

The week ending December 27, 2013

IRAN

Rice: We Don't Want Iran to Have a Bomb

National Security Advisor Susan Rice told [60 Minutes](#) on Dec. 22 that the United States will not accept a bad nuclear deal with Iran. Rice also cautioned during the wide-ranging interview that sanctions will not be lifted without a mechanism to re-impose them if Iran violates a final agreement. "We will not construct a deal or accept a deal in which we cannot verify exactly what they are doing. And if they're caught we will insure that the pressure is re-imposed," Rice said. ". . . We do not want Iran to be not only to have a bomb, but be in a position to race towards a bomb undetected." This information is an update to the information contained in this week's [Sermon Tidbits](#). To subscribe to Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).

Pentagon Investigates Iran Sanctions Violations

The Pentagon is investigating a large military supplier for violating sanctions by transporting supplies through Iran, [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported. Anham FZCO, based in Dubai and Virginia, has an \$8 billion contract to supply water and food to U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Anham is alleged to have used supply routes and a port in Iran to move steel and heavy machinery into Afghanistan. Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) and Mark Kirk (R-IL) sent a letter to the Pentagon in October urging a probe into Anham's possible sanctions violations. "We request that you urgently look into this matter, verify the recent public reports surround Anham, make recommendations on what to do with Anham's existing U.S. government contracts and propose steps the department should take to ensure this does not happen again," Kirk and Ayotte stated. This information is an update to the information contained in this week's [Sermon Tidbits](#). To subscribe to Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).

THE U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Dozens of U.S. universities reject academic boycott of Israel

[The Washington Post](#) reported that dozens of American colleges and universities are rejecting an academic boycott of Israeli universities recently approved by the academic American Studies Association (ASA), the nation's oldest and largest association devoted to the interdisciplinary study of American culture and history. And a few schools said they are withdrawing from the organization. The ASA's membership—or, rather, 66.05 percent of the 1,252 votes that came in from the group's 5,000 members—approved the boycott last week over the objections of numerous former presidents of the organization. Schools including Johns Hopkins, Harvard, Yale, Cornell, Princeton and Boston universities and the Universities of Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Texas at Austin and others have slammed the boycott, issuing statements. Penn State University at Harrisburg and Brandeis University have said they are withdrawing their memberships from the ASA, and other schools are considering doing the same thing. In addition, the

Association of American Universities and the Association of American University Professors, have issued statements rejecting the boycott.

THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST

White House Condemns Syrian Civilian Casualties

The White House [condemned](#) Syrian government forces on Dec. 23 for recent civilian casualties in the country's civil war. The rebuke of Bashar al-Assad's forces came because of recent sustained attacks in Aleppo using SCUD missiles and barrel bombs. "The attacks over the weekend killed more than 300 people, many of them children" stated Jay Carney, White House press secretary. "The Syrian government must respect its obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population. The Syrian government must fulfill its November commitment to do more to facilitate the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance, so that millions of Syrian men, women, and children have access to urgently needed services." Barrel bombs are oil drums filled with explosives and shrapnel.

Egypt designates Muslim Brotherhood as terrorist group

The Egyptian [formally listed](#) the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization after accusing the group of carrying out a suicide bomb attack on a police station that killed 16 people. The move marked a major escalation in the army-backed government's campaign to suppress the Islamist movement that propelled Mohamed Morsi to the presidency 18 months ago but has been driven underground since the army toppled him in July. It gives the authorities the power to charge any member of the Brotherhood with belonging to a terrorist group, as well as anyone who finances the group or promotes it "verbally, or in writing". "This is a turning point in the confrontation. This is an important tool for the government to close any door in the face of the Brotherhood's return to political life," said Khalil al-Anani, a Washington-based expert on the movement. The Brotherhood condemned the attack on Tuesday in the Nile Delta city of Mansoura, north of Cairo. Earlier on Wednesday, a Sinai-based militant group, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, had claimed responsibility for the attack that wounded some 140 people.

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

String of Palestinian attacks has Israel jittery

A spate of violent Palestinian attacks on Israeli targets in recent weeks is raising concerns in Israel that it may be on the verge of a new type of Palestinian uprising. According to the [Associated Press](#), in contrast to previous waves of Palestinian violence, the recent incidents do not appear to be an organized effort by militant groups but rather a collection of individual acts. After years of relative quiet, Israel's Shin Bet security service has reported a steady rise in attacks since Israeli and Palestinian peace negotiators resumed peace talks in July. In November, for instance, there were 167 attacks in Jerusalem and the West Bank, compared to 136 in October, the agency said. The Palestinians say the current climate is a result of brewing frustrations over the perceived lack of progress in peace talks. "Politically, there is no sign of any hope and on the economic side there is no sign too," said Jihad Harb, a Palestinian commentator. Israeli leaders believe the Palestinians are spreading hatred. "The terrorist attacks against Israelis over the last few days are a direct result of the incitement and hatred propagated in Palestinian schools and media," said Mark Regev, a spokesman for Netanyahu. "We are disappointed that so far President (Mahmoud) Abbas has not condemned these acts of terrorism as one would expect from a partner in peace talks.