

# Israel News from David Dolan

*February 28, 2012*

Greetings to one and all:

Below is my monthly Middle East news overview report for February 2012. As with every month in recent years, much significant news occurred in the roiling region during the month, including important developments in Israel, Syria, Iran and the Persian Gulf area, where military tensions remain high between Western forces stationed in the area and Shiite-ruled Iran. An Israeli civilian suffered injuries abroad in what some security experts warn could be the first of many Iranian-sponsored terror attacks upon international Israeli and Jewish targets. Meanwhile speculation grew during February that Israel is preparing to attack Iran's nuclear facilities sometime in the first half of this year.

I enjoyed seeing some of you during my speaking tours in the Dallas and Denver areas in late January and February. I plan to share on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March at a church in St. Joseph MO, and the weekend after that in the Charlotte area. Details will be posted on my web site soon, [www.ddolan.com](http://www.ddolan.com) I want to remind you that electronic versions of my new novel, MILLENNIUM: THE LORD REIGNS, are also available for purchase and download on my site, along with printed versions of all of my books.

## **IRAN ATTACKS ISRAELIS ABROAD**

By David Dolan

International speculation intensified during February about a possibly pending Israeli military strike on Iran's rogue nuclear development program. America's Defense Secretary stated that such action is likely sometime before Iran completes the transfer of its uranium enrichment facilities to hardened underground bunkers, expected to be accomplished before early summer. This came as Iran's boisterous leaders declared once again that the world's only Jewish State will soon be wiped off the world map, while simultaneously launching a new round of military exercises in the roiling region.

The war of words between Iran and its self-declared enemies was transformed into actual violence during the month when terrorist attacks were launched against Israeli diplomatic personnel in two foreign countries, India and the former Soviet republic of Georgia, leaving the wife of an Israeli diplomat seriously wounded. A third planned assault was thwarted in Thailand. After it was confirmed that Iranian agents were behind the attacks, Israeli facilities around the world were placed on the highest state of alert while Israeli tourists traveling overseas were warned by their government to be extra vigilant as they move about.

To the north of Israel, fighting intensified in Syria just hours after Russia and China blocked a United Nations Security Council resolution that called upon embattled Syrian dictator Bashar Assad to immediately step down from power. Heavy street clashes occurred for the first time in the heart of the Syrian capital city, Damascus. Early in the month, the United States and Britain pulled their ambassadors out of Syria to protest the rising death toll in the crumbling Arab country, followed by Egypt and other countries. This came as news reports said foreign volunteer Al Qaida jihad warriors had joined the opposition battle to topple the entrenched police state regime. An opposition leader claimed Assad has begun to use chemical weapons in his intensifying struggle to remain in power.

Iranian warships sailed through the Suez Canal during the month to dock in Syrian ports in a dramatic demonstration of the extremist Shiite regime's determination to assist its main Arab ally in whatever way possible. This came as fresh reports revealed that heavily armed Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Lebanese Hizbullah militiamen were being positioned around many Syrian military outposts, apparently designed to protect the facilities from what has become a flood of defecting Syrian military forces.

Closer to home, the Palestinian Authority signed a deal in early February with the rival Muslim fundamentalist Hamas movement to establish a "national unity government", a proposal that had already been supposedly agreed upon and then thwarted several times over the past few years. Under the terms of the latest agreement, PA President Mahmoud Abbas would retain his current position as overall PA leader and also assume the role of Prime Minister. Many junior Hamas officials cried foul over the deal, initialed between Abbas and senior Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal, who moved his office out of Damascus during the month. Later Abbas provided more fuel to hard-line opponents of the unity pact when he claimed Hamas had agreed to recognize all previous international agreements entered into by the PA, including the PLO's 1993 Oslo peace accord with Israel. Senior Hamas officials denied this, stating once again they would never recognize the existence of a Jewish-run state in the mostly Muslim Middle East.

