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American Military is Ready for an Iran Strike – If Needed

By *IsraelNationalNews.com*

US Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro said his nation's military is ready to execute "the military option" on Iran's nuclear program if need be.

Makor Rishon reported that Shapiro, speaking at a meeting of the Israel Bar Association for Tel Aviv and the Central Region, said that not is an American military option available, but that made all necessary preparations to carry it out were complete.

"We do not know if sanctions and diplomacy will work," Shapiro said of Western efforts to force Tehran to halt its controversial uranium enrichment program. "So, all options are on the table, including the military option."

Shapiro said President Barak Obama made it clear in previous meetings with Prime Minister Netanyahu - and public pronouncements - that the US will do whatever is necessary to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. "I think this is a statement that America can take to the bank, that Israel can take to the bank, and that Iran should take to the bank," Shapiro said. "We believe that there is a window - not an unlimited time - in which we can still use diplomacy to achieve our goal," he said.

Shapiro stressed "At some point we will have to decide if diplomacy has failed. What we want to do is give it any chance, because this is another thing that Israel and the US agree on - that it's better to solve this diplomatically and through sanctions, than through military force.

"But that does not mean that the military option is not available. In fact, this is not only an available option, but as I said, it is ready. All the necessary preparations have been made to read it," he repeated. Shapiro added that Obama considered an Iranian nuclear weapon counter to America's national interests, and was unafraid to use military force to protect those interests. "This is a part of the fight against international terrorism," Shapiro said, adding, "Certainly it was the right decision to eliminate Bin Laden. This is a good indication of president's ability to make hard choices when he believes the interests of the US are on the line."

Shapiro's remarks come ahead of talks between the P5+1 - the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany - and Iran in Baghdad next week.

New Project: Robots to Patrol Israeli Borders Instead of Soldiers

By *IsraelNationalNews.com*

A new project currently being developed will have robots replacing IDF soldiers on patrols along Israel's borders.

The project was initiated by the families of Benny Avraham, Adi Avitan and Omar Sawaid, who were kidnapped by Hizbullah terrorists in October of 2000, as they were patrolling the security fence along Israel's border with Lebanon. The IDF determined the soldiers were killed either during the attack or immediately afterwards.

On Jan. 29, 2004, the bodies of the three soldiers were returned in exchange for 435 terrorist prisoners. Hizbullah also returned abducted Israeli citizen Elchanan Tenenbaum as part of the deal.

Among the terrorists Israel released was Mustafa Dirani, a Hizbullah terrorist who held missing IAF navigator Ron Arad for several years and was believed to have information on what happened to him.

Haim Avraham, father of Benny Avraham, told Arutz Sheva on Wednesday that the revolutionary project is being developed in collaboration with the IDF's Engineering Corps and the College of Management in the city of Rishon LeZion. "The project aims to develop robots to fill the roles of soldiers patrolling the border and so far the college has developed six robots," Avraham said, adding that he hopes other institutions will join the project.

"The institute which is creating the robots will not be able to evolve unless additional factors, other than the three families, support it as well," he said. "It requires many resources. We are making efforts to get more resources and have so far distributed 160 scholarships to students participating in the project. We also received a large donation from an anonymous donor for the project."

Avraham said that he believes the robots will be able to provide a partial solution to kidnappings of soldiers, noting, "It's not a solution to all the kidnappings, just for border patrols. Terrorist organizations take advantage of the proximity to the border and study our soldiers' routines. Our robots will move along the border and, based on a decision of the commander stationed at the control point, they will also be able to shoot."

In the interview, Avraham also spoke of Israel's decision to transfer 100 bodies of Palestinian Authority Arab terrorists currently buried in Israel, as part of the deal reached with PA prisoners to end their mass hunger strike. The Prime Minister's Office later said the deal was a goodwill gesture to PA Chairman Abbas.

Avraham said the gesture was "a scandal", adding, "All these gestures only encourage them to continue to kill us. They release bodies of terrorists, whose hands are stained with blood. They do not sit with us for negotiations, they refuse to accept invitations from us, so what's the point of these gestures? Our families waited three and a half years without receiving information about the boys, in the end we received dead bodies in exchange for living terrorists, and here we time and time again succumb to the whims of the Arabs."

Israel to Aid Palestinians in Case of Earthquake

By Reuters

Israel has set up a mechanism to funnel aid to the Palestinians in the event of an earthquake, though its emergency relief services would not deploy throughout their territory, Israeli officials said.

A 5.5-magnitude quake rattled Israel and the West Bank on Friday, reminding residents of their common vulnerability to the Syria-African Rift, a northern extension of Africa's Rift Valley, despite the deadlock in talks on founding an independent Palestinian state.

Given Israel's control over and inside the West Bank, it would, in the event of a major quake, host a United Nations aid distribution centre to receive relief from abroad, by air and the Mediterranean sea, for Israelis and Palestinians.

"The working assumption is that they (Palestinians) do not have the means to deal with such a disaster on their own," said Alon Rozen, director-general of Israel's Civil Defense Ministry.

The last big quake in the region, in 1927, killed hundreds of people. Such events tend to recur every 80 or 90 years.

Rozen said the need to arrange for the U.N.-mandated contingency On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) arose after Israel, whose home front preparations focus on incoming missiles in a future war, decided last year to devote new attention to earthquake preparedness.

"The aspect of international aid for the Palestinians was something we had not dealt with. Last September, we realized this was a shortfall," he said.

A UN official confirmed the OSOCC coordination with Israel. Palestinian officials had no immediate comment.

