

Israel News from David Dolan

August 28, 2012

Shalom from Jerusalem,

Talk of a major regional war increased during the month as preparations for a new conflict intensified in Israel. Iranian leaders ratcheted up their anti-Israel verbal blasts, declaring once again that the Jewish State will soon be destroyed. This came as fighting escalated in neighboring Syria as more refugees poured into Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, where armed clashes broke out once again between opponents and supporters of the embattled Assad regime. Another terror attack along Israel's southern border with Egypt took place in August, followed by increased Egyptian military activity in the Sinai Peninsula. All of the details of these stories and more are in this month's Israel news and analysis report, posted below.

I hope to see some of you the second weekend of September when I am scheduled to speak at a prophecy conference in Wisconsin, not far from the city of Green Bay. Details are on my web site, www.ddolan.com

MIDDLE EAST CRISIS MUSHROOMS

By David Dolan

While the embattled Assad regime in Syria continued to lose ground in August to rebel forces as fighting raged in the war-torn Arab country, talk of a looming conflict between Israel and Syria's main ally, Iran, took front and center in the regional media. The Syrian regime was further weakened by major defections during the month, including that of the Prime Minister who fled to neighboring Jordan. This came as heavy fighting escalated in many parts of the capital city, Damascus, and in the country's largest city and financial hub, Aleppo in the northwest.

Turkey announced late in the month that it had reached its capacity to absorb Syrian refugees fleeing the intensifying fighting. Jordan was said to be nearing the same threshold. In Washington, President Barack Obama made clear he would consider the use of any chemical weapons in the spreading conflict as a "game changer" that would spark a significant response from the Americans and their allies. Press reports said Washington and Ankara have drawn up military plans to intervene if Syria's vast chemical arsenal is either deployed by the regime, captured by rebel forces, or moved to another location. Off the Mediterranean coast, US and Israeli naval vessels held a four day joint exercise to test their compatibility to cooperate in any new regional war.

More violence flared in neighboring Lebanon during the month, pitting supporters and opponents of the embattled Syrian regime against each other. Meanwhile the Shiite Hizbullah militia pledged to support Iran in any military showdown with Israel. A Lebanese newspaper said the radical group has drawn up plans to invade and capture parts of the northern Galilee region in any future war. Israeli forces in the area remained on high war alert as a series of drills were held in different parts of the country to test the readiness for a possible massive missile blitz upon all portions of Israel. An Israeli official revealed that a regional war involving Iran, Hizbullah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad based in the Gaza Strip, and possibly Syria, would probably last around one month, taking several hundred Israeli lives. However some experts say they anticipate a much higher casualty figure in any new conflict.

Nuclear experts report the Iranian regime is defiantly stepping up its uranium enrichment program, setting up new centrifuges in its facilities near the city of Fordow. This news came as Iran's top leaders again vowed that "the Zionist entity" will soon be wiped off of the regional map. In Israel, the internal debate as to the wisdom and practicality of an IDF military strike on Iran's rogue nuclear program heated up like never before. While many called for imminent action before it becomes too late to destroy the growing underground portion of Iran's nuclear development program, a former armed forces chief joined other voices in calling upon government leaders to desist from a dangerous military operation at this time.

Another major terrorist assault launched against Israel from the volatile Sinai Peninsula took place during the month. This time, Egyptian security forces were targeted first before an armed attack was launched on an Israeli

border position. The action led to an increased Egyptian military presence in the area, to the chagrin of some Israeli officials who fear the new Muslim Brotherhood-led government might actively back Hamas in its ongoing jihad war with Israel. Israeli concerns only increased when the new Egyptian President announced he would travel to Iran for an international conference, the first such visit in over 30 years. On a more positive note, the new Egyptian Defense Minister phoned his Israeli counterpart to assure him that the government is still committed to the Camp David peace treaty that has been in effect, if just, since 1979.

