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Spy Satellite Report: Syria Moving Scuds to Israel, Turkey Borders

By IsraelNationalNews.com

Jordanian news site Ahbar Baladna reports that western spy satellites have recently spotted movements of Syrian heavy missile launchers northward and southward, toward Syria's borders with Turkey and Israel. The site says hundreds of high-caliber launchers are being moved, and that these could only be long range Scud missile launchers.

Syria has threatened in the past that in the event of foreign military intervention on its soil, it will not hesitate to fire missiles at Israel and Turkey in order to ignite a large scale regional war.

Turkish and French officials said 10 days ago they were mulling a potential military intervention in Syria, where civil war has been raging for 14 months. "In the face of developments in Syria, we are taking into consideration any kind of possibility in line with our national security and interests," Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu told parliament during a briefing to lawmakers.

Netanyahu Calls for Early Elections

By [Scott Bobb \(VOA-Jerusalem\)](http://ScottBobb.com)

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu on Sunday called for early parliamentary elections, indicating that he would like them to be held in four months. Netanyahu's right-wing coalition has been one of the most stable in recent times. But there were growing divisions, primarily over domestic issues.

Netanyahu called for the dissolution of his coalition government more than a year before scheduled elections and told cheering members of his Likud party that he would like elections to be held in September.

Netanyahu said he did not want a year and a-half of instability and that a short campaign period of four months would ensure political stability. He added that political instability always brings "extortion" and "populism," which harm security, the economy and society.

Recent public opinion surveys indicate that the prime minister remains popular and that his center-right Likud party likely would win enough votes to allow him to form the next government.

Netanyahu's political coalition, formed three-and-a-half years ago, has split over a controversial law that exempts ultra-Orthodox Jews and Arab Israelis from military or civilian service. Nationalist-secular parties in the ruling coalition say all Israelis should serve. Highly religious parties reject this.

Jerusalem businessman Eli Tal says the government is stable, but indecisive. "Probably the hard decisions they should make, they don't feel enough in-power to make the really serious decisions," he said. For many Israelis, the economy is the main issue. Demonstrations over the high cost of living and lack of social services rocked the Netanyahu government last year.

Adi Botshvalb says the rent for a small apartment today costs 3,000 shekels, about \$800. "The prices here are crazy. You need to pay around 3,000 shekels for a good place, and apartment. We pay 2,600 [shekels] and we live in, like, a little basement," he said.

In addition, the Israeli military wants more funds to face what it says is rising antagonism in the region, following last year's popular uprisings known as the Arab Spring. There are also fears of a conflict if Israel carries out its threat to attack Iran's suspected nuclear weapons facilities. Iran denies it is building nuclear weapons. As a result, the Netanyahu government was facing a major battle over next year's budget.

Hebrew University political scientist Abraham Diskin says the divisions in Netanyahu's ruling coalition are typical of Israeli politics. "What really matters in Israeli elections is the balance between the two blocks, the right-wing parties and the left-wing parties. And the balance is very fragile," he said.

Analysts say that during the election campaign, the Israeli government will be less likely to launch a military strike against Iran, fearing an electoral backlash if the operation fails. They also say the campaign period will likely further delay the stalled Middle East peace talks as Palestinian leaders wait, hoping for a more flexible negotiating partner.

The proposed elections must be approved by the Israeli parliament, which is scheduled to meet on Monday. Leaders across the political spectrum have said they support an early vote.

Is Netanyahu Preparing to Strike Iran?

By [Ron Ben-Yishai \(Commentary\)](http://RonBenYishai.com)

Bringing the Israeli elections forward to September 4th of this year not only won't avert an Iran strike, but rather, in some ways may in fact advance the fight against Tehran's nuclear program. Those who think that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is heading to these elections due to weakness are wrong. The PM has a stable coalition, yet its makeup won't allow it to cope with the challenges it would have faced in the near future.

The PM is in fact going to the polls in order to reinforce his political survival at a time when he needs to make tough decisions in all areas. A skilled politician, Netanyahu identified the peaking support he enjoys at this time and is quick to ride this wave before losing momentum. At this time he enjoys a backwind not only within Israel's domestic theater – conditions in the regional and global arena are also convenient.

Early elections will assist the West in its diplomatic negotiations with Iran. Netanyahu does not hide his intention to strike Tehran's nuclear sites before they become immune to attack. Hence, his decision to call early elections when his position on this issue is so clear and consistent shows confidence that Israel's public is behind him, thereby granting more credibility to the Israeli threat.

This threat is one of the most powerful ways to press Washington and Europe not to "go easy" on the Iranians during the talks; it appears that even Iran is starting to fear it. Thus far, Iranian officials tended to show contempt for the Israeli threat. Yet now they realize that an Israeli operation, regardless of its success or failure, would force them and their clients to respond. This would entangle Iran in an unwanted confrontation with the US, as Washington, especially during a presidential election campaign, would not be able to remain idle when its soldiers and regional allies are being attacked.