Fresh rocket assaults were launched upon Israeli civilian centers during February from the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, provoking IDF military responses on several occasions. Meanwhile security officials announced late in the month that they had prevented a planned terror attack from the Sinai Peninsula, the scene of the last major terrorist assault against Israeli civilians near the southern port city of Eilat last August. Arabs in Jerusalem clashed with Israeli security forces late in the month. North of the city, a Palestinian school bus was struck by a vehicle driven by an Arab-Israeli man, killing eight children and wounding over thirty others. The tragic accident came as heavy rain and snow blanketed most of Israel, helping to somewhat alleviate the prolonged drought that has plagued the region for several years.

## **TERROR ATTACKS IN INDIA AND GEORGIA**

As tensions continued to mount between Israel and Iran, terrorists attempted to murder the wife of an Israeli diplomat in the Indian capital city of New Delhi on February 13. The victim, 40 year old Tal Yehoshua Koren, sustained serious spinal wounds in the car bomb attack soon after dropping her children off at a nearby school. She is the wife of the defense attaché at the Israeli embassy in the city. Her brother told Israeli media outlets that a terrorist on a motorcycle drove up to her embassy vehicle at a stoplight and attached a magnetic bomb to it. An explosion rocked the car seconds later. After undergoing extensive surgery in New Delhi, the wounded victim was later flown back to Israel for further treatment at a hospital in Tel Aviv.

Earlier the same day, a similar terrorist device was placed on the car of an Israeli embassy employee in Tblisi, the capital of the country of Georgia. However the local Georgian man heard the sound of scraping metal that the device was making as it rubbed against the pavement, and stopped in time for local police sappers to come and safely defuse the bomb. As in India, the attempted bombing received extensive media coverage in the country. Both India and Georgia enjoy friendly relations and strong business ties with Israel.

Addressing the Israeli Knesset that evening, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said "Iran, and its proxy Hizbullah force, were behind these attacks," adding that the Shiite regime "is the largest exporter of terror in the world." Indian officials later confirmed that "foreign agents" had carried out the assault in New Delhi. Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman warned that, "We will not take these attacks lying down."

The very next day, an Iranian terrorist ring was apprehended in the Thai capital city of Bangkok. The action came after several explosions went off in a crowded Bangkok residential district, injuring five people. Local police officials said the first blast occurred at a house rented by three Iranian nationals, who fled their residence after a cache of homemade bombs apparently accidentally ignited. One of the three injured Iranians then attempted to hail a passing taxi, which sped from the blast scene, prompting him to hurl a hand grenade at the vehicle. He later threw another grenade at a police car that rushed to the scene. However the explosive device bounced back toward him, blowing off one of his legs and severely injuring the other one, which was later amputated. Thai police subsequently found two unexploded magnetic devices inside of the partially ruined home, saying they were identical to the ones deployed in India and Georgia. Israeli officials rapidly placed all of their embassies and other properties around the world on high security alert, while warning Israeli tourists traveling abroad to be on guard against additional Iranian and Lebanese Hizbullah terrorist actions.

## **ISRAEL TO STRIKE IRAN THIS SPRING?**

Amid the wave of apparent Iranian terrorist assaults, news reports swirled round the world during February concerning the likelihood of a pending Israeli military attack upon Iran's sprawling nuclear facilities. The reports began the second day of the month when the *Washington Post* newspaper ran an article by veteran columnist David Ignatius, then in Brussels with visiting American Defense Secretary Leon Panetta. The senior US official had traveled to the Belgium capital city to discuss the growing crisis with Iran, and other hot topics, with his European Union counterparts. Ignatius wrote that "Panetta believes there is a strong likelihood that Israel will strike Iran in April, May or June; before Iran enters what Israelis described as a 'zone of immunity' to commence building a nuclear bomb." The Atlanta-based CNN cable network confirmed the comments attributed to the traveling US defense official, who assumed his post last July after serving since 2009 as director of the CIA.

Without citing his sources, Ignatius wrote that, "Very soon, the Israelis fear, the Iranians will have stored enough enriched uranium in deep underground facilities to make a weapon; and only the United States could then stop them militarily." Iranian officials announced last year that they planned to move their uranium enrichment centrifuges to hardened bunkers deep inside mountains near the Shiite Iranian holy city of Qom, nearly 100 miles southwest of Tehran. Security experts say the ongoing centrifuge transfer is scheduled to be completed by this coming June.