MORE BLASTS FROM IRAN

Talk of a possibly pending major conflict with Iran grew to a fever pitch in Israel during August, fueled by a new round of bombastic Iranian warnings that the Jewish State will soon be totally wiped out. Speaking in mid-August to a group of Iranian war veterans from his country's long and blood-soaked war with Iraq, which was waged in the 1980s, Supreme Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei declared that what he termed "the fake Zionist regime" will "disappear soon from the landscape of geography." Saying as he often does that the biblical Holy Land must be returned to total Muslim control, he pledged that "the light of hope will shine on the Palestinian issue, and this Islamic land will certainly be returned to the Palestinian nation." In an earlier speech delivered during Friday Muslim prayers, he vowed that "The nations of the region will soon finish off the usurper Zionists in the Palestinian land." However several Palestinian Authority leaders pointed out in response that any Iranian nuclear strike upon the small Jewish State would also kill untold numbers of Palestinians due to the fact that the two related peoples live in close proximity to each other.

Another threatening speech added further fuel to Iran's verbal blasts, this time delivered by Iranian military leader Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali, who echoed Khamenei's visceral vow to annihilate Israel. Speaking before serving military personnel, he declared that "no other way exists apart from resolve and strength to completely eliminate Israel's aggressive nature and to destroy the country." Commenting on the war-mongering speeches, an Israeli official in Jerusalem said the latest Iranian genocidal threats were a "reaffirmation of what we continually hear from the Iranian leadership. The Iranians use unequivocal language, and their words speak for themselves."

The United States wasted no time in condemning the latest Iranian vows to annihilate the Jewish State, with the White House calling them "reprehensible." The European Union's foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, labeled the remarks "outrageous and hateful," while UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon characterized them as "offensive and inflammatory." However, the UN chief also announced that he would attend this week's non-aligned summit meeting in Tehran and meet with senior Iranian leaders, a move that the Israeli government has strongly opposed.

The current IDF Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Benny Gantz, responded to the latest Iranian verbal barrage by warning that "whoever tries to harm us will face our devastating might." He noted "We are hearing explicit threats over Israel's security and the well being of its people, threats that demonstrate an underestimation of our capabilities. Anyone who thinks they can get rid of Israel and hurt our nation will discover the IDF's devastating force." Alluding to the missile threat posed by Iran's Lebanese Hizbullah puppet ally, he added that, "We stand steadfast along our borders in the face of threats. The IDF has the world's best soldiers and commanders."

The Reuters news agency reported in August that Israel has upgraded its Arrow II ballistic missile shield, which is designed to intercept and destroy medium range enemy rockets and missiles aimed at Israel. A senior Israeli defense official told the agency that the new "Block 4" generation of guided interceptor rockets, radars and related technologies are being installed in the Arrow. The report said the upgrade would serve to synchronize the Arrow with similar US systems. The Arrow, partially funded by the United States, has been operational since 2000.

IS WAR IMMINENT?

The war-like words pouring forth from Tehran served to ratchet up widespread Israeli media speculation that an IDF strike upon Iran's nuclear program may be imminent. This was enhanced by reports that Iran will soon complete its speedy operation to move most of its uranium enrichment nuclear facilities to an underground

mountain bunker south of the capital city, making them nearly impossible to reach by existing IDF armaments. An unnamed Western diplomat stationed in Vienna told reporters Iran has been busy installing many new uranium enrichment centrifuges in its underground bunker near the city of Fordow. He said the operation is ongoing, and is expected to be confirmed in an upcoming report put out by the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency. Israeli media outlets reported that nuclear experts say the Shiite Islamic Republic has started to enrich uranium at the Fordow underground site to a fissile purity of 20%, which brings it much closer to being ready for a rapid transformation to weapons-grade levels.