Early elections have another important effect: They produce "diplomatic immunity" for Netanyahu and the Israeli government from negative US reaction should Israel decide to strike Iran.

By early September, the elections will be behind Netanyahu, and as a prime minister he won't have trouble to form a stable coalition and government that would endorse his position on an Iran strike. Meanwhile, US President Barack Obama would still be in the midst of his own election campaign. During this period, until November of this year at least, he would have trouble taking punitive measures against Israel or endorsing such steps at the UN should such proposals be made in the wake of an Israeli strike.

Hence, Israel would have at least two months of freedom to act, before winter clouds hinder the Air Force and while assuming that the US, with clenched teeth, would help Israel defend against missile retaliation by Iran and its clients (Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah) and help us on the diplomatic front. Some observers argue that this is the main consideration that prompted Netanyahu to bring the elections forward.

IDF Foils Third Terror Attack in Three Days

By IsraelNationalNews.com

A planned terror attack in Israel was thwarted on Sunday evening, for the third time in several days.

According to a report on Channel 2 News, Border Police officers arrested a 17-year-old Palestinian Authority Arab at a checkpoint near the Tapuach junction in Samaria. Upon inspection, the teen was found to be in possession of three pipe bombs. The teen was arrested and taken for questioning, while the explosive devices were detonated by sappers in a controlled explosion.

The latest foiled attack comes just several days after the IDF foiled two attempted terrorist attacks in Samaria, one of which was foiled in the same Tapuach junction.

On Thursday evening, Border Police officers arrested two terrorists in their 20s at the Tapuach junction. The terrorists were found to be carrying explosives and knives. Sappers detonated the explosives, and no one was hurt. The two suspects were transferred to security authorities for further interrogation.

Later the same night, a third terrorist armed with a knife tried to infiltrate the community of Elon Moreh in Samaria. The terrorist was caught by IDF soldiers after he managed to penetrate the security fence and began making his way into the community.

On April 24, two terrorists were nabbed as they were trying to smuggle explosives through a checkpoint in northern Samaria. The two Palestinian Authority residents were arrested after soldiers manning the checkpoint discovered four pipe bombs. The bombs were destroyed by sappers in a controlled explosion, and the men were taken in for questioning.

On April 11, IDF forces stopped a would-be terrorist bomber at a checkpoint east of Shechem in northern Samaria. The terrorist was carrying improvised explosive devices, three knives, and 50 bullets. A Border Police bomb disposal unit was called in to dismantle the explosives.

Brother of Rabin Assassin Released from Prison

By Robert Berger (VOA-Jerusalem)

The controversial prison release of Hagai Amir, the brother of the man who assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, has stirred emotions in Israel and stoked memories of a dark chapter in the nation's history.

Amir was confronted by angry Israeli peace activists, who shouted "Disgrace! Disgrace," as he was freed from prison Friday after serving 16 years. Amir was convicted of being an accomplice of his brother Yigal Amir, an Orthodox Jew who assassinated Rabin in 1995. The brothers opposed his policy of trading land for peace with the Palestinians.

In a brief statement to reporters, Hagai Amir showed no remorse. "I am proud of what I did," he said.

The decision to free him has prompted the public to revisit Rabin's assassination -- an event that deeply divided the nation. The Israeli left, which supports the peace process with the Palestinians, accused the right of creating an atmosphere of incitement that led to the murder.

At the prison, left-wing protesters said Amir is a threat to Israel's democracy and should have spent his life behind bars. "We will not forgive or forget," said Barak Selah, a young activist in the liberal Meretz party.

But Amir had his supporters too, including Noam Federman, a Jewish settler from the biblical West Bank town of Hebron, who said Rabin's policies led to Palestinian terrorist attacks that killed hundreds of Israelis. Federman said while he doesn't support the murder of the prime minister, he will not weep for him either.

Sixteen years after the assassination, Yitzhak Rabin remains an icon of Israel's peace camp and a symbol of the national rift about the concept of land for peace.

WSJ's 'Holy' Front Page Creates Problems for Religious Jews

By YnetNews.com

Will Jewish readers of the Wall Street journal have to keep last Friday's edition forever? That was the question raised by the JTA news agency after the front page of The Wall Street Journal featured an article on the perils of dropping the Torah scroll during "hagbah," the Torah-lifting ritual.

The problem arose because of the fact that the story included a photo of a Torah scroll open to the Ten Commandments in the Book of Exodus, the blurry text includes God's name. Throwing God's name in the trash is a no-no, so what does that mean for the Wall Street journal's religious readers? Must they keep it forever, bury it, or place it in a "genizah"?

The JTA decided to ask rabbis what they thought and the consensus is -- no. "It was not put there for any purpose of kedusha, of holiness," said Rabbi Allen Schwartz of New York's Orthodox Congregation Ohab Zedek. Schwartz explained that in order to require placement in a genizah, God's name "has to be four clear letters" -- meaning that blurriness disqualifies the Journal picture.

