

The week ending June 14, 2013

IRAN

U.S. Hardens Tone toward Iran as Election Nears

The Obama administration has sharply [increased its economic and diplomatic pressure](#) on Iran's rulers in recent weeks in a bid to shape how the country's presidential election on Friday is viewed both in and outside the country. The highly public and critical U.S. strategy marks a sharp break from its approach toward Iran's last presidential election, in 2009, when the White House was focused on talks with Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the Iranian government to curb its nuclear program. This year, American diplomats are publicly questioning the credibility of the June 14 election, which will elect a successor to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, especially after two prominent politicians were banned by the government from participating. The Treasury Department, meanwhile, has sought to aid the ability of the Iranian government's critics to communicate by dialing back restrictions on certain software and telecommunications equipment entering Iran. The U.S. has also intensified its financial war on Tehran in recent weeks by seeking to ban the use of Iran's currency, the rial, internationally and sanctioning companies that allegedly laundered billions of dollars on behalf of Mr. Khamenei. This information is an update to the information contained in this week's [Sermon Tidbits](#). To subscribe to Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).

Google Says It Has Uncovered Iranian Spy Campaign

Google uncovered a vast Iranian spy campaign that had been targeting tens of thousands of Iranian citizens over the last three weeks, [The New York Times](#) reported. "These campaigns, which originate from within Iran, represent a significant jump in the overall volume of phishing activity in the region," the company said in a blog post. "The timing and targeting of the campaigns suggest that the attacks are politically motivated in connection with the Iranian presidential election on Friday." The surveillance campaign is just the latest evidence that political groups are increasingly using digital means to keep tabs on their opposition. Google would not say how it had traced the current spy campaign to Iran because it did not want to tip off attackers. It did say, however, that it was confident the attackers were the same ones behind a sophisticated attack in 2011 on DigiNotar, a Dutch company that sells certificates that validate the security of a Web site. By compromising the certificate authority, the attackers were able to intercept users' Web traffic and compromise their computers.

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Gaza kids play 'kidnap Israeli soldier' in summer camp

In a somewhat unorthodox [summer camp in the Gaza Strip](#), Islamic Jihad has invited thousands of children aged between 6 and 16 to pick up an AK-47 and engage in a series of quasi-military drills and lively games including "kidnap an Israeli soldier" in the

sand dunes of Rafah. An AFP correspondent listed some of the activities the Islamic Jihad summer camp offers its enrollees: Weapons use, jumping over fire and crawling under barbed wire, all performed to the tune of exploding charges. Photographs of these drills were taken and one of the pictures shows young boys dragging a Khaki-clad doll away from an Israeli flag, in what appears to be a re-enactment of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit being kidnapped in 2006. The camp organizers expect up to 10,000 Palestinian children to participate this summer. This information is an update to the information contained in this week's [Sermon Tidbits](#). To subscribe to Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).

GREATER MIDDLE EAST

Syrian Death Toll Approaches 93,000, U.N. Says

Navi Pillay, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights said [92,901 killings have been documented](#) since the violence began. "The constant flow of killings continues at shockingly high levels," Pillay said in a statement in Geneva, "with more than 5,000 killings documented every month since last July, including a total of just under 27,000 new killings since Dec. 1." Pillay said, "This extremely high rate of killings, month after month, reflects the drastically deteriorating pattern of the conflict over the past year" and that the killings of "at least 6,561 minors, including at least 1,729 children under 10 years old" were documented. The statement also revealed that there were "well-documented cases of individual children being tortured and executed, and entire families, including babies, being massacred—which, along with this devastatingly high death toll, is a terrible reminder of just how vicious this conflict has become."

Erdogan pushes protesters out of Istanbul square

After more than a day of chaotic clashes, Taksim Square was largely cleared of protesters, with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan taking harsh action against the demonstrations that have created the biggest crisis in his 10 years in power. [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported, Erdogan was scheduled to meet with a select group of protesters, but in the day leading up to the meeting riot police swept into Taksim Square, using vast clouds of tear gas and water cannons to clear away thousands of protesters who had gathered there to protest what they say are encroachments on their personal liberties. The central Istanbul square had largely shut to traffic since May 31, when major protests started, but police cleared away barricades the protesters had erected and stripped a central monument of revolutionary banners that had covered it.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Google buys Israel's Waze to keep mobile maps lead

Google Inc. bought Israeli mapping startup Waze on Tuesday for just over \$1 billion. According to [Reuters](#), maps and navigation services have become vital for technology companies as consumers adopt smartphones and other mobile devices. Waze uses satellite signals from members' smartphones to generate maps and traffic data, which it then shares with other users, offering real-time traffic info. Waze's product development team will remain in Israel and operate separately for now, Google said. Eventually, its service will also serve to enhance the U.S. company's Maps app, while the core Waze product itself will benefit from integrating Google-search capabilities. Google's acquisition ranks among the largest purchases of an Internet company this year as technology deals begin to heat up. Last month, Yahoo Inc. closed a \$1.1 billion acquisition of blogging service Tumblr.