

The week ending May 16, 2014

IRAN

U.N. nuclear probe of Iran reaches deadline, no sign of breakthrough

According to [Reuters](#), the U.N. nuclear watchdog declined to say whether Iran had met a deadline on Thursday for starting to address suspicions it may have carried out atomic weapons research, adding to signs of limited progress so far. Under a cooperation pact agreed to between the two sides in November, Iran was to implement seven transparency steps by May 15 to help allay international concern about its disputed nuclear program, which the West fears may have military ends. On the most sensitive of those--for Iran to provide information about detonators that can, among other things, be used to set off an atomic explosive device--diplomats have said the U.N. atomic agency was seeking further clarification. How Iran responds to questions about so-called Explosive Bridge Wire detonators is seen as a litmus test of its readiness to begin cooperating with a long-stonewalled investigation into what the Vienna-based U.N. body calls the possible military dimensions (PMD) of the country's nuclear program. Iran denies Western allegations that it has been seeking to develop the capability to make nuclear weapons but has offered to work with the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to resolve its concerns.

This article expands upon the information contained in last week's Sermon Tidbits. To view the original article click [here](#).

U.S. – ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Hagel lands in Israel to talk Syria, missile defense

[The Times of Israel reports](#) U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel arrived in Israel Wednesday night for two days of meetings with officials. Senior Defense Ministry official Amos Gilad received Hagel at Ben-Gurion Airport, as did U.S. ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro. The Pentagon chief is due to meet with President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon. Hagel is on a week-long trip to the region. Before landing in Israel, he attended a meeting of the U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council in Saudi Arabia, and then flew to Jordan to discuss Eager Lion, an upcoming military exercise. "This trip will be the secretary's third to the Middle East in just over a year, and it will advance America's regional strategy in that region," Pentagon press secretary Rear Admiral John Kirby said last week. In Israel, Hagel will discuss efforts to bolster Jerusalem's rocket and missile defenses, Kirby said. He is also expected to discuss volatile situations on Israel's border, including Syria and Egypt. The tour is part of "our effort to work in a coordinated manner with allies and partners across the region to address common security challenges," according to the press secretary.

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Netanyahu to Abbas: Dissolve Pact with Hamas and Resume Peace Negotiations with Israel

[According to the Jerusalem Post](#) Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said in comments published Wednesday that if Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas tears up his pact with Hamas, "then it will open the way for somehow resuming the peace negotiations" with Israel. Netanyahu's words, in an interview during his visit to Tokyo with the Japanese newspaper Mainichi Shimbun, came on the day that Abbas met in London with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. This was their first meeting since Abbas surprised the U.S. and Israel and announced a unity pact with Hamas, leading Israel to suspend the talks just a week before the expiration of their nine-month deadline. Netanyahu said that while Palestinian "national unity for peace is good, a pact with Hamas, which openly calls for our destruction and practices terror against our people – that's bad." The prime minister said that he was asked by Kerry whether he would make a peace agreement with a Palestinian Authority that doesn't govern all the Palestinian people, adding that "I said 'yes,' because I will make peace with that part of the Palestinian people that is prepared to live in peace with the State of Israel." Netanyahu said he hopes Abbas "dissolves" his pact with Hamas. "But if he establishes a government of national unity, and [if] Hamas continues to fire rockets to Israel, then we'll have to hold President Abbas responsible. It just doesn't make sense for him to [forge] this pact if he wants peace." Asked what would happen if Hamas accepted the quartet's conditions for engagement and renounced terrorism, recognized Israel and accepted previous agreements, Netanyahu said "that would obviously be an entirely different situation, but unfortunately I don't see it happening. They're very ideological, very militant and very extreme, and they show no signs of such change."

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

'Homeland' co-creator wants Israel to be prime spot for U.S. TV shows

[Reuters](#) reports the Israeli co-creator of the hit spy thriller television series "Homeland" believes his native country should become a prime location for U.S. television shows about the Middle East and is working hard to make this happen. Writer-director Gideon Raff is at the helm of the Fox drama "Tyrant" and the NBC-Universal archeological mystery "The Dig", two U.S. productions under way simultaneously in Israel--a first for the country's small but active entertainment industry. Until a decade ago, Israel was shunned by foreign studios for fear of suicide bombings during a Palestinian uprising. But with the violence now abated and many neighboring Arab states riven by strife, Israeli facilities enjoy a new appeal. "To concoct the Middle East in Los Angeles you have to spend a lot of money. You need to get the cars, the attire and the faces right," Raff said in an interview at his Tel Aviv office, its walls festooned with actors' headshots and storyboards. "The Middle East is not just a desert, and Americans are increasingly sophisticated and expect a show set outside the United States to have been shot outside of the United States." He gave, as an example, the experience of filming in Jaffa, an Arab district of Tel Aviv, where "the moment you set up, everything you get on camera is worth millions of dollars."