He added that variations on the four-letter Tetragrammaton such as a single letter also don't require burial. In a rare case of Jewish interdenominational agreement, Rabbi Kenneth Kanter, the director of the rabbinical school at the Reform Hebrew Union College, seconded Schwartz's opinion.

"We see pages of Torah or other sacred books reproduced in so many ways on TV or in the print media," he said. "Jewish law would urge us to treat Torah scrolls with respect. Sometimes they are reproduced upside-down, which is certainly for me a bigger problem."



Courtesy of Yaakov Kirschen, www.drybones.com

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Israeli Supreme Court Returns Old City Properties to Jews *El Al's Ticket Price Too High Even for Israel's President*

By IsraelNationalNews.com

Israel's Supreme Court on Monday ordered two Arab squatters in Jerusalem's Old City to vacate the homes they are occupying.

Lawyer Mohammed Dahleh said the court had rejected his clients' appeal on the basis that the properties had been legally acquired by Jewish prior to the establishment of Israel in 1948. "It went through the Magistrates Court, the District Court and now the Supreme Court," Dahleh said.

The Supreme Court also ordered the plaintiff's – Ghazi Zalum's house and Ismail Wazwaz – to pay all the legal costs. Both properties – one a residence, the other a shop – are in the Al-Qarameh neighborhood between the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Temple Mount.

Zalum complained to the AFP that there had been a systematic takeover by settlers of properties in the area. "With my evacuation, Israel has evacuated half of the Al-Qarameh neighborhood and Aqbat al-Khaldiyya as part of an organized policy of clearing the Old City," he charged.

"It is more of a political issue than an Arab or Jewish property issue. This move comes with the announcement of the elections and is a message to Israelis saying: we are liberating Jerusalem from the Arabs," he said, referring to a decision by Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to call early elections this September.

The identities of the Jewish owners who won the court battle were not immediately available. Jews were forced to abandon their properties and flee when Judea, Samaria, and eastern Jerusalem when Jordan invaded and occupied the territory during Israel's War of Independence.

Israel liberated the Old City along with the territories occupied by Jordan, originally slated for the Jewish state under the British Mandate, in the 1967 Six Day War.

Jewish organizations dedicated to re-establishing the Jewish presence in the Old City and eastern Jerusalem frequently scours archives for documents proving Jewish ownership of properties in the area.

With the exception of a very brief period following the Crusader sacking of Jerusalem in 1099, there has been an unbroken Jewish presence in Jerusalem for thousands of years.

By IsraelNationalNews.com

Israel's national airline made international headlines by charging the country's president to carry an oxygen tank. Airline fees for various items once were included in the ticket price or that were simply never charged for have become the latest method of milking passengers for more money.

But El Al Airlines -- already fairly pricey due to the need to maintain a high security profile -- managed to drive away one of its most prestigious passengers last week after attempting to charge President Shimon Peres nearly \$5,000 to carry an oxygen tank on board. The tank is considered mandatory equipment whenever the president or prime minister travels abroad. Peres simply looked elsewhere for a better deal.

AP, picked up the story from Israeli media -- as did USA Today and numerous other international news outlets. And Peres decided to choose Air Canada for his official trip to Canada after El Al had broken the proverbial camel's back with its faux pas -- despite an after-the-fact apology by the airline. Air Canada did not charge the 88-year-old Israeli president for carrying the oxygen tank.

Peres arrived Sunday night on his official four-day state visit to Ottawa. "Canada is always positive, never indifferent, never neutral," he said graciously in his remarks at an official welcoming ceremony Monday that included full military honors and a 21-gun salute.

The president was expected to meet with Prime Minister Stephen Harper later in the day on security and trade, with an eye toward deepening bilateral ties.

eBay Sale of Western Wall Stones was Just Gravel

By IsraelNationalNews.com

Jerusalem police and the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) have determined that the advertised sale of Western Wall stones on the eBay website earlier this year turned out to be only gravel at the holy site. The offer last February was removed by eBay after an uproar by Jews offended by the suggestion that the stones at the wall surrounding the Temple Mount courtyard were up for sale.

Western Wall Rabbi Shmuel Rabinovich asked eBay to remove the "for sale" item and filed a complaint with police. An investigation has revealed that the seller was offering no more than gravel from the Western Wall.

The Israeli antiquities law forbids anyone from dealing in protected items without permission. IAA director Shuka Dorfman said that even if the seller of the "gravel" was not in violation of the antiquities law; he was guilty of fraud and false advertising.

The original ad offered the stones for a "blessing and success" for the purchaser. An ad on eBay offered a supposed "Piece of Stone Soil from the Wailing Western Wall Kotel Jerusalem Jesus Israel" for \$24.99. The seller's identity included a description linking a company to Christianity.

