

The week ending August 9, 2013

IRAN

Iran Constructs New Rocket Site for Ballistic Missile Tests

According to a military intelligence report published Thursday, Iran has constructed a rocket-launching site that could be used for testing ballistic missiles, [Reuters](#) reported. Satellite imagery showed extensive construction over the last three years at a site believed to be equipped for rocket launches. According to Jane's Intelligence Review, "imagery analysis of the Shahrud site suggests it will be a strategic facility used to test ballistic missiles, leaving the other two sites free to handle Iran's ambitious program of satellite launches." The Islamic Republic has determinedly developed its space and missile programs in recent years, which Western countries worry could be used to propel satellites into orbit to deliver nuclear warheads.

Netanyahu: Iran Accelerating Nuclear Program

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cautioned not to be misled by Iranian president Hassan Rouhani's false diplomatic rhetoric, charging that Iran is not only continuing, but also accelerating its nuclear weapons program, according to [The Washington Post](#). "While everybody is busy talking to him, he'll be busy enriching uranium. The centrifuges will keep spinning," Netanyahu said. Yuval Steinitz, Israel's minister for international affairs, echoed Netanyahu's concerns about Iran's new president. "Rouhani is charming, he is cunning, and he will smile all the way to the bomb," he said. Israeli leadership has declared Iran's uranium enrichment program an "existential threat," and says that Tehran's continued defiance of the international non-proliferation regime is intolerable. Also troubling to Israel and the United States were recent reports that Iran may be operating a heavy-water factory to produce plutonium, which can also be used to develop a nuclear weapon. "The situation, unhappily, is not getting any better, it's actually getting worse," Netanyahu said.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Iron Dome is a game changer, but it's just the beginning

Over 50,000 rockets are pointed at Israel at any given time from Hamas, Hezbollah and other neighboring terrorist entities, not including chemical weapons from Syria or intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) from an Iran on the brink of nuclearization. To address this increasingly sophisticated and aggressive threat, Israel has deployed five batteries of Iron Dome, a short-range rocket interceptor developed by Israel and deployed with the help of U.S. funding. [Iron Dome](#) is a game changer, but it's just the beginning. The U.S. and Israel are co-producing two revolutionary systems – David's Sling and Arrow 3. David's Sling will be able to intercept short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, long-range rockets, and cruise missiles. Arrow 3 is an exo-atmospheric interceptor designed to catch missiles at high altitude to minimize leakage from chemical

or nuclear warheads. Arrow 3 completed its second successful flight test last month with an expected on-time deployment in the near future. This information is an update to the information contained in this week's [Sermon Tidbits](#). To subscribe to Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).

Israel Group in Talks to Export Natural Gas

A group of energy companies that discovered ample amounts of natural gas off Israel's Mediterranean coast are in talks to export gas to Turkey, Jordan and Egypt, according to [Reuters](#). A spokesman for Delek Group, Israel's dominant integrated energy company, said the group was in advanced discussions with companies in the three countries and the Palestinian Authority about building pipelines and buying gas. Israel already has one active pipeline to Egypt. According to estimates by the U.S. Geological Survey, there are 3.5 trillion cubic meters of recoverable gas in Israeli and Cypriot waters. The potential Israeli exports raise new prospects for significant economic growth, as well as reduced tensions between Israel and Turkey. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu estimated in June that Israel's government could receive \$60 billion in royalties from natural gas exports over the next two decades.

THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST

House Members Urge Qatar to Disassociate from Hamas

Two dozen members of the U.S. House of Representatives are urging the government of Qatar to [cut ties with Hamas](#), a U.S.-designated terrorist group based in the Gaza strip. A bipartisan letter drafted this week said that Qatar's relationship with Hamas "empowers, legitimizes and bolsters an organization committed to violence and hatred." Qatar reportedly pledged over \$400 million in subsidies to Hamas in October 2012 and planned to transport members of Hamas' military leadership to its capital in Doha. The United States has warned that these actions threaten to undermine American-Qatari relations. The House letter, spearheaded by Reps. John Barrow (D-GA) and Peter Roskam (R-IL), was sent to Qatar's ambassador to the U.S., Mohamed Bin Abdullah Al-Rumaihi. "Failure to condemn such brazen incitement undermines our shared interest of regional stability and prospects for a lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty," the letter said. "In the interest of maintaining strong U.S.-Qatari relations, we urge you to promptly address these serious allegations regarding your relationship with Hamas."

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Palestinians warn Israeli construction 'has a price'

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat warned the Israeli plan to build a new Jewish settlement in a predominantly Arab East Jerusalem neighborhood "has a price and that this price will continue to grow" if Israel proceeds with its settlement plans, which he said could sabotage peace talks resumed only last week in Washington. Talks are expected to continue next week in Jerusalem following Israeli government approval to release 26 Palestinian prisoners out of 104 it agreed to release in four stages during the talks. "Some people in Israel continue to believe that the endgame for negotiations should not be peace but rather further colonization," said Erekat. Another Palestinian official accused Israel of wanting to scuttle the U.S.-led peace efforts. This information is an update to the information contained in this week's [Sermon Tidbits](#). To subscribe to Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).