



Rabbinic Recap

The week ending May 23, 2014

U.S. – ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

‘Juniper Cobra’: The Next Chapter in U.S.-Israel Military Cooperation

In yet another example of the close collaboration between the United States and Israel, the two allies partnered in a missile defense training exercise to protect against large-scale missile and rocket attacks. More than 6,000 American military personnel participated in this summer’s joint military drills, dubbed Juniper Cobra. The joint anti-missile drill has been conducted every two years since 2001 and includes five days of measuring military efficacy in countering rocket and missile attacks. The U.S. troops engaged in the exercises both on the ground in Israel, and remotely from European Command. Two U.S. Navy ships equipped with the Aegis Combat System—technology used to intercept incoming missiles from the water—also took part in the drills from the Mediterranean Sea. American-Israeli military cooperation has become increasingly vital to both countries in recent years. With the Jewish state surrounded by enemies possessing more than 200,000 rockets and missiles, the threat of a unified aerial attack poses a significant danger to Israel. Juniper Cobra was conducted to help negate this threat by improving Israel’s preparedness and coordination with the U.S. military to bolster its missile defense capabilities. U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel spoke about the training maneuvers while in Israel earlier this month. “The exercises will employ Israel’s entire rocket and ballistic missile architecture, including Iron Dome, Arrow, and David’s Sling—assets that the United States is proud to have helped Israel finance and develop,” he said. In remarks delivered to the American and Israeli personnel partaking in the mission, Hagel alluded to the importance of a robust bilateral partnership to combat the threats facing America’s strongest ally.

Shimon Peres to Receive Congressional Gold Medal

Just one month before retiring from his distinguished post as President of the State of Israel, and after decades of public service to the Jewish state, Shimon Peres will be awarded the highest civilian honor (along with the Presidential Medal of Freedom) given by the United States—the Congressional Gold Medal. Both chambers of the U.S. Congress granted Peres the acclaimed distinction by unanimous consent. A House bill sponsored by Reps. Trent Franks (R-AZ) and Joe Kennedy (D-MA) was approved on May 19, while its companion bill in the Senate, sponsored by Sens. Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), passed last March. Both bills honor the legacy of Shimon Peres by underscoring the beneficial influence that the Israeli president has had on the Jewish state and its robust partnership with the United States. “By presenting the Congressional Gold Medal to Shimon Peres, the first to be awarded to a sitting President of Israel, Congress proclaims its unbreakable bond with Israel and reaffirms its continual support for Israel as we commemorate the 66th anniversary of the independence of Israel and the 90th birthday of Shimon Peres, which are both significant milestones in

Israeli history," the House bill reads. The legislation's sponsors lauded President Peres on his lifetime achievements for the State of Israel and for the U.S.-Israel alliance. "For over 70 years, President Shimon Peres has dedicated himself to the enduring bond that unites Israel and the United States," said Congressman Kennedy. "There has been no greater champion for our shared values and defender of our shared interests." Kennedy's co-sponsor, Rep. Franks, offered similar appreciation. "President Shimon Peres has embodied a commitment to the mutual values shared by the United States and Israel—values that include the preservation of life, faith, family and freedom," Franks said.

IRAN

Hagel Says U.S. Won't Let Iran Build Nuclear Weapon

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel pledged to Israeli leaders on May 16 that the U.S. "will do what we must" to prevent the Jewish state's greatest fear of a nuclear-armed Iran. "I want to assure you of the United States' commitment to ensuring Iran does not get a nuclear weapon—and that America will do what we must to live up to that commitment," Hagel said. "We must not let the ayatollahs win, we mustn't let the foremost terrorist state of our time, Iran, develop the capability to produce nuclear weapons," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.

Iranians arrested for 'Happy' video freed: social media

[Reuters](#) reports that Six Iranians arrested for appearing in a video singing along to an American pop song were released on Wednesday, one day after being detained for what police called their "obscene" behavior, one of them said in an online posting. In the clip, the three women and three men dance and lip synch to Pharrell Williams' "Happy", imitating the official video of the international hit. The women are not wearing headscarves, as demanded by Iran's Islamic law. Their arrest caused outrage among fans of the song—a catchy anthem about feeling happy who took to social media to denounce what they saw as a heavy-handed response by the Islamic Republic to a piece of harmless fun. Pharrell Williams himself criticized the arrests. "It's beyond sad these kids were arrested for trying to spread happiness," he tweeted on Tuesday. The incident has highlighted the struggle between Iran's conservatives and those who hope President Hassan Rouhani, who has eased the country's antagonistic stance with the West, might also relax the Islamic Republic's social strictures. Iran's state-run TV broadcast a program on Tuesday, apparently showing the six expressing regrets. "They had promised us not to publish the video," said one of the women. Tehran's police chief, Hossein Sajedinia, said he had ordered the arrest of the six youngsters because they had helped create an "obscene video clip that offended the public morals and was released in cyberspace," the ISNA news agency said. A source close to the six said they had been released on bail.