



# Rabbinic Recap

The week of May 19, 2017

## IRAN

### **Director of National Intelligence Stresses Iran's Dangerous Regional Behavior**

On May 11, leaders from the U.S. intelligence community testified before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence at the annual worldwide threat assessment hearing. In his remarks, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats highlighted Iran's destabilizing behavior in the region, including its support for terrorist proxy groups and the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria. "The Islamic Republic of Iran remains an enduring threat to U.S. national interests because of Iranian support to anti-U.S. terrorist groups and militants, the Assad regime, Houthi rebels in Yemen, and because of Iran's development of advanced military capabilities," he said. Director Coats emphasized the danger posed by Iran and its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah, stating, "Iran continues to be the foremost state sponsor of terrorism and, with its primary terrorism partner, Lebanese Hezbollah, will pose a continuing threat to U.S. interests and partners worldwide." He also underscored Iran's backing of the Assad regime through the provision of arms, financing and training to Syria. According to Coats, the Iranians manage as many as 10,000 Iraqi, Afghan and Pakistani Shia fighters in Syria and have sent hundreds of their own forces to support Assad. Director Coats further explained that, "Iran views the [2015 nuclear deal] as a means to remove sanctions while preserving some nuclear capabilities. Iran's implementation of the deal has extended the amount of time Iran would need to produce enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon from a few months to about a year. Tehran's malignant activities, however, continue."

### **Treasury Targets Individuals, Entities Linked to Iran's Ballistic Missile Program**

On May 17, the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) sanctioned two senior Iranian defense officials and a China-based network for supporting Iran's ballistic missile program. One of the Iranian officials was also found to have coordinated the sale and delivery of explosives to the Assad regime in Syria. "This Administration is committed to countering Iran's destabilizing behavior, such as Iran's development of ballistic missiles and support to the Assad regime. It is alarming that individuals involved with Iran's missile program are assisting the brutal Assad regime, and we are taking action to curtail this behavior," said Treasury Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin. "These sanctions target Iranian officials as well as a China-based network that are providing support to Syria and supplying items to further Iran's ballistic weapons program. The United States will remain vigilant when it comes to Iran." OFAC's action was made in conjunction with the State Department's release of the semi-annual report issued to Congress that details sanctions imposed on individuals and entities involved in human rights abuses in Iran. "Iran has compiled one of the world's most egregious records on human rights since the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979, and its conduct has only grown worse in recent years," said the State Department. "Addressing Iran's continued human rights

violations and abuses remains a high priority for the U.S. government...[W]e will continue to work with authorities granted by Congress as well as use existing executive orders to sanction persons involved in abuses of human rights in Iran.”

## **U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP**

### **U.S. Army Disaster Drill Employs Israeli Water Technology**

The U.S. Army employed innovative Israeli technology that extracts water from air during a five-day disaster relief simulation in Indianapolis and Chicago on May 8-12. Created by the firm Water-Gen, the technology traps, cleans and dries humid air, resulting in clean water. In the drill, disaster relief volunteers had access to Water-Gen’s medium-sized 350 gallon model water generators. The devices provided water to both relief workers and disaster victims stuck in hotel buildings that fell over due to tornadoes. “This experience is invaluable for us, from the training with military personnel to the understanding of how all the emergency organizations work together,” said Maxim Pasik, chairman of Water-Gen. While Water-Gen was the only Israeli private sector participant in last week’s simulation, an Israeli volunteer accident and disaster relief organization known as ZAKA’s International Rescue Unit and the National Search and Rescue Unit of the Israel Defense Forces’ Home Front Command also played a role in the U.S. disaster drill. “Water-Gen and ZAKA emergency preparedness training is ever-evolving, and we thank the U.S. military for ensuring we are more prepared to save lives and offer relief efforts if needed,” said Pasik, praising U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation. At the 2017 AIPAC Policy Conference, Professor Alan Dershowitz demonstrated the new technology in one of its first public appearances. “This great new innovation by Water-Gen...It’s like an enormous air conditioner, but much more efficient and much less expensive. It pulls water out of the air. It purifies the water; it makes it smaller and cheaper. It uses a revolutionary plastic heat exchanger and a new purification method and there are little tiny home units.” said Dershowitz.

## **ISRAEL IN THE NEWS**

### **First-Ever Construction-Tech Hub Opens in Israel**

The Israeli launch of the world’s first construction-tech hub aims to provide construction companies and real-estate developers everywhere access to disruptive high-tech innovation. Announced on April 27, the Construction Innovation Zone is a unique joint project of the Israel Builders Association, the Tel Aviv-based [SOSA](#) platform for global startup ecosystems, the Israeli Construction and Housing Ministry and the Israeli Economy Ministry, according to [ISRAEL21c](#). “The state of Israel has proven itself as a leader in the world of high-tech and innovation, changing the way we communicate, the way we drive and now the way we build,” said Minister of Construction and Housing Yoav Gallant at the launch held at SOSA, where the hub will be based. “We are championing the combination of new technologies to create new models of operation, improve methods of construction and accelerate production times. This initiative will lead to progress and innovation in the construction industry, and as more and more startups join, and as the program expands to new industries, many more breakthroughs will be created,” Gallant stated. “We are in a unique position to create the next ‘it’ technology field,” says Uzi Scheffer, CEO of SOSA. “Much like the efforts the Israeli government took to spark the auto-tech industry with grants and a positive regulatory environment, our partnership will help lay the groundwork for the fundamental disruption of the multi-trillion-dollar global construction and real-estate development industry.” Connecting the two huge industries of construction and high-tech necessitates creating a niche ecosystem in Israel, involving startups, investors, academia, government agencies, regulators and service providers, Scheffer tells [ISRAEL21c](#).