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Would-Be Underwear Bomber Double Agent

By CBS News

The would-be bomber in the recently-uncovered plot to blow up a U.S.-bound airliner leaving Yemen was an undercover intelligence agent.

The plot was revealed to U.S. intelligence officials based on a tip by Saudi intelligence services, and had been revealed by a Saudi intelligence source that had been inside Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and providing information through the Saudis for some time.

CBS News correspondent John Miller, a former assistant director at the FBI, reported that the double-agent revelation goes right to the heart of an intelligence agency's nightmare, which is identifying a source that they've placed inside an organization.

Intelligence agencies and senior officials told CBS News they're not going anywhere near commenting on the issue for obvious reasons. The Associated Press reported that the alleged double agent has been removed from Yemen and apparently is safe. This may go a long way toward explaining why authorities said yesterday that the bomber was no longer considered a threat.

Google Earth Outs Hizbullah Bases

By IsraelNationalNews.com

Recently uploaded satellite images to Google Earth reveal what appears to be a Hizbullah terror training ground constructed after the 2006 Lebanon War. According to military analysts, the facility near Janta in the Bekaa Valley includes a suspected driver training course, a 100-meter firing range, and a possible urban terrain assault course.

The Google Earth images also reveal considerable overt construction activity in sealed-off Hizbullah security pockets in southern Lebanon, particularly in the hills south of Jezzine. The area was designated the terror groups primary staging line following the redeployment of UNIFIL peacekeepers on the Blue Line, which separates Israel from Lebanon.

The scale of the activity buttresses previous reports of significant Hizbullah efforts undertaken since the 2006 war to prepare itself for its next conflict with Israel. But the overt nature of the construction work also raises questions as to the purpose of these facilities, which should be easily visible to Israeli UAV reconnaissance missions.

The Google Earth image of the Janta area is dated May 21, 2011, and when compared to the previous image dated 28 November 2005 shows substantial activity such as new tracks and buildings alongside the more militaristic facilities.

The region served as the birthplace of the nascent Hizbullah in 1982 when it, along with Iranian Revolutionary Guard instructors, began its first recruiting drive in Shiite villages following Israel's invasion in June. There are few trees on the barren hills in the eastern Bekaa, making them vulnerable to observation and attack.

In the Jezzine area, numerous buildings and new roads have appeared in the hills south of the town in areas sealed off by Hizbullah after the 2006 war. The location and existence of these "security pockets" is common knowledge. The hills are strategically advantageous, with clear overviews of the western Bekaa to the east, and the coastal littoral to the west.

From 2000 to 2006 intelligence officials knew where Hizbullah's security pockets were, but no one knew what the terror group was doing in them. Now, it is apparent to anyone with an Internet connection.

Biden Defends Obama on Israel

By IsraelNationalNews.com

U.S. Vice President Joe Biden vigorously defended the Obama administration's record on Israel on Tuesday, crediting Obama for strengthening America's position in the region and for imposing "the most damaging sanctions in this century" to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Biden spoke before an annual convention of the Rabbinical Assembly. "We were the problem," Biden was quoted by NBC as having said of the global view of the United States before the president took office. "We were diplomatically isolated in the world, in the region, in Europe. The international pressure on Iran was stuck in neutral." He added, "We were neither fully respected by our friends nor feared by our opponents. Today it is starkly, starkly different."

Biden argued that Obama "deserves the credit" for coordinating harsh sanctions against Iran that he says are bringing that nation's negotiators back to the table, although he warned that the time for diplomacy may be waning. "The window has not closed in terms of the ability of the Israelis if they choose on their own to act militarily," he added, noting that he understood Israel's desire not to "contract out" its security to allies like the United States.

He repeated that the U.S. does not have "a policy of containment" towards Iran and added, "We will prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon by whatever means needed, period. Period."

Citing dissension between Iran's own leaders, the vice president also predicted that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will be forced from power within two years. Biden's remarks come a day after Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sought to defend Israel for its actions in the Middle East.

During a visit to Kolkata, India, Clinton said, "The United States believes that whatever differences one might have with the situation in the Middle East, Israel has been defending itself for 60 years and has made numerous overtures to bring about a peaceful resolution of the situation. It has thus far been unsuccessful in doing so."

Obama has come under fire for his policy on Israel. In his foreign policy speech last May, Obama called for a return to the 1949 armistice lines (often erroneously called 1967 borders) as a starting point for negotiations with the Palestinian Authority.

The speech drew criticism from Obama's political opponents, with Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney accusing the President of having "thrown Israel under the bus." Obama's policy on Israel may have come at a price. Recent reports have indicated that Obama has lost 16% of his support among U.S. Jews and may lose the elections in key states like Florida, come November.

The reports were based on a recent poll by the Public Religion Research Institute, which showed that 62% of 1,004 American Jews surveyed said that they would vote for Obama. The key concern for Obama is that this is a sizeable downturn from 2008, when he got 78% of the Jewish vote.