The *Washington Post* article went on to state that the postponement in January of a major joint US-Israeli anti-missile defense exercise was probably the result of the Obama administration's conclusion that an Israeli military strike was likely to occur during the first half of this year. The Defense Secretary and the Pentagon declined to comment on the report. It came soon after the EU joined the United States in slapping additional economic sanctions upon the Iranian clerical regime that has ruled the Shiite Muslim country since 1979, including a total suspension of EU oil imports by June. The EU has been Iran's second biggest customer after China. Tehran later retaliated by immediately banning oil sales to Britain and France.

As he was preparing to meet with President Barack Obama in the oval office on February 21<sup>st</sup>, Panetta's spokesman, George Little, released a statement designed to "clarify" the earlier comments attributed to his boss. "The Defense Secretary has said that Iran must not be able to possess nuclear weapons, and that the international community must continue to put diplomatic and economic pressure on the Iranian regime not to make the decision to develop them." The spokesman then insisted that "sanctions are working," adding Panetta has "talked about red lines the Iranians can't cross, including nuclear weapons and closing the Strait of Hormuz. And on Israel, he's echoed what the President said, that we believe Israel hasn't made a decision whether or not to strike Iran." Later in the month, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov said an Israeli military attack upon Iranian nuclear targets would be "catastrophic for the region and for the whole system of international relations." Israeli officials dismissed the comment, saying the Kremlin has no moral ground to speak on the topic since it is actively supporting the brutal Syrian regime's deadly assaults upon its own citizens.

## **THIS TIME NEXT YEAR**

The new American Defense Secretary had earlier been quoted as stating that Iran could potentially produce a nuclear warhead in just one year's time. This closely echoed comments made by Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, delivered while visiting Brussels in mid January. In a rare public briefing, the head of Israeli military intelligence, Major General Aviv Kochavi, revealed Iran could produce what he termed "a crude nuclear device" within one year of making a decision to do so. Speaking at an international security conference held annually north of Tel Aviv, the career military officer went on to state that "Iranian scientists have already managed to enrich enough radioactive material to successfully produce not just one, but four nuclear bombs." The IDF security chief added ominously that "Iran is very actively pursuing its efforts to develop its nuclear capacities, and we have evidence they're seeking nuclear weapons." The United Nations Atomic Energy Agency released a report last November confirming for the first time that evidence it gathered strongly suggests that the rogue Shiite regime is indeed actively pursuing a nuclear weapons program.

Speaking at the security conference the following day, Deputy Prime Minister Moshe Ya'alon stated that Israel possesses significant evidence that Iran has succeeded, with North Korean help, in producing long-range ballistic missiles capable of traversing the north pole in order to strike targets in North America. Ya'alon<sup>a</sup>relieved of his earlier position as IDF Chief of Staff by PM Ariel Sharon in 2005 after he publicly questioned the then-pending Israeli military and civilian pullout from the Gaza Strip;<sup>a</sup>indicated he shared this unsettling information with senior American officials during a late January visit to Washington, where Prime Minister Netanyahu is heading in early March. Seeming to confirm the statements attributed to Leon Panetta that Israel may launch a military assault on Iran's nuclear facilities very soon, Ya'alon warned that "The Israeli government will stop Iran one way or another." Reacting to all the comments concerning a possible pending IDF military strike against Iran's threatening nuclear program, President Obama said his administration is "going to be sure we work in lockstep as we proceed to try to solve this problem;<sup>a</sup>hopefully diplomatically." Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak also spoke again during February of his hope that economic sanctions coupled with diplomatic moves might persuade Iran's militant leaders to back away from their nuclear production program. However he also pointed out the numerous indications that this path will most likely fail.

