

The week ending October 18, 2013

IRAN

Iran nuclear talks get under way in Geneva

Iran and a group of six world powers known as the P5+1 engaged in “substantive” and “forward-looking” discussions on the disputed Iranian nuclear program and planned to meet again in early November. [The New York Times](#) reported, the meeting was the first between Iran and the P5+1 since Iranian President Hassan Rouhani took office in August. Despite the many obstacles, American officials highlighted the positive tone of the meeting including the straightforward, candid conversations with the Iranian delegation. “This is a beginning. Beginnings are rarely groundbreaking because you are putting pieces on the table.” said a senior Obama administration official. Prior to the talks in Geneva, a bipartisan group of senate leaders wrote President Obama supporting efforts to explore a diplomatic opening with Iran, but emphasized that Iran must match its rhetoric with actions. This information is an update to the information contained in this week’s [Sermon Tidbits](#). To subscribe to Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).

Major Israeli Air Force exercise enters second week

A major Israeli Airforce (IAF) exercise continued this week in Israeli skies, where jets simulated a variety of battle scenarios. According to [The Jerusalem Post](#), the drills began last week with a simulation of long-distance strikes to prepare squadrons for the possibility of attacking Iran’s nuclear facilities. Should Israel strike nuclear sites in Iran, defense observers widely assume the IAF would also have to focus its efforts on squelching rocket attacks from Tehran’s proxy in Lebanon, Hezbollah, which could target air bases. Last week the army issued some of its most explicit warnings over the Islamic Republic’s nuclear program to date. “When one mentions that ‘all options are on the table,’ it’s clear that military operations are also being talked about,” the IDF Spokesman’s Office said. “The air force, which is the IDF’s long arm, is responsible for realizing this option if necessary, and to that end squadrons are practicing and strengthening the full range of their abilities, including long-range flights.”

THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST

Turkey reportedly leaks Israeli intelligence to Iran

The Turkish government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan divulged to Iran the identities of as many as 10 Iranian spies for Israel who met with their Mossad handlers in Turkey, according to the Washington Post. David Ignatius, an Opinion writer for the newspaper, [disclosed the incident](#) in a column published Thursday. He said it occurred last year and is now being reported for the first time. Ignatius cited what he called knowledgeable sources as saying the leak was a “significant” loss of intelligence and “an effort to slap the Israelis.” He said U.S. officials are not sure whether the intelligence exposure was in retaliation for the Gaza flotilla attack or just a sign of deteriorating

relations between Turkey and Israel. Israel, which Ignatius said has been cooperating with Turkish intelligence in secret for more than 50 years, does not trust Turkish intelligence chief Hakan Fidan because of his ties with Iran, even as the United States deals with him on sensitive matters.

Syria inspectors plan to disable all equipment by deadline

Inspectors overseeing the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons program say they are on track to meet a Nov. 1 deadline for disabling production equipment. [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported that the 27 inspectors in Syria have visited 11 of the more than 20 chemical weapons sites disclosed by the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, according to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)—which last week won the Nobel Peace Prize. On Oct. 12, “a number of vehicle-borne explosive devices went off,” said Malik Ellahi, a political adviser to the OPCW's director-general. That was followed by mortar firings. “Naturally this is a matter of concern for us, but the team remains determined and the morale is very high,” Ellahi said. OPCW officials entered Syria on Oct. 1 with the cooperation of Syrian officials and the goal of verifying the regime's chemical weapons disclosure and eliminating all equipment by the end of the month. Roughly halfway through October, about 50 percent of that work is done, officials said. The next step for the OPCW will be the intricate task of supervising the destruction of the weapons stockpile itself, estimated at roughly 1,000 tons.

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Hamas' 'terror tunnel' and Israel's tool that found it

According to [The Times of Israel](#), the tunnel stretching from the outskirts of Khan Yunis to the fields of Kibbutz Ein Hashlosha was meant to facilitate a complex terror attack involving an assault on soldiers or civilians, with the intention of seizing a captive Israeli and holding him or her as a bargaining chip. Senior Hamas official Moussa Abu Marzouk confirmed this two days after Israeli authorities revealed their discovery. The Ein Hashlosha tunnel, which was discovered on October 7 and revealed to the public on October 13, was 20 meters at its deepest. The tunnel was discovered by using technology developed by Israeli researchers Asaf Klar and Raphael Linker, both of the Technion Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering. They developed a system based on fiber-optic cables that can detect a tunnel at a depth of more than 20 meters. The system forms an underground fence that could “analyze the tunneling-induced changes in the optical fiber,” according to the Technion's literature, and, on the basis of computer software models, pinpoint the location of the tunnel.

THE U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Israel to make helmets for U.S. F-35 fighter

Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon [said](#) in a statement that Elbit Systems and its U.S. partner Rockwell Collins have been chosen by the Pentagon and F35 manufacturer Lockheed Martin to supply helmets for the next generation of the Joint Strike Fighter, the hi-tech warplane that is supposed to serve as the backbone of future American air power. “I congratulate Elbit Systems on becoming a partner in this global flagship project to produce the world's most advanced warplane,” Yaalon said. Yaalon said that state-owned Israel Military Industries is already part of the F-35 project, for which it manufactures aircraft parts. “The choice of Elbit Systems to produce the pilots' helmets is a vote of confidence in Israel's defense industries and their people,” he added.