Biden himself recently came under fire after he told rabbis in Florida that Obama was set to release Jonathan Pollard but that Biden thwarted the move. "President Obama was considering clemency, but I told him, 'Over my dead body are we going to let him out before his time,'" said Biden, adding, "If it were up to me, he would stay in jail for life."

Israeli Phone Center in Bedouin Mosque Reduces Arab Unemployment

By IsraelNationalNews.com

Despite the prevalent allegations and misconceptions that Israel discriminates against its Arab population, the Jewish state, in fact, goes above and beyond in ensuring the success and happiness of its Arab population.

Israel's Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, in conjunction with the government-owned telecom company Bezeq, have launched a new initiative to incorporate Bedouin Arab women into the workforce.

As a result of their suppressive patriarchal lifestyle, husbands and fathers customarily prohibit their wives and daughters to go to work. However, these restrictions were somewhat dispelled by housing the new call center inside a mosque.

"Bedouin women would like to work, most of them, and they want to be a part of the work market and to contribute to the economy of the house alongside their husbands. But because there are no work places in the villages and they are not able to work outside the villages, this is preventing many of them from being a part of the work force," said Mahmoud Alamour, director of the center.

Now, dozens of women from one Bedouin town are earning a competitive salary without breaking societal norms. One of the woman told Al-Arabiya news that she is very happy working for the Israeli company. "As a Bedouin woman I am so proud of myself because as a Bedouin girl I started from zero," she said.

"I think I have no problem with this project and if I sometimes need to go out of work in a specific time, like when a child is sick, Bezeq helps me -- they allow us to go and tend to our children," said Manal Abu-keren, a Bezeq employee.

Many of the women see the new opportunity as a way to improve their lots in life and hope to use their income to pay for future university studies. Bezeq said they have been very pleased with the new call center and intend to expand the initiative. Several other Israeli companies are also reportedly planning to target the Bedouin community with new jobs.

Evidence is Discovered of Canaanite Jewish Rituals in Reign of King David

By IsraelNationalNews.com

A Hebrew University archaeologist has uncovered spectacular evidence confirming the reign of King David and that there were groups who believed in one Creator at the time. Architecture that was uncovered pre-dates the First Temple built by King Solomon.

Prof. Yosef Garfinkel announced on Tuesday the discovery of objects found in the ruins called Khirbet Qeiyafa, a fortified border city in the Kingdom of Judah adjacent to the Valley of Elah, less than 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem and five miles west of Gush Etzion.

The archaeologist and colleagues uncovered rich assemblages of pottery, stone and metal tools, and many art and ritual objects. The architecture and discoveries correspond to the biblical description of a local, organized group that observed the second of the 10 Commandments prohibiting belief in graven images.

The absence of cultic images of humans or animals in the shrines provides evidence that the local inhabitants practiced a different cult than that of the Canaanites or the Philistines. This discovery is the first time that shrines from the time of early biblical kings were uncovered. The village of Khirbet apparently existed for only about 40 years and was violently destroyed.

The People of Israel conducted their lives according to a religion different from all other nations of the ancient Near East by being monotheistic and banning human or animal figures. The Bible describes this in detail.

The findings at Khirbet Qeiyafa also indicate that an elaborate architectural style had developed as early as the time of King David. The construction is typical of royal activities and indicates the establishment of a state and of urban life in the region in the days of the early kings of Israel.

"These finds strengthen the historicity of the biblical tradition and its architectural description of the Palace and Temple of Solomon," Hebrew University stated. "This is the first time that archaeologists uncovered a fortified city in Judah from the time of King David," according to Prof. Garfinkel.

"Even in Jerusalem we do not have a clear fortified city from his period. Thus, various suggestions that completely deny the biblical tradition regarding King David and argue that he was a mythological figure or just a leader of a small tribe, are now shown to be wrong.

"Over the years, thousands of animal bones were found, including sheep, goats and cattle, but no pigs. Now we uncovered three cultic rooms... but not even one human or animal figurine was found. This suggests that the population of Khirbet Qeiyafa observed two biblical bans -- on pork and on graven images -- and thus practiced a different cult than that of the Canaanites or the Philistines."

The three shrines are part of larger building complexes, different from the style of Canaanite or Philistine cults, and Garfinkel pointed out the biblical verse in the time of King David: "He brought the ark of God from a private house in Kyriat Yearim and put it in Jerusalem in a private house" (Chapter 6 in the Second Book of Samuel).

Parts of the structures, such as the doors, help explain obscure technical terms in the description of Solomon's palace as described in the First Book of Kings 6. "For the first time in history, we have actual objects from the time of David, which can be related to monuments described in the Bible," the archaeologist said.



Courtesy of Yaakov Kirschen, www.drybones.com

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How Dangerous Are Tehran's Subs?

By IsraelNationalNews.com

Iran's fleet of 20 submarines poses a dangerous and unpredictable force in the Persian Gulf region. The United States - with its Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain and carrier groups frequently deployed in the region - has not revealed what it knows about Iran's capabilities.