Adding to the growing public sense that war with Iran and its allies may be imminent, the army's Home Front Command stepped up its gas mask distribution during the month as increasing numbers of civilians requested the protective devices. This was despite the known reality that such masks are totally ineffective against a nuclear or biological attack, or a chemical attack involving deadly skin-penetrating nerve agents like Sarin gas, which Syria possesses in copious amounts. The Home Front Command held a large gas attack drill during the middle of August, centered in the northern Galilee region. The drill was widely reported by the Israeli media.

The army also tested out a new system to alert citizens of a pending missile attack, military operation or other threats affecting public order. The system simultaneously sends out thousands of SMS messages to Israeli cell phones informing area residents of a pending attack or other similar items. Analysts say the system gives the government a new ability to quietly, yet quickly inform the public of an imminent attack without utilizing the media, heavily monitored by Israel's enemies. Issuing public alerts via the media would in effect give away the element of surprise if IDF forces were sent into action against Iran's nuclear targets. However not warning the public of pending action is morally questionable and would undoubtedly lead to increased Israeli casualties when the rockets and missiles do fly.

The Israeli *Ha'aretz* newspaper said in mid August that President Obama had received a revised intelligence report that contained "startling fresh information" that Iran had made "unexpected strides" in its nuclear program, with some experts saying it might be able to produce several nuclear warheads before the end of this year. The newspaper said the report contained "new and alarming information" about Iran's nuclear production program. The White House said it would "not comment on intelligence reports the President may or may not have received."

Meanwhile American Defense Secretary Leon Panetta came to Israel in early August and met with senior government officials, including Defense Minister Ehud Barak. He later told reporters that Iran's militant leaders "have a choice to make. They can either negotiate in a way that tries to resolve these issues and has them abiding by international rules and requirements and giving up their effort to develop their nuclear capability. But if they don't, and if they continue to make the decision to proceed with a nuclear weapon, we have options that we are prepared to implement to ensure that does not happen."

THIRTY DAY WAR

The wisdom of Israeli leaders ordering a military strike on Iran was widely debated here during the month, sometimes openly and sometimes via anonymous quotes from senior officials. It became clear that a significant debate is taking place among senior cabinet ministers about the possible outcomes of an IDF operation, both militarily and diplomatically. Whether speaking on the record or not, almost all Israeli political and military leaders agree that if a military attack is deemed essential to halt Iran's burgeoning nuclear production program, it would be best if it were led by the United States and its NATO allies, with Israel merely playing a supporting role.

However in light of the American presidential and congressional elections scheduled to be held in early November, very few expect that President Obama would initiate such action even if Iran's uranium enrichment centrifuges end up completely buried deep underground (which is seemingly already essentially the case). Still, if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu launches a military operation, many security analysts say they anticipate it most likely would not take place before the Jewish autumn holidays end after the first week of October. The country is always brimming with foreign tourists during the holidays, both Jews who come to see family and friends and Christians who come for the annual Feast of Tabernacles celebrations. Of course, Israel's enemies can initiate action at any time as well, as Hizbullah essentially did in 2006..

Among those who went on record against an IDF operation during August was former Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi, who argued it would bring much damage in its wake and only set back the Iranian nuclear program for a short season. However senior aids to the Prime Minister noted that Ashkanazi has been engaged in a long-standing feud with Defense Minister Barak, which may at least partially explain his public opposition to any potential IDF action against Iran.

Just before stepping down from his cabinet position, Israel's outgoing Home Front Command Minister, Matan Vilnai, gave an interview to the *Ma'ariv* newspaper concerning the prospects of war with Iran and its allies. Detailing some of the work his ministry has done to prepare for a possible conflict, he said the Israeli government and military are "fully prepared for a multi-front war" that is likely to erupt following any Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. He said such a "blow-back" war would probably feature multiple missile attacks upon Israeli targets, as has been stated before by Barak and other Israeli leaders. Vilnai said the Israeli military can keep up sustained operations for as long as 30 days if necessary, saying any new war may last that long (similar to the length of the 2006 war with Hizbullah forces in Lebanon). He added it would sadly feature rocket and missile attacks upon Israeli population centers and military targets every day.

