



## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel  
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of  
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

### News...

#### Canada's Immigration Minister Jason Kenney Blasts Dangerous Leftist-Islamist Anti-Semitism

A new anti-Semitism that emanates from an alliance of Western leftists and Islamic extremists is more dangerous than the "old European" form of Jew-hatred, Canada's minister of citizenship, immigration and multiculturalism said as he wound up a four-day trip to Israel Sunday.

"The existential threat faced by Israel on a daily basis is ultimately a threat to the broader Western civilization," said Jason Kenney, explaining the staunchly pro-Israel positions of his government, led by Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

"It's a threat that comes from profoundly undemocratic forces that don't have the same conception of human dignity or freedom, and which abuse Israel as a kind of representative of the broader West and Western liberal-democratic values," said Kenney. "I also very acutely understand the nature of the new anti-Semitism, and I think it's even more dangerous than the old European anti-Semitism."

Kenney said many anti-Israel attacks come from adherents of a form of anti-Semitism that who appear to view a Jewish homeland as illegitimate. "Israel is not perfect, obviously," Kenney said. "Israelis should be the first to admit that. But we acknowledge that so much of the criticism Israel faces is motivated by a dangerous form of anti-Semitism that tries to hide behind anti-Zionism and is represented by a coalition of the far left in the West with extreme currents of jihadi Islam that seek the destruction of the Jewish nation. They seem to believe that the Jewish people are the only people in the world that don't have a right to a homeland." (Haaretz May 25)

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### Commentary...

#### It's Not That Simple Editorial National Post

Perhaps it would have been expecting an awful lot of Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon not to pay some kind of rhetorical tribute to the torn and singed middle-Eastern "road map" to peace Monday, what with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas standing right there beside him. But his declaration that the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank is an "illegal move" on the part of the Israeli government is a strange obtuseness of binary, black-and-white thinking into a situation of infinite nuance and multiple, migraine-inducing moral claims.

If he had said "unfortunate" instead of "illegal" he might have had a stronger case. The whole reason for Mr. Abbas to be on Canadian soil is that he represents the best hope for a united, peaceable, functioning Palestinian government with which Israel can bargain. Something of the sort -- some common voice through which Palestinian Arabs can speak and negotiate -- is a necessary precondition for progress toward a two-state solution in the Holy Land. And the expansion of a few wildcat settlements in the West Bank probably won't help strengthen the hand of Mr. Abbas and his Fatah party.

Mr. Cannon's claim of "illegality," though, implies a reference not to merely tactical realities, but to some higher absolute norm or authority than the sovereign state of Israel. Opinions about the status of Israeli settlements in the West Bank under international law are more varied than the pro-Palestinian segment of the press would lead you to believe. There has, of course, been no final settlement of borders between Israel and the future

Palestinian state; the Palestinian parties have always found a way to sabotage any such deal, and must take considerable responsibility for the continued low-level give-and-take over disputed lands. And there are endless tedious arguments over

whether new building in particular occupied areas represents accommodation of natural increase on the part of lawful Jewish communities, or true demographic invasion tactics. One man's chicken coop is another man's "outpost."

As Mr. Abbas's negotiators admit, the ultimate question is not who is living in a particular spot, but which side is to be master there. The essential precondition for firming up a set of mutually tenable borders is for Palestinians to settle their civil war -- civil wars in the plural, really, since Fatah is fighting itself as well as Hamas -- and choose a government that is permanently committed to renouncing terror. They have, essentially, been paid hundreds of millions of dollars by the West to help this part of the process along; so far, the money has accomplished little. It almost seems as though the more cash we pour in, the stronger and more strident Mr. Abbas's Hamas rivals get (and the more loudly all Palestinians argue that the territory under their authority is too crowded and innately impoverished to sustain prosperity).

In 2005, Israel demonstrated in the Gaza Strip, to what ought to be anyone's satisfaction, that it is willing to dismantle unauthorized Jewish settlements in disputed territories to achieve peace. In Gush Katif, it evacuated a particularly successful community in a place that has had Jewish demographic representation since antiquity, and turned a cutting-edge economic infrastructure over to Palestinian authority -- only to see that infrastructure demolished in triumphalist rioting, and to be rewarded with rocket fire on nearby Israeli towns. As a consequence, Israel now has a hard-nosed right-wing government that is arguably less stringent than it ought to be about monitoring settlement in the occupied territories, though still more committed to the thankless pursuit of the "road map" than popular Israeli opinion, characterized these days by a perfectly understandable cynicism, might like.