Military analysts believe the U.S. has been using aircraft, satellites, subs, and underwater sensors to monitor the activities of Iranian subs at sea. Doing so requires entering Iranian territorial waters, but the Iranians would be unlikely to admit US warships entered their waters with impunity publicly.

Recent US war games which included achieving naval dominance, air superiority, and a coastal foothold in a fictional nation closely resembling Iran were said to include an anti-submarine warfare component. But the efficacy of Iran's submarine fleet remains unknown due to the untested nature of most of Tehran's designs.

Russia agreed to stop selling its Kilo-class subs to Iran in 1996, forcing Tehran to develop homegrown craft. Tehran has three such vessels.

After 10 years of trial and error they produced the 100 ton Qadir class vessels in 2005. Iran currently has 12 of these small diesel electric subs. The Qadir-class vessels are squarely between the old midget submarines and the Russian Kilos.

Analysts say look very similar to the Italian made Cosmos SX-506B submarines that Columbia received in the 1980s. The 100-ton SX-506Bs are only large enough to carry commandos and mines. News photos also show what may be two torpedo tubes, as well.

Russia's Cosmos exported a number of larger SX-756 vessels to Pakistan in the 1990s, which may be the design basis for the Qadir. The North Korean Sang-O class submarine closely approximates the Qadir type.

In 2007, North Korea gave Iran four of its Yugo-type midget submarines. These elderly Yugos are 90-ton, 65-foot craft. Iran is also believed to possess five larger Nahang class subs. A about 500-tons it is the same size as and closely resembled the old German Type-206 class from the 1960s, which was developed for operations in the confined shallows of the Baltic.

The Type 206's size enabled it to carry eight torpedo tubes with no reloads, but the Iranian version has been little seen and Western intelligence officials believe it is a failed design.

Tehran is now working on the third indigenous Iranian design. Laid down in 2008, the Qaem is a 1000-ton boat and should be large enough to handle a full set of torpedo tubes along with a reload. They could be the possible replacement for Iran's Russian-made Kilos.

Iran's Kilo 877/636 type diesel-electric submarines pose the most significant threat in Tehran's submarine fleet. The 2300 ton Kilos are long range subs capable of operating throughout the Indian Ocean. They have six 533mm (21 inch) torpedo tubes and carry 18 torpedoes, or 24 mines. The Kilo is regarded as a formidable foe and stay at sea for up to 45 days. Iranian Kilo crews have more than a decade of experience, but the craft are more than half-way past their 30-year lifespan.

The real question is whether Iran has found ways to overcome their limited experience and technological know-how with warship construction in general and submarine construction in particular.

The Qadir boats are reported to be troublesome for their crews and unsafe, which some analysts say may be indicative of Iranian submarine design overall. How they would perform against the naval power and prowess of the United States, or Israel's German-manufactured Dolphin-class submarines, will remain unknown unless a shooting war erupts.

New Birthright Trip to Bring Older American Jews to Israel

By IsraelNationalNews.com

The success of the Birthright Israel trip, which has brought more than 200,000 young Jews to Israel from 52 countries over the past 12 years, has caused the parents of these young adults to want to go on a trip of their own. Now they can.

The UJA-Federation of New York has created the "Birthright Israel for Boomers" trip to provide older American Jews, who have never visited Israel, an experience identical to the one that young adults go on through Birthright. The first pioneer group of 34 participants from New York arrived in Israel on April 28 and remained until Wednesday.

According to Birthright Israel for Boomers Chairman, Michael Lax, "The vast majority of American Jews have never visited Israel and when they are asked why, the answer is that they really would like to visit the country sometime, but it's not really their top priority."

He added, "We decided that Israel needed to market to U.S. Jews in a more attractive way and since we have seen the effect of Birthright on young participants we asked ourselves, why not try this trip with older adults? Our motto was 'when was the last time in your life that you did something for the first time?'"

According to recent studies in American Jewry, only one in five American Jews has visited or plans to visit Israel. "The response we received about this trip was beyond any expectations," said Nancy Leipzig Powers of UJA-Federation of New York. "Dozens contacted us and wanted to participate in the project. Since the trip is in its first stage and because of logistical reasons, only 34 will go on the first trip. However, we plan to offer more trips to Israel in the future and hope that the project will be as big as the original Birthright program."

All of the participants in the Birthright Baby Boomers came from New York; most of them are between 50 and 60 years old and none have ever been to Israel before. Several of the participants' children have been on Birthright themselves and convinced their parents to join the expedition.

"The program we have built for adults is very similar to the original Birthright itinerary but includes a few adjustments for those who are older in age," said Michael Lax. "They will visit all of the tourist attractions including: Jerusalem, Masada, the Dead Sea, Eilat, Tel Aviv, and the Golan Heights, rafting in the Jordan River, and sailing on the Sea of Galilee. The participants will also visit military bases such as the Palmachim Air Force Base and meet VIP's including Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky."

