most of his post summit comments on the Palestinian issue, repeating once again his contention that resolving the long and bitter conflict between Arab Palestinians and Israeli Jews in the near term will somehow help deflect the Iranian threat.

Israeli media reports said Netanyahu pointed out to Obama that both Hizbullah and Hamas—Israel's two most active Muslim enemies in recent years—receive substantial military and financial assistance from Iran. Until something concrete is done to change that reality, no peace accord with the Palestinians can succeed, he vigorously argued. He reportedly reminded the US President that the American-backed Oslo peace accords, which were being implemented during Netanyahu's first term in office from mid 1996 until mid 1999, ultimately collapsed because of a renewed Hamas terror campaign partially funded by Iran. Given that the radical Palestinian Sunni Muslim group, supported by the Lebanese Shiite militia, is in full control of the Gaza Strip, and popular in the West Bank, it is hardly a ripe time to pursue a final peace treaty with Palestinian Authority chief Mahmoud Abbas, who is constantly under threat from his Hamas rivals.

As most political analysts anticipated, PM Netanyahu did not endorse President Obama's call for the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state. Although the American leader insisted in his public remarks following the summit meeting that such a "two state solution" is the only way forward, Netanyahu stuck to his position that working toward that goal before the Iranian vow to annihilate Israel is dealt with is totally futile. Still, he acknowledged that the threat itself might be used as a means to bridge differences between Israel and the wider Arab world.

"There has never been a time when Arabs and Israelis see a common threat the way we see it today, and also see the need to join together in working towards peace while simultaneously defending ourselves against this common threat," he told reporters after the White House meeting had ended.

Netanyahu reportedly told the American leader that the Iranian nuclear threat was the main topic of discussion when he met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo in early May, followed by a clandestine visit to nearby Amman Jordan, where he held talks with King Abdullah. Both Arab leaders were said to have agreed with the new Israeli Premier that a viable peace accord with the

Palestinians cannot be secured while non-Arab Iran, controlled by Shiite fundamentalists, continues to openly enrich uranium while building nuclear power plants.

Despite their different approaches regarding the Palestinian issue, PM Netanyahu did reiterate earlier comments that he plans to work toward peace with the Palestinians while also dealing with the issue of Iran. He maintained that he and President Obama “see exactly eye to eye on this” adding that “we want to move simultaneously and then parallel on two fronts—the front of peace, and the front of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear capability.”

Soon after landing back in Israel, PM Netanyahu said that Jerusalem will remain the undivided capital of Israel forever. Speaking at a ceremony to mark Israel's Six Day War capture of the eastern half of Jerusalem in June 1967, the Israeli leader noted that “Our people's unparalleled affinity to Jerusalem has spanned thousands of years, and is at the basis of our national renaissance. It has united our people, secular and religious people alike.”

PRESSURE COOKER

In his post summit comments, President Obama declared that Israel must halt all settlement expansion before any final peace accord can be arrived at with the Palestinians. In fact, Israel has not initiated any new settlement building for many years now, although “natural growth” expansion of many existing communities in disputed areas of the land continues apace.

PM Netanyahu reportedly reminded Obama that Ariel Sharon's controversial 2005 decision to uproot twenty one settlements in the Gaza Strip and four in Samaria north of Jerusalem, which was strongly endorsed by the previous Bush administration, was followed by stepped up rocket attacks upon Israeli cities and towns near the Gaza Strip and then the violent 2007 Hamas coup in the Palestinian coastal zone. He was said to have clearly stated that Israel cannot take the huge risk of a similar outcome by evacuating land just a couple miles from the governmental center in Jerusalem, along with disputed territory near Ben Gurion international airport and not far from Tel Aviv and other coastal cities.

However in an apparent effort to please the new American administration, Netanyahu did authorize the demolition of a small Jewish settlement outpost three days after the White House meeting. Police officers and army soldiers evicted around 40 Jewish residents from seven metal huts and then destroyed them in the small community of Maoz Esther, located northeast of Jerusalem. The community is named after the biblical Jewish queen who interceded with her husband in order to spare her people from mass slaughter in ancient Persia. However some of the evicted residents later returned to the site and began putting up temporary homes.

Speaking out on the settlement issue soon after Netanyahu returned to Israel, former armed forces chief Moshe Ya'alon, who is currently serving as the Strategic Affairs Minister, said that Israel will not agree to President Obama's insistence that all settlement expansion be immediately halted. "We will not halt the construction in the settlements within the framework of natural growth," he told Israel's Channel 2 station, adding that "There are people here who are living their lives, raising children. Housing is required. It isn't housing that has prevented peace."

As talk of peace continues amid serious regional preparations for future warfare, it is a good time to recall the biblical promise of eternal joy in store for all who love Zion and serve Israel's Sovereign Lord: "*Shout aloud and sing for joy people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you*" (Isaiah 12:6).

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- [**HOLY WAR FOR THE PROMISED LAND**](#) (Broadman & Holman), his latest book, is an overview of the history of the Israel and of the bitter Arab-Israeli conflict that rages there, plus some autobiographical details about the author's experiences living in the land since 1980. It especially examines the important role that militant Islam plays in the conflict.
- [**ISRAEL IN CRISIS: WHAT LIES AHEAD?**](#) (Baker/Revell), which examines the political and biblical prospects for a regional attack upon Israel, settlement in the disputed territories, and related topics, is also available for purchase, along with an updated edition of his popular end-time novel, [**THE END OF DAYS**](#) (21st Century Press).

You may order these books at a special discount price by visiting his web site at www.ddolan.com, or by phoning toll free 888-890-6938 in North America, or by e mail at: resources@yourisraelconnection.org

DOLAN'S STIRRING DVD, "FOR ZION'S SAKE" is also available for purchase. Click the title under "BOOKSTORE" for more details.

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