

The week ending November 1, 2013

IRAN

Iran: We will keep enriching uranium to 20 percent

Recently an influential Iranian lawmaker commented that Iran had voluntarily halted its production of 20 percent uranium. Yet, according to the Islamic Republic's top nuclear official Iran has never stopped enriching, [The Times of Israel](#) reported. "20 percent uranium and nuclear plates are being produced inside the country and there has never been a halt in the production trend," said Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization. "No stop has occurred in the process of the production and it never stopped before," he continued. Despite engaging in negotiations over its disputed nuclear program, Salehi added that Iran will continue to defy the West by maintaining the pace of its enrichment program." This information is an update to the information contained in this week's [Sermon Tidbits](#). To subscribe to Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).

Dual Citizen Caught Trying to Sell 200 Missiles to Iran

An Iranian-American has been accused of [violating U.S. sanctions](#) for trying to supply the Iranian government with banned weaponry. The U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan on Oct. 25 charged Reza Olangian with attempting to buy at least 200 surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and spare aircraft parts from an undercover DEA agent. Olangian, who had tried this scheme before, was arrested in Estonia in October 2012 as part of the operation, and extradited to the United States this March. According to the charging document, "Following his arrest, Olangian stated, among other things, that he had been working with Iranian government officials; that the SAMs he had arranged to purchase were being obtained for the Iranian government; and that the aircraft parts he attempted to acquire were to be used in Iranian military aircraft."

Congress is not convinced to delay new Iran sanctions

Republican and Democrat key lawmakers have not yet been convinced to [delay new sanctions](#) aimed at ending Iran's nuclear program. Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL), a member of the banking panel opposed any further delay. "Every day the Senate delays consideration of new sanctions, Iran installs more centrifuges, enriches more uranium and improves its nuclear breakout capability," he said. International talks over Iran's nuclear program restarted this month and the P5+1 will meet again November 7-8 in Geneva. Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) has pledged to continue sanctions pressure on Iran until it verifiably abandons its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Menendez, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told a group of real estate investors on Oct. 28 that now is not the time to remove sanctions against the Islamic regime. "The leaders in Iran act out of necessity, not goodwill, and ultimately their calculation is political," Menendez said. "The question they are asking is, has our economy, and the day-to-day purchase power of ordinary Iranians, eroded to a point where our political lives—and the future of our revolution—are at risk? And bear in mind that making a deal with the West,

specifically with the United States, for the hardliners in Iran is synonymous with the end of the revolution.”

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Abbas greets 21 convicted murderers as veteran heroes

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said that there would be no peace agreement with Israel as long as a single Palestinian remained in Israeli prison, [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported. Abbas personally greeted 21 convicted murderers back to the West Bank on Wednesday, calling the prisoners “veteran heroes who were behind bars and have now entered the world of freedom.” Abbas said that the third batch of prisoners would be released after two months. “Now we are talking about 104 prisoners,” he added. “But our joy would not be complete unless all the prisoners are released.” Israel, meanwhile, was angered and concerned by the celebrations that greeted the freed terrorists in Ramallah. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s spokesman Mark Regev condemned the Palestinian celebrations. “I would ask the Palestinians what message they are sending to us when they celebrate their murderers, when they put them on a pedestal,” he said. “And what is the message they are sending to Palestinian youth if they turn these people into heroes?”

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Turkey’s Zorlu in talks on Israeli gas

Turkey’s Zorlu Energy has begun talks with Israeli firms over the potential for a [gas pipeline](#) to be built between the two countries. Israel is set to become a gas exporter by the end of the decade after the discovery of two major offshore fields, Leviathan and Tamar, off its Mediterranean coast. Turkey is looking to diversify away from expensive Russian gas and could become a customer as well as providing a transit route to other markets, particularly Europe. “Turkey is a very suitable route for Israeli gas. I can even say it is the most suitable,” said Omer Yungul, chief executive of the Turkish energy group. With Israel set to become a gas exporter following the discovery of the Leviathan and Tamar fields in the Mediterranean, Turkish firms are increasingly eager to develop the pipeline project. Political tensions between the two countries, however, remain an impediment to the plans.

THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST

Syria meets deadline for chemical production facilities

[Reuters](#) reported that Syria has met a major deadline in its disarmament program by destroying or rendering inoperable all of its declared chemical weapons production and mixing facilities. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which won the Nobel Peace prize this month, said its teams had inspected 21 out of 23 chemical weapons sites across the country. The remaining two were too dangerous to reach for inspection but the chemical equipment had already been moved to other sites that experts had visited, it said. Syria “has completed the functional destruction of critical equipment for all of its declared chemical weapons production facilities and mixing/filling plants, rendering them inoperable,” it said, meeting a November 1 deadline for the work. The next target date is November 15, by when the OPCW and Syria must agree to a detailed plan of destruction, including how and where to destroy more than 1,000 metric tons of toxic agents and munitions.