Who could have expected any less? Why, when every step Israel takes toward peace is met with increasing pressure from Palestinian elements who hope to annihilate it, should it be stricter about suppressing overly adventurous Jewish settlers than Palestine has ever been about respecting Israeli sovereignty over Israel? Any imagined norm of law that requires such a thing is bound to be ignored, indeed laughed at, by the Israelis. When rocket attacks and cross-border raids are answered by the quiet, stubborn construction of houses and farms, it won't do for third parties to forget the rockets and denounce the farms as "illegal." (NP May 27)

#### Don't Even Think About It! By Stewart Weiss

Shavuot - as the late, great comedian Rodney Dangerfield might have characterized it - is the holiday that gets no respect. It is devoid of prominent, eye-catching symbols, such as the shofar or the hanukkah; it is the shortest of the festivals, lasting just one day (in Israel), and it comes on the heels of a host of other holy days, such as Pessah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, Remembrance Day and Yom Ha'atzmaut. As such, it seems to somehow get lost in the shuffle.

Yet Shavuot deserves a better fate, as it represents a moment of cataclysmic importance, a day that changed civilization in a most profound way. The giving - as well as the receiving - of the Torah on Mount Sinai energized our people forever and brought order, justice and civility to the world at large.

The code word of that great moment of revelation, the collective response of the Jewish nation to God's offer of the Torah is na'aseh v'nishma, we shall do and we shall hear. But that statement is as puzzling

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as it is powerful. For while faith is certainly a vital component of our religion, our unquestioning, almost blind belief in this most comprehensive set of laws and behavior seems quite out of character for the Jewish people. We usually read the fine print oh so carefully, delving into the meaning and nuance of every detail before we decide to finally jump in.

So what happened at Sinai?

I would like to respond to this classic question with a story from our recent history, one that is as relevant today - perhaps even more relevant - than when it first occurred. In 1978, the Camp David summit with Egypt resulted in the return of the entire Sinai Peninsula. US president Jimmy Carter, delirious with joy that Israel had decided to give two-thirds of its land mass to an enemy nation, decided he would try to push the envelope. He told prime minister Menachem Begin that, before ending the summit, he would like to discuss the issue of Jerusalem, that he wanted Israel to consider either ceding part of it, or internationalizing all of it.

Begin flatly refused Carter's request.

"At least think about it for a few days," said Carter.

"No!" said Begin defiantly.

"What?!" answered an incredulous Carter, "You won't even think about it? Why not? How can you be so obstinate?"

Begin replied: "I think it's time to tell you about Rabbi Amnon."

He then proceeded to relate to Carter the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz. Pressured incessantly by the bishop of that city to convert to Christianity, he finally asked for three days to think about it. He was then so overcome with guilt that he begged God for forgiveness. "How could I ever even contemplate such an act of heresy?" he lamented.

When he did not return to the bishop, Rabbi Amnon was cruelly tortured, his limbs amputated one by one. Yet through it all he did not relent. Maimed and mutilated, he was finally brought home. Three days later, on Rosh Hashana, he asked that he be brought to the synagogue and placed before the Holy Ark. There he uttered his famous prayer that has become the centerpiece of the High Holy Day liturgy - Un'taneh Tokef, Who shall live, and who shall die - and there he expired.

When Begin finished the story, he turned to Carter: "There are some things in life, Mr. President, that a Jew cannot even think about - and relinquishing Jerusalem in any way, shape or manner is one of them." With that emphatic statement, Begin returned home.

It is true that, normally, we weigh our important decisions with great deliberation and give pause to consider all the pros and cons.

But on certain issues, our gut instinct takes over and there is nothing to discuss. We know, deep inside, that there is a God, even if we cannot prove it; we believe He gave us the Torah and, by virtue of our mutual obligations to one another, that we have a special relationship with Him. And we are absolutely certain, regardless of world opinion and the ranting of our neighbors, that Israel is our home, and Jerusalem is our eternal, undivided capital.

