

The week ending July 25, 2014

ISRAEL & THE PALESTINIANS

The U.S. Should Push for the Disarming of Hamas in Gaza-Israel Cease-Fire

In an editorial [The Washington Post](#) suggests that the distinguishing feature of the latest war between Israel and Hamas is “offensive tunnels,” as the Israeli army calls them. As of early Wednesday, 28 had been uncovered in Gaza, and nearly half extend into Israel, according to Israeli officials. The tunnels are the reason that the government of Benjamin Netanyahu decided last weekend to launch a ground invasion of Gaza, and they explain why that operation has strong support from Israelis in spite of the relatively heavy casualties it has inflicted. Most significantly, the tunnels show why it has been difficult to reach a cease-fire and why any accord must forge a new political and security order in Gaza. The newly discovered structures have only one conceivable purpose: to launch attacks inside Israel. Three times in recent days, Hamas fighters emerged from the tunnels in the vicinity of Israeli civilian communities, which they clearly aimed to attack. The concrete-lined structures are stocked with materials, such as handcuffs and tranquilizers, which could be used on hostages. One was found underneath al-Wafa hospital, where Hamas also located a command post and stored weapons, according to Israeli officials. There they continue to reject cease-fire proposals, instead outlining a long list of unacceptable demands.

Secretary of State John F. Kerry, the Egyptian government and other “would-be brokers” are right to seek a cease-fire, but they should reject Hamas’s agenda. Instead, any political accord should come after a cease-fire and be negotiated with the Palestinian leadership of Mahmoud Abbas. It should link opening of the borders and other economic concessions to the return to Gaza of the security forces of the Palestinian Authority, the disarmament of Hamas and elections for a new government. In setting such conditions, international mediators will likely have the quiet support of most of Gaza’s population. Polls show that they are fed up with Hamas’s rule and with its use of women and children as cannon fodder in unwinnable wars with Israel. The next government of Gaza should be one that invests in schools, health clinics and houses, not in tunnels.

Under Rocket Fire from Gaza, Israeli Humanitarian Aid Continues

According to the [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), despite the constant fire into Israel, the Kerem Shalom crossing remains open during Operation Protective Edge and the flow of goods and fuel into the Gaza Strip continues. Medicines and medical equipment have passed continuously as well through the two crossings. The IDF acceded to the request of hundreds of Palestinians who hold foreign citizenship to leave the Gaza Strip. The Erez Crossing in northern Gaza also remains open to Palestinians pedestrians for humanitarian cases. General Yoav Mordechai, Coordinator for Government Activities in

the Territories, noted that terrorist organizations daily attack the crossing through which Israel allowed trucks carrying supplies to enter the Gaza Strip. The IDF, in cooperation with the Red Crescent, has opened a field hospital at the Erez Crossing, on the Gaza border, to treat wounded Palestinians from the Gaza Strip. The field hospital contains an emergency room, lab, pharmacy, pediatric ward, ambulatory clinic, gynecology unit, family and internal medicine, and is equipped to treat dozens of patients.

For the latest information on the situation in Israel please click [here](#).

HEZBOLLAH

House votes to toughen sanctions on Hezbollah

[The Hill](#) blog posted that, the U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday passed legislation to impose further sanctions on extremist group Hezbollah's foreign assets. Passing 404-0, the measure would slap sanctions on Hezbollah's foreign assets, international narcotics trafficking rings and its television station, Al-Manar. "Today, we have an opportunity to place a critical blow to Hezbollah," said the bill's sponsor, Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.). "We must pass this legislation to make sure that we can do it, to cripple their ability to finance and put people out of harm's way." Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, argued that crippling sanctions on Hezbollah could help bring the group to the negotiating table. He pointed to the ongoing negotiations with Iran over its nuclear arsenal, arguing that the talks began because of international sanctions. "This can be done with Hezbollah. This is what we're trying to do today," Engel said.

IRAN

IAEA Worried about Slow Progress in Iran Nuclear Probe: sources

The U.N. nuclear watchdog is concerned about Iran's current lack of engagement with an investigation into its suspected atomic bomb research, reports [Reuters](#). Western officials want Iran to address questions by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on allegations of past efforts to develop a nuclear weapons capability. Under a phased cooperation pact hammered out late last year, an attempt to jumpstart the long-stalled IAEA investigation, Iran agreed two months ago to implement five nuclear transparency measures by Aug. 25, two of which directly dealt with the nuclear bomb inquiry. However, so far there appears to have been little - if any - movement by Iran to engage on them, the sources said on condition of anonymity. U.S. officials say it is vital for Iran to address the IAEA's suspicions if the parallel negotiations between Tehran and the United States, France, Germany, Britain, China and Russia on a long-term deal to end the dispute are to succeed. The IAEA's inquiry focuses specifically on what it calls the possible military dimensions (PMD) of Iran's atomic activities. After years of what the West saw as Iranian stonewalling, Iran gave the IAEA information it had requested as to the purpose in developing Exploding Bridge Wire detonators, which can be used to set off an atomic explosive device. Iran says it was for civilian use. A U.S. official described the IAEA's investigation as one among "very difficult subjects" in the Iran nuclear diplomacy. "Achieving an Iranian confession of past sins is not going to happen," Greg Thielmann, a senior fellow at the Arms Control Association research and advocacy group, said. Instead, the focus should be on "strict limits on Iran's nuclear capability and intrusive" monitoring, he added.