The former government minister, who has been appointed Israel's new ambassador to China, revealed that officials estimate up to 500 Israelis might perish in the projected conflict with Iran and its regional allies. Many thousands would be wounded, some critically. However several Israeli security analysts said such relatively low casualty figures are probably on the optimistic side, with one noting that tens of thousands of people could easily be killed, especially if chemical or other non-conventional weapons are aimed at Israel's urban centers.

Adding to concerns that a pending war could be quite fierce, Lebanese newspapers reported that the Iranian-funded and trained Hizbullah militia held a major military drill in southern Lebanon during August. Over 10,000 armed Hizbullah fighters were said to have participated in the war drill, which would make it the largest in the militia's 30 year history. The Lebanese press reports claimed that the drill was testing the militia's ability to pour across the nearby Israeli border and cut off and then occupy the Upper Galilee region, which is home to tens of thousands of Israelis. The military drill came just days after Hizbullah's overall leader, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, pledged in a speech that his heavily-armed militia force would join any Iranian military action in response to an IDF strike upon Iran's nuclear facilities. Many Israeli Middle East analysts say in light of the fact that Hizbullah's closest regional backer, Bashar Assad, is apparently losing his struggle to cling to power, and given the likelihood that some military action is pending against Iran, another round of Hizbullah rocket attacks upon Israel is probably inevitable.

In another sign of a possibly pending conflict with Iran and its regional allies, underground parking garages in Tel Aviv are being prepared to act as bomb shelters for those city residents who do not have one in their homes or workplaces. Municipal officials announced in mid August that 60 garages have been approved for use as bomb shelters for some 800,000 people in the case of a missile attack on Israel's largest urban center. The municipality said it devised this solution out of concern for residents stuck without access to a shelter or a reinforced "security room" inside or near their places of residence. The municipality's website uploaded a map of the city detailing the locations of the garages, which some experts said was a bad move that may give Israel's enemies new targets to attack in time of war.

FIGHTING ESCALATES IN SYRIA

Syria's two largest cities, Aleppo and Damascus, became totally engulfed in armed conflict during August as more military and political leaders defected to the Sunni Muslim-led revolt aimed at toppling the detested Assad family regime that has governed Syria since the 1960s. Syrian air force warplanes joined government tanks and attack helicopters as battles were fought in many portions of Damascus, still mostly under regime control. In Aleppo, rebel forces claimed to be holding many parts of the city and surrounding areas. The intensifying conflict caused the United Nations to pull its monitors out of Syria during August, saying they were no longer able to have any effect as the fighting blazed into full-scale civil war.

The United Nations confirmed Israeli and international media reports that Iran has been providing crucial and substantial aid to the besieged Assad regime in its 17-month struggle to stay in power. The UN said the Shiite Republic is providing funds, weapons munitions and intelligence support to Assad and his cronies. Iranian

Revolutionary Guards are operating on the ground, establishing local militias to help back the strained Syrian military, which has been greatly weakened by many defections over the past year. The UN report states that over 18,000 people have perished so far in the conflict, many of them non-combatant civilians, with countless numbers wounded. It added that around 170,000 Syrians have fled the fighting, seeking refuge in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and other regional countries. Human rights groups say some 2.5 million Syrian civilians are in dire need of food and medical aid. Opposition groups claim that over 23,000 Syrians have been killed so far in the fierce conflict, three-fourths of them non-combatants.

Riad Hijab, who until recently served as Prime Minister in Bashar Assad's crumbling regime, defected to Jordan in early August, declaring he was joining the Syrian opposition movement. The Sunni Muslim official fled Damascus with his family and two other senior Syrian government officials and three army generals. In a statement he sent to the *Al Jazeera* Arab satellite news network, he declared "I announce my defection today (August 6) from the regime of killing and terror, and I join the ranks of the revolution." American officials and the rebel factions opposed to the regime hailed Hijab's defection. The Sunni Muslim Brotherhood movement posted a statement on its web site calling his move "a courageous expression of great nationalism."