Among the participants are Ken and Sari Friedman of Long Island, New York, whose two daughters have visited Israel on Birthright trips. "I always felt that Israel was not a safe place to go, so I refrained from visiting," said Sari Friedman. "But after hearing all of the amazing experiences that our girls had while in Israel, I decided that I wanted to go."

Rick and Arlene Morse, both 55, from Long Island, New York, said before the trip that they were excited about it and had been preparing themselves for the trip both physically and mentally.

"We have been exercising and watching documentary films on Jewish tradition and history, we are very excited to finally go to Israel and want to ensure that we are ready for any challenge," said Rick Morse. "We can't wait to visit the Western Wall in Jerusalem and are eager to climb Masada and then go bathing in the Dead Sea."

The Birthright-Taglit program, partially funded by Israel, has enabled tens of thousands of young Jews to visit Israel for the first time. Last year's success of bringing 32,500 people to Israel prompted Birthright and the government to agree to plan for 50,000 next year. The government funds one-third of the expenses, amounting to approximately \$25 million.

Palestinian Airlines Renews Operations

By *YnetNews.com*

Seven years after grounding its planes, Palestinian Airlines was back in business on Wednesday, with an inaugural flight that traveled between the Egyptian town of El Arish and Jordan's capital, Amman.

The renewal of the air carrier's business was facilitated by an agreement reached between the Palestinian Transportation Ministry and the authorities in Egypt and Jordan.

The company was founded in 1995, and operated flights that shuttled travelers between the Dahania Airport in Rafah and various destinations in the Middle East and North Africa. The company was forced to shut down after the IDF bombed Dahania in 2001, with the start of the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

Palestinian Airlines Director General Zeyad Albad told Ynet that the company will carry a weekly flight from Amman's Marka International Airport and Arish. The route will simplify travel for Gaza residents, who were forced to travel over 400 kilometers (about 250 miles) to the nearest international airport – in Cairo, according to Albad.

The official noted that the airline's fleet consists of two Fokker planes, a Boeing 727 and an Airbus 320. "At first, the smaller planes will be used, because 40 or 50 passengers don't warrant the use of the larger planes," Albad said, adding that during busy season, when Muslim pilgrims flock to Mecca, the entire fleet will be involved. In the future, the company intends to offer flights to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia and Istanbul, Turkey.

Dubai Hit Inspires Israeli Spy Thriller

By *IsraelNationalNews.com*

A French-Israeli filmmaker is producing a spy thriller loosely based on the daring 2010 assassination of a Hamas terrorist on Dubai starring Israeli supermodel Bar Refaeli.

The assassination of Mahmoud al-Mabhouh was widely blamed on the Mossad and led to speculation that Israel had reactivated the legendary Caesarea assassination unit purported to have pursued the perpetrators of the Munich massacre. Israeli officials have long followed an iron-clad policy of not discussing intelligence matters and refused to comment on the assassination.

Dubai police accused the Mossad of carrying out the actual hit in a five-star hotel, and released surveillance camera footage of the assassination team tracking al-Mabhouh.

Several nations, including Britain, Ireland and Australia, expelled Israeli diplomats in protest over the use of their nations' passports. The diplomatic blowback, however, was short-lived and easily contained. More than half of the names turned out to belong to real-life dual nationals living in Israel, but none of them were among the assassins.

The movie, titled "Kidon" (Bayonet) for the Mossad's supposed black operations unit, adds a plot twist in which a gang of criminals murder al-Mabhouh in an attempt to frame Israel's Mossad spy agency. "The movie is not a documentary and it's not a history movie. It's my take on the al-Mabhouh story," director Emmanuel Nakash said.

Refaeli plays Einav Schwartz, an Israeli femme fatale whose role is to lure al-Mabhouh into the assassins' trap with her feminine wiles. The characters are all fictional, except for al-Mabhouh, a Hamas leader responsible for smuggling arms to Gaza who was also wanted for kidnapping and murdering two Israeli soldiers in the late 1980s.

Model-turned-actress Refaeli said "Kidon" gave her a fictional brush with her dream job: working for the Mossad. "I would love to be in the Mossad and maybe I am. Who knows? I think that being a famous model is the best cover," Refaeli told the Associated Press on the set of the film.

She also told Israelis are used to hearing about covert operations blamed on the Mossad, but the al-Mabhouh killing was something sensational. "This specific one sounded like a movie scene," Refaeli said. "It was just like reading a script."

But the Dubai killing was a cold, methodical and efficiently executed operation that did not include Hollywood hijinks or seduction scenes. Instead, the disguised assassination team entered the city undetected on foreign passports, pulled off the highly complex operation, then escaped the country unscathed.