Late in the month, former Republican presidential candidate Senator John McCain led a congressional delegation in a visit to Jerusalem. After meeting with senior Israeli leaders, he said the Obama administration should share Israel's "correct assessment" of the dire threat posed by Iran's nuclear program. McCain also disputed a statement issued by the Pentagon in late February that the radical Iranian clerical regime is "fundamentally rational" and would therefore probably not deploy nuclear weapons against Israel. He said "any regime with an abiding concern for its own security, self-interest and self-preservation would not engage in such deeply provocative conduct," adding "There is no doubt that Iran has so far been undeterred on the path of acquiring nuclear weapons."

## **DESTROY THE "ZIONIST TUMOR"**

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, delivered an abrasive two-hour speech the first weekend of February, calling Israel a "cancerous tumor" that must be uprooted from the region. He repeated his threatening comments in a similar speech later in the month. Speaking at a Friday mosque service in Tehran, broadcast live around the country and via the Hizbullah satellite network throughout the Middle East, the clerical leader said "the Zionist regime is a cancerous tumor that should be cut and will be cut." He vowed to pursue what he called "nuclear energy development" while boasting that any military attack upon Iranian nuclear sites would "only make Iran stronger." The hostile remarks about Israel were delivered in fluent Arabic, which analysts said reflected Khomeini's apparent desire to speak directly to the Arab world. He also employed Arabic while commenting on the over year long political upheaval that has gripped much of the Arab world, hailing the militant Islamic electoral victories in Tunisia and Egypt. He said the fundamentalist triumphs will help to "weaken and isolate" Israel, adding that they reflected what he termed the "utter failure of American foreign policy based on anti-Islamic propaganda."

For the first time ever, the overall Iranian leader confirmed that his regime has been assisting the radical Lebanese Shiite militia;<sup>a</sup>in fact it helped establish the armed force in the early 1980s and has been funding, arming, training and even partially commanding it on the ground ever since. Khomeini also affirmed what the Israeli government has long known: that his country has been arming and training the Sunni Palestinian Hamas militia, which violently seized control over the Gaza Strip in 2007. "We have intervened in anti-Israel matters, and that brought victory in the 33-day war by Hizbullah against Israel in 2006, and in the 22-day war between Hamas and the Zionist state in Gaza," which began after heavy Hamas shelling of nearby Israeli civilian centers in 2008. Khomeini added threateningly that "From now on, in any place, if any nation or any group confronts the Zionist regime, we will endorse and we will help. We have no fear expressing this out loud."

Later in the month, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards held another major military exercise dubbed *Sarollah*, an Arabic word meaning "Allah's vengeance." A spokesman for the group claimed the large-scale drills were designed to protect the entire Gulf from "foreign intervention," ignoring the fact that all Gulf Sunni Arab states fear Shiite Iran and have been urging the United States to take action against the country's threatening

nuclear weapons program. The exercises began the same day as a team of experts from the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency arrived in Teheran for talks with Iranian officials. The team later left in failure, reporting no progress in attempts to uncover the deeper dimensions of the secretive Iranian program. In particular, inspectors were not allowed to visit a building in an Iranian nuclear compound that they suspect houses facilities to test the effects of nuclear explosions.

With tensions mounting in the region, Israeli media reports said American military personnel were gathering in significant numbers in the strategic area. Unusual airlifts were reported across the Sinai Peninsula and southern Israel, heading further east to the Gulf region. They apparently emanated from American military bases in Europe. This came as military forces from six nations, including the United States, Britain and France, held joint exercises to practice an attack on an unnamed "enemy mechanized division" after it supposedly invaded a neighboring country. Including a US nuclear aircraft carrier and its support ships, plus the French Charles de Gaulle carrier, defense experts termed it the largest amphibious exercise held by such joint forces in over one decade. Many added that it was designed to reassure nervous Gulf Sunni-ruled Arab countries, including oil rich Saudi Arabia, that the West is remaining vigilant in the face of growing threats from Shiite Iran.

### **SITUATION DETERIORATES IN SYRIA**

Heavy street fighting broke out in mid-February in the Syrian capital city, Damascus, between supporters and opponents of the brutal Assad family regime that has ruled the Arab country since the 1960s. To the north, the regime's remaining loyal forces were pounding the city of Homs, about the same size as the US city of Philadelphia, with massive artillery bombardments that left hundreds of people dead or wounded, including two prominent Western journalists. Clashes took place in many other parts of the torn county as the minority Alawite regime desperately attempted to cling to power in the face of growing international calls for Assad to immediately step down.

