



Rabbinic Recap

The week ending December 4, 2015

IRAN

Nuclear Agency Says Iran Worked on Weapons Design Until 2009

Iran was actively designing a nuclear weapon until 2009, more recently than the United States and other Western intelligence agencies have publicly acknowledged, according to a final report by the United Nations nuclear inspection agency. The report, based on partial answers Iran provided after reaching its nuclear accord with the West in July, concluded that Tehran conducted “computer modeling of a nuclear explosive device” before 2004. It then resumed the efforts during President Bush’s second term and continued them into President Obama’s first year in office. Tehran gave no substantive answers to one quarter of the dozen specific questions or documents it was asked about, leaving open the question of how much progress it had made. According to [The New York Times](#), the report, titled “Final Assessment of Past and Present Outstanding Issues Regarding Iran’s Nuclear Program,” will not satisfy either critics of the nuclear deal or those seeking exoneration for Iran. Instead, it draws a picture of a nation that was actively exploring the technologies, and testing components that would be needed to produce a weapon someday.

U.S. – ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

President Obama Signs Defense Bill into Law, Includes Key Pro-Israel Provisions

On Nov. 25, President Barack Obama signed into law the [FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act \(NDAA\)](#), which includes substantial U.S.-Israel cooperative missile defense funding. Earlier that month, the Senate voted 91-3 and the House of Representatives voted 370-58 to approve the measure. Overall, the NDAA authorizes \$474 million for U.S.-Israel missile and rocket defense programs.

The legislation also authorizes \$25 million in research and development funding to develop a new, joint U.S.-Israel anti-tunneling defense program, which could be used to protect Israel and U.S. forces from terrorist attacks. In addition, the bill requires a report on the military power of Iran and expresses the sense of Congress that Iran continues to conduct a range of malign activities that threaten U.S. national security interests. The authorization is part of a two-step process. The actual funding will be allocated through an appropriations bill, which is expected to be voted on before the end of the year.

BIRD Energy to invest \$5.1 million in U.S.-Israeli Projects

The U.S. Department of Energy and Israel’s Ministry of National Infrastructure, Energy and Water Resources have selected six energy projects to receive \$5.1 million under the 2015

Binational Industrial Research and Development (BIRD) Energy program, reports [Israel21c](#). “Renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements are essential to shaping our clean energy future. This partnership with Israel makes possible collaborative investments that move us closer to rigorous technology breakthroughs. These advancements are a key part of modernizing our energy infrastructure, enhancing our energy security, and mitigating the risks of global climate change,” said U.S. Secretary of Energy Dr. Ernest Moniz. The selected projects will leverage private sector cost-share for a total project value of \$11.3 million. This is the seventh round of funding for BIRD Energy which has approved 28 projects with a total investment of about \$22 million. “The BIRD Energy program is undoubtedly a success story of cooperation based on the strategic vision of the two economies, while also promoting partnerships among the most innovative capabilities, generating significant value and benefit to both countries,” said Dr. Yuval Steinitz, Minister of National Infrastructure, Energy and Water Resources. “BIRD Energy has demonstrated significant added value and mutual benefit, supporting innovation on renewable energy and energy efficiency in both countries and providing critical funding for the success of the companies and their partnerships.” said Dr. Eitan Yudilevich, Executive Director of BIRD.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Israel Tech Helps the Deaf ‘Hear’ and the Blind ‘See’

Israeli tech has touched many lives around the world, but there’s one group that’s been underserved—the disabled. “Israel is famous for being the start-up nation, but unfortunately the positive impact of its hi-tech revolution is felt by just 15% of the population,” said Guy Spigelman, who heads Presentense Israel, which has over the past seven years launched dozens of tech accelerators and hundreds of businesses. Presentense—along with partners Beit Issie Shapira, the Ruderman Foundation and the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles—celebrated last week at the accomplishments of members of an accelerator with a unique mission to help the disabled become more abled. Among the technologies and products at the event was AbiliSense, which uses sensors to detect sounds in the environment and transfers them into alerts—text, images and vibrations—that will get the attention of a deaf person, said Erez Lugasi, the system’s inventor. The system uses different combinations of vibrations and different images that are beamed to any connected device—such as a smart watch or a smartphone—enabling a deaf person to “hear” what is going on instead of watching and wondering helplessly. It’s a companion to another technology developed by three Technion students that helps the blind to easily navigate their environment. Using a Kinect 3D camera, a computer and an Android phone for audio interaction, students Tzahi Simkin, Gal Dalal and Danny Zilber came up with a system that detects oncoming obstacles, and uses audio messages and signals to warn users if they are about to bump into something, telling them how to avoid the obstacle. According to [The Times of Israel](#), the companies will now work on perfecting their technology, and develop a business plan to promote their ideas in new markets.