TERROR IN SINAI

Exactly one year after eight Israelis were killed in a coordinated terror attack near the Israeli border with Egypt, Muslim fundamentalist terrorists launched another major assault in the area. Officials said a terrorist squad, probably originating from the nearby Gaza Strip, began its deadly operation by attacking an Egyptian army outpost located not far from the Rafah border crossing. After killing 16 Egyptian soldiers and wounding over 20 others during an intense firefight, the attackers stole two Egyptian armored personnel carriers which they quickly used to cross over into Israeli territory. The attackers fired anti-tank rockets at nearby Israeli soldiers who were patrolling the border area. An Israeli air force jet quickly went into action, destroying the heavy vehicle while other terrorist riding in a second vehicle jumped out and ran for cover. After combat that lasted several minutes, the bodies of seven of the infiltrating terrorists were left lifeless at the scene. No Israeli casualties were reported.

Initially it was thought that the attackers were probably Bedouin Arabs living in the Sinai who had been contracted by international jihadist groups to attack the Egyptian outpost and Israel. However it was subsequently learned that the squad crossed over into Sinai from the Gaza Strip before carrying out their audacious operation. Israeli Defense Minister Barak responded to the assault by calling upon the new Egyptian government to step up its efforts to curb the growing terrorist menace in the Sinai Peninsula. "The modus operandi of the terrorists again highlights the need for determined Egyptian action to restore security and prevent terrorist activities in Sinai. Perhaps this will be necessary wake-up call for the Egyptians to take matters in their hands in a more serious way."

New Egyptian President Mohamed Morsy wasted no time in seizing the day, declaring that "this cowardly attack will not go without a response. Those who committed this crime will pay for it dearly." After conferring with his security advisors, he quickly ordered Egyptian security forces to be beefed up in Sinai while launching a massive manhunt for any surviving terrorists. According to the 1979 Camp David peace accord, Israeli leaders must approve any major Egyptian military movement into the Sinai Peninsula. Initially such permission was forthcoming, but only for increased ground forces and the use of attack helicopters. However after Egyptian air force jets went into action against "terrorist nests" in the area for the first time since the treaty was signed, Israeli leaders called for restraint and asked the US government to intervene and halt the action. This came as the Muslim Brotherhood movement called for a "review" of the peace treaty after accusing the Israeli Mossad spy agency of somehow being responsible for the heinous attack. The Lebanese Hizbullah movement echoed the absurd charge.

Soon after the border terrorist assault was launched, President Morsi fired Field Marshall Hussein Tantawi who headed the Military Council that governed Egypt after Hosni Mubarak was ousted from power in March 2011. Other senior members of the military were also dismissed from their posts. Earlier the Muslim Brotherhood movement had accused the senior army officers of plotting a coup against the newly elected Islamic fundamentalist President. Analysts say the action means that Egypt is now firmly in the grip of the radical movement that helped found the Palestinian Hamas movement in 1988.

As the countdown to a new and potentially disastrous regional war seems to gain pace, it is heartening to recall some of the end time promises that the God of Israel made long ago to His people via the ancient Hebrew prophets: *"For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land, and I will build them up and not overthrow them, and I will plant them and not pluck them up (Jeremiah 24:6).*

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 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.

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

TO RECEIVE THESE FREE ISRAEL UPDATES DIRECTLY, FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS BELOW. YOU WILL ONLY RECEIVE DAVID DOLAN'S UPDATE AND ANALYSIS INFORMATION FROM THIS ADDRESS. THE LIST WILL NOT BE TRADED OR SOLD.

TO SUBSCRIBE or to unsubscribe, go to: <http://www.ddolan.com/subscribe.asp>

mail2web.com – Enhanced email for the mobile individual based on Microsoft® Exchange - <http://link.mail2web.com/Personal/EnhancedEmail>