A senior Israeli military officer with home front responsibilities said his forces were on standby to provide relief to Jewish settlers in the West Bank but not to the wider-spread, more numerous Palestinian populations. "Were they to request help, I'm sure we would be happy to provide it," said the officer, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The UN official, who also asked not to be named, said that a Palestinian request for Israeli assistance in the West Bank would be standard procedure under such circumstances.

More challenging would be the Gaza Strip, another Palestinian territory but whose Islamist Hamas administration is deeply hostile to Israel.

Israel, which keeps the enclave under naval blockade while allowing some commercial traffic across its land border, has held preliminary internal discussions on how to deliver emergency assistance, Rozen said.

A Tourist's Guide to Traveling in Iran

By Michael Smallet

Iran, or ancient Persia, is a country with past so great and glorious that there would be very few countries in the world to match it. Its civilization started thousands of years ago with mighty empires that conquered half of the world. Remnants of those empires still attract curious people from all parts of the planet.

Iran is a unique country where the past and the present co-exist in a harmonious unity. Historical sights of Iran are not just a pile of half-ruined buildings or prehistoric mosques, minarets and mausoleums. In fact, this country is a piece of living history, where nothing is forgotten. The great palaces of the kings of Persia, the clay fortress wall in Bam, the tomb of biblical prophet Daniel, paradisiacal gardens, ancient bazaars, and many other things are symbols of Iran.

Iran is a very interesting country in all spheres of life, but its rich history, full of different events, is the factor that motivates people from the rest of the world to come here and personally get acquainted with this legendary place.

(Editor's Note: However be prepared for Iran's secret police to follow you, tap your telephones etc to ensure that you are not a Mossad or CIA agent.)

Iran is mentioned in many legends and stories often as the scene of unbelievable events. According to some scientists, Iran's ancient city of Tabriz was the place of the divine Eden garden. Another Iranian city of Shush, located on the site of the ancient city of Susa, had been the capital of one of the most advanced civilizations in the world. Unique castles, palaces, mausoleums, and tombs are all the icons of modern Iran, which are definitely worth seeing with your own eyes.

The capital of Iran, Tehran, is a real metropolis, bustling with the voices of millions of people. However, modern concrete structures have diminished the oriental flavor of the city. In Tehran, there are not so many tourist spots. You can visit the National Museum and the Museum of Persian Carpets, Azadi Square with the monument to freedom, where from you can get a panoramic view of the city.

Tourists will have to travel far from Tehran to see the pearl of Iran - the ancient fortress city of Bam, surrounded by plantations of eucalyptus and palm trees. Iran has many interesting places, but the small town of Bam can be called one of the wonders of the world.

Bam was a major trading center on the famous Spice Road, which ran from China and Indo-China through Central Asia and Iran. The town is small and cozy, but its majestic monuments dominate the landscape. They include the Arg-e-Bam Citadel, the remnants of the outer rampart, the internal castle complex, and the tomb of the famous astronomer Mirza Naim.

One of the oldest cities in the world and the first capital of ancient Persia is the city of Hamadan. Today, it is the major commercial and industrial center famous for its pleasant summer climate, lots of interesting places and beautiful gardens. In Hamadan, one will find the mausoleum and the museum of the philosopher and physician Avicenna, the Jewish mausoleum, Hakmatana hill with the ruins of fortifications of the Median period, the palace of Darius, and the Burj-e Qurban Tower.

Chinese: 'Jews Make Money'

By YnetNews.com

A well known American stereotype is that Jews love Chinese food, but what do the Chinese think of Jews? Rachel Guo, the creator of the web-based Chinese series "Real China, No Drama" asked the same question. The answers were presented in an episode fittingly called "Oy Vey: China on the Jews" and seem to stick to the stereotypical bent.

Guo, 29, created the YouTube series which is made up of short clips which attempt to explain the Chinese nation. She's a kind of goodwill ambassador: She wasn't sent by the Chinese foreign ministry, doesn't receive a salary and yet since December 2011 she has already uploaded 16 clips – all "homemade" – each presenting the Chinese culture in a way that make it accessible to the Western eye, ear and most importantly – heart.

It all started, she says, when she visited the US 18 months ago. "From the moment I landed at the airport, the US seemed familiar," she notes. "I had consumed American culture through movies and TV shows my whole life." In contrast, Guo found there was a great deal of ignorance when it came to what Americans knew about her country.

Understanding that the power lay in various media outlets, Rachel decided to go back to her country and try and generate a revolution of awareness with regards to China and its culture – even if only in the smallest way. One episode of her hit YouTube show focuses on what the Chinese think of Jews. The episode came about after a slight incident with a Jewish friend, in a bid to show that what sounds perfectly reasonable to one culture, may not sound reasonable to a different culture. "Most Chinese people think that Jews are smart, they have strong relations with their families and are very responsible," Guo told Ynet. "I never thought about it too much until I took a vacation in China with one of my friends last summer. My friend is a US born Jew and he came up with an idea for a business venture. I joked around and said 'you're Jewish.'

"He was a little bit offended and angry and asked in response: Did you just say you're Jewish? I meant to say you're a smart Jew who finds business opportunities wherever you go. It was supposed to be a compliment. But for some reason he took offense." So if responses like: "Jews are a smart nation who know how to make money," and "Jews are good at business," "Jews lead the global economy," and "They have long noses;" arouse an angry reaction and thoughts of the Holocaust, stop for a minute and look at Guo's smiling face who assures us, it all comes from a deep sense of admiration.