Dubai police outlined a 19-hour operation, where the agents, wearing disguises such as fake beards, wigs and tennis attire, kept close watch on al-Mabhouh for hours before slipping into his room and killing him. Forensic tests indicated he was first injected in the thigh with a fast-acting, hard-to-detect muscle relaxant. Then he was suffocated with a pillow, Dubai police said.

The movie – being filmed at a hotel in Eilat – is expected to be released in Israeli theaters in 2013.

Dry Bones ELDERLY COUPLE



Courtesy of Yaakov Kirschen, www.drybones.com

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U.S. is Concerned That Netanyahu, Mofaz Alliance May Attack Iran

By IsraelNationalNews.com

The United States is worried that Shaul Mofaz and his Kadima party's joining a unity government with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu could result in an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities at any given moment, according to a report on Channel 10 News on Thursday.

U.S. government officials told Channel 10 News that they believe a Likud-Kadima joint government could make a decision about an Israeli attack on Iran at any moment and perhaps even before the U.S. presidential elections in November.

The report said that when the Americans believed early elections would be held in Israel on September, they thought it meant the attack in Iran would be postponed at least until after the election. Now, with the stabilization of Israeli politics and the current government likely to end its term on schedule, the situation has changed and the Americans are concerned.

According to the Channel 10 report, in order to try and prevent or at least postpone the Israeli decision on the issue, the Americans recently held marathon talks with Israeli officials at all levels.

Israel – like the United States, its European allies, and Gulf Arab states – believe Iran is conducting nuclear work with military applications. Defense Minister Ehud Barak recently warned that as long as Iran poses a threat to Israel with its nuclear program, all options are on the table.

"I believe it is well understood in Washington, D.C., as well as in Jerusalem that as long as there is an existential threat to our people, all options to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons should remain on the table," Barak said.

"I have enough experience to know that a military option is not a simple one," Barak added. "It would be complicated with certain associated risks. But a radical Islamic Republic of Iran with nuclear weapons would be far more dangerous both for the region and, indeed, the world."

Recent reports indicated that President Barack Obama is prepared to make a major concession to Iran on uranium enrichment. According to the reports, the Obama administration now is willing to allow 5% enrichment if Iran were to take other major steps to curb its ability to develop a nuclear bomb."

Knesset to Mark 30 Years since Surrender of Yamit to Egypt

By IsraelNationalNews.com

A ceremony marking 30 years since the 1982 destruction of Yamit will be held Monday in the Knesset. The ceremony was initiated by the Center for Memorializing Gush Katif and Northern Samaria – areas in which Jewish communities were similarly razed many years after Yamit, in the 2005 Disengagement.

(Editor's note: Israel Faxx editor Don Canaan was one of the original American olim that formed a group to make aliyah and settle Yamit.)

Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin, Uri Ariel and representatives of Sinai communities will address the participants. Prof. Yiftach Bar-Asher, who heads the Katif Center for the Study of Coastal Deserts, will give a lecture on the contribution of agriculturalists in Sinai and Gush Katif to agriculture in Israel and the world.

Mochi Better, Director of the Katif Center, explained that the former residents of Gush Katif and Northern Samaria feel a deep connection to Yamit and the Sinai communities. "During 35 years of settlement in Gaza we used to mark Yamit Day at the Neveh Dekalim Hesder Yeshiva and we feel a deep connection to the residents of that area, many of whom moved to Gush Katif after the eviction."

Best Buy Link to Hamas? Internet-Based Boycott Petition Breaks 10,000

By IsraelNationalNews.com

A call to boycott the US-based Best Buy chain alleging the electronics store has ties to the Hamas terrorist organization is continuing its campaign to raise awareness about the issue. More than 10,000 people have signed the online petition set up on April 23 by Islamist Watch.org.

The group alleged that Best Buy donated money to an event run by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). The organization was prominently mentioned in federal court papers in the 2007 trial of the Holy Land Foundation charity, which served as the fundraising arm for the Gaza-based Hamas terror organization.

"From its founding by Muslim Brotherhood leaders, CAIR conspired with other affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood to support terrorists" and "the conspirators agreed to use deception to conceal from the American public their connections to terrorists," the court papers said.

At the time, District Court Judge Jorge Solis ruled the government had provided "ample evidence" that tied CAIR to Hamas and allowed its designation as an "unindicted co-conspirator."

In December 2001, the U.S. government froze the assets of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, affiliated with Hamas, and the Al Qaeda-linked Global Relief Foundation (GRF).

A subsequent appeal of a 2008 conviction of five of the group's organizers on charges of financially supporting the terrorist group was lost last year in the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. Each of the five defendants was sentenced to 65 years in prison – essentially a life term.

According to a statement by the Best Buy Corporation, the company aims to "represent a variety of faiths and denominations. We respect that diversity, and choose to engage with our customers, employees and communities in ways that reflect their traditions and maintain good relationships for Best Buy."

Islamist Watch.org director Marc Fink expressed his disappointment with the move, saying that he had assumed the decision was made by "out of ignorance or at a low level... sadly, I was wrong."