The fighting intensified only hours after both Russia and China used their vetoes to block a UN Security Council resolution demanding Assad's quick ouster. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, later told the General Assembly that Assad's forces had been "emboldened" by the Security Council's failure to end the escalating violence. She said the regime was deliberately attacking Syrian civilians, especially in the city of Homs. "The failure of the Security Council to agree on firm collective action appears to have emboldened the Syrian government to launch an all-out assault in an effort to crush dissent with overwhelming force," Pillay said, adding she was "particularly appalled by the ongoing onslaught on Homs. According to credible accounts, the Syrian army has shelled densely populated neighborhoods of Homs in what appears to be an indiscriminate attack on civilian areas."

Later in the month, Saudi state-run news outlets said that King Abdullah had phoned Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to express his deep displeasure over the Russian veto. He said that "Russia should have coordinated with the Arabs before using the veto," adding that his country would "never abandon its religious and moral obligations towards what is happening" to his fellow Sunni Muslims, who are leading the battle against the Assad regime, aided in recent weeks by Al Qaida fighters from several neighboring countries, especially Iraq. The monarch's harsh rebuke came just days before diplomats from over 60 nations gathered in Tunisia to discuss ways to end the bloodshed in Syria.

Meanwhile Awad Al-Razak, a military officer who recently defected to the opposition Free Syrian Army, told the *Al-Arabiya* newspaper that the Assad regime has used chemical weapons against protesters in the city of Homs, under the supervision of Russian and Iranian scientists. The disturbing claim came as Sen. John McCain called upon outside sources to arm the Syrian opposition. Noting that Al Qaida is now aiding the opposition, Gen. Martin Dempsey, the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said such a move would be "premature."

## ARABS RIOT IN JERUSALEM

Tensions flared in Jerusalem in late February after Palestinians attacked a group of Christian tourists as they were heading up to the Temple Mount. Police said the Palestinians thought the tourists were local Jews who intended to pray at Judaism's holiest site on earth. The following Friday, a young Palestinian man was shot dead by Israeli policemen as he was hurling an exploding firecracker at them in the Arab suburb of Al-Ram, where hundreds of rioting Palestinians clashed with security forces. Earlier Palestinians hurled rocks and other objects at Jews praying next to the Temple Mount's Western Wall.

Negotiations took place all month between leaders of the Palestinian Authority and the rival Hamas movement as attempts continued to forge a unity government to rule over nearly four million Palestinians in the PA-ruled disputed territories north and south of Jerusalem and in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip. Several other Palestinian political factions also took part in the talks, held in Cairo. Hamas leaders said late in the month that they still had differences with the PA. Israeli leaders said again in February that the inclusion of the militant Islamic fundamentalist offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood movement would spell the complete end of the struggling peace process.

With the tense Middle East now ticking like a time bomb, it is good to know that those who trust in the Lord can take shelter in His loving arms, as the psalmist David did while being pursued by King Saul. *"Be gracious to me oh God, be gracious to me; for my soul takes refuge in You. And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge until destruction passes by (Psalm 57:1).*

**DAVID DOLAN** is a Jerusalem-based author and journalist who has lived and worked in Israel since 1980. His latest book, a novel titled *MILLENNIUM: THE LORD REIGNS* is available for purchase at his web site, [www.ddolan.com](http://www.ddolan.com) in both printed and electronic versions at special introductory prices. His first novel, *THE END OF DAYS*, which is a companion work to the new novel, is available for a very low price of just \$5.00. His earlier books are also for sale, listed below.

- [\*\*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,
- You may also order Dolan's books by phoning 888-890-6938 in North America, or by email at: [resources@yourisraelconnection.org](mailto:resources@yourisraelconnection.org)

**DOLAN'S DVD, "FOR ZION'S SAKE," which was broadcast on national television, is also available for purchase. Click the title under "BOOKSTORE" for more details.**

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