

The week ending March 28, 2014

IRAN

Iran Buying Banned Nuclear and Missile Program Parts

Iran was caught buying banned parts for its nuclear and missile programs even though it agreed to halt such actions. Vann Van Diepen, the State Department's principal deputy assistant secretary for international security and nonproliferation, said in an interview with [Reuters](#) that a Chinese businessman has continued to supply Iran with missile parts despite attempts by China and the United States to stop this activity. "We continue to see [Iran] very actively setting up and operating through front companies, falsifying documentation, engaging in multiple levels of trans-shipment...to put more apparent distance between where the item originally came from and where it is ultimately going," said Van Diepen. This latest development comes as Iran is in negotiations with world powers to reduce sanctions, which have crippled its economy, in exchange for abandoning its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

THE U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Israel, Greek and U.S. Navies Kick Off Annual Med Sea Drill

According to [Defense News](#), Israeli, Greek and US military personnel are slated to meet in Crete to kick off Noble Dina 2014, a two-week, trilateral exercise in the Mediterranean Sea. This year's annual multimission drill, the fourth conducted by the three nations, will involve hundreds of military personnel deployed on advanced surface ships, air assets and submarines, Navy sources here said. The Israel Navy's Snapir Unit, a relatively new and highly specialized force trained for persistent surface and underwater port security, will support the newest element of the drill scheduled for later this week at a Cretan port. Noble Dina is the result of routine cooperation among the three navies and many months of focused planning. "It's a long, complex and extremely substantive exercise aimed at enhancing the already significant coordination and interoperability among the three navies," said Rear Adm. Yaron Levi, chief of staff of the Israel Navy.

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Arab League backs refusal to recognize Jewish state

Arab leaders fully back a Palestinian refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, an Israeli demand that threatens to derail peace talks, a joint statement said on Wednesday according to [The Times of Israel](#). "We express our total rejection of the call to consider Israel as a Jewish state," said the final declaration of the two-day Arab summit in Kuwait. The move was widely expected after a draft statement endorsed by foreign ministers on Sunday stressed a "categorical rejection" of the demand for recognition of Israel as a Jewish state and rejected "all pressures exerted on the Palestinian leadership" to agree

to that demand. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has made recognition of Israel as a Jewish state a central demand in peace talks.

THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST

Egypt's Sisi declares intent to run for presidency

[The New York Times](#) reports that Abdul-Fattah el-Sisi, the defense minister and military officer who led last summer's takeover of the elected government in Egypt, formally announced on Wednesday that he was resigning from the army and running for president, taking a critical step in his consolidation of power. "It is true this is my last day in uniform but I will fight every day for Egypt free of fear and terror," Sisi said, alluding to the military-led government's continuing battles against the attacks launched by Islamist militants and street protesters. "Not only Egypt but the whole region, I repeat what I have said before: 'we'd rather die before Egyptians are terrorized.'" Sisi, who held the rank of Field Marshal, is expected to win the election. He has been the government's pre-eminent decision-maker since he led the ouster of President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, on July 3. Sisi faces enormous challenges, including a stagnant economy, widespread labor unrest, a wave of terrorist attacks, and ongoing street protests against the takeover.

U.N. Report Faults Syria and Rebels for Blocking Relief

A month after the Security Council ordered warring parties in Syria to let aid workers into besieged areas and stop indiscriminate attacks on civilians, the office of the United Nations secretary general says that the Syrian government continues to delay or ignore requests for access and that relentless fighting among opposition groups has also kept many areas of the country inaccessible, reports [The New York Times](#). The findings are part of a 14-page report documenting the response of the Syrian government and its rivals to the Council's Feb. 22 resolution. The document is likely to spur fierce arguments among the members of the deeply divided Council over who is to blame, but it is unlikely to result in any immediate enforcement measures. Food rations have been held up at government checkpoints; medicines have been removed from aid trucks; visas are held up for United Nations officials; and a hard-won agreement to let aid through the land border from Turkey ran into trouble when customs officials at the border said they had not received a green light from Damascus.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Rolling Stones Officially Confirmed for Show in Israel

Ignoring calls by BDS supporters, the Rolling Stones officially announced a June 5 show in Tel Aviv as part of the their "14 on Fire" world tour, [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported. "It's the first time in 35 years that I have no words to describe the enormity of this event," said producer Shuki Weiss, who has been trying to get the renowned band to Israel for much of his career. "This is emotional, even for me, and I've been doing this a long time," said Weiss. "Summer 2014 is lining up to be a great summer of biggie performances, with Neil Young, the Pixies, Soundgarden, and this is the cherry on top." The Tel Aviv concert will be the Stones only show in the Middle East.