To even consider rejecting these fundamentals of faith, well, don't even think about it. (Jerusalem Post May. 26)

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## **Will The US Follow Its Laws And Suspend Funding To Abbas?**

By Itamar Marcus And Barbara Crook

As US President Barack Obama prepares to welcome Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to Washington this week, and US lawmakers debate the proposed \$900 million aid package to the PA, it is once again using its money to proclaim that killing Israeli woman and children is heroic.

The PA chose to name its latest computer center "after the martyr Dalal Mughrabi," who led the most deadly terror attack in the country's history. Her 1978 bus hijacking killed 37 civilians, 12 of them children, including American photographer Gail Rubin. The new center is funded by Abbas's office, which is bolstered by Western aid money. (Al-Ayyam, May 5).

US law prohibits the funding of Palestinian structures that use any portion of their budget to promote terror or honor terrorists. But \$200 million of the US's proposed \$900m. aid package is earmarked to go directly to the Abbas government, which regularly uses its budget to honor terrorists. In fact, this latest veneration of Mughrabi is not an isolated case, but part of a continuing pattern of honoring terrorists that targets children in particular.

Last summer the PA sponsored "the Dalal Mughrabi football championship" for kids, and a "summer camp named for martyr Dalal

Mughrabi... out of honor and admiration for the martyr." It also held a party to honor exemplary students, also named "for the martyr Dalal Mughrabi," under the auspices of Abbas and at which Abbas's representative "reviewed the heroic life of the martyr [Mughrabi] (Al-Hayat al-Jadida, July 23, 24 and August 8, 2008). All these PA-funded activities were to teach kids that a killer of women and children is a role model.

Two months ago, 31 years to the day after the Mughrabi murders, PA TV broadcast a special program celebrating the terror attack, calling the killing of 37 civilians "one of the most important and most prominent special operations... carried out by a team of heroes and led by the heroic fighter Dalal Mughrabi" (PA TV March 11). And its not just Mughrabi who is a Palestinian hero. Despite professions in English by Abbas and other PA leaders that they reject terror, the PA has a long and odious history in Arabic of celebrating terrorists as role models and heroes, often involving US money.

USAID spent \$400,000 in 2004 to build the Salakh Khalaf soccer field. After Palestinian Media Watch reported that Khalaf was the head of the Palestinian terror group that murdered 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics and two American diplomats in Sudan, USAID publicly apologized and said it would demand that the PA change the name. The name was never changed.

In 2002, US money funded renovations of the "Dalal Mughrabi school for girls." After PMW alerted the US State Department to Mughrabi's terrorist past, the funding was cancelled. Within 24 hours, the PA said the name would be changed, and the American money was reinstated. Once the work was completed, however, the school was renamed for the terrorist. It bears Mughrabi's name to this day.

At a recent hearing of the House Appropriations Committee, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pledged: "We will work only with a Palestinian Authority government that unambiguously and explicitly accepts the Quartet's principles, [including] a commitment to nonviolence." And it's not just Clinton's pledge. US law interprets nonviolence to include not honoring terrorists: "None of the [US]... assistance under the West Bank and Gaza program may be made available for the purpose of recognizing or otherwise honoring individuals who commit, or have committed acts of terrorism" (2008 Foreign Operations Bill Sec. 657.B - C.1). This latest glorification of the terrorist Mughrabi, coming as Congress considers the administration's latest request to fund Abbas, imposes a profound responsibility on Congress. But it also creates a unique opportunity.

Will the US follow its own laws, and insist that the PA stop turning killers of women and children into heroes and role models before it receives another cent of US money? Congress and Obama can send a message to the PA that the US will not fund the PA, or any part of its budget, until it proves that it has ceased promoting terrorist murderers as heroes and role models. It can demand a statement from Abbas - in public, in Arabic and in the PA media - that murdering Israelis is terror, that terrorists are neither heroes nor holy martyrs and that they will no longer be honored.

Or they can send a different message to Abbas: that raising another generation of Palestinian children to the values of hate, murder and martyrdom is acceptable to the US - so acceptable that the US is even willing to fund it. (Jerusalem Post May 25)

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## **Israel's Forgotten Rights In Jerusalem** By Dore Gold

Israel has not yet declared its detailed positions in future talks with the Palestinians, and for understandable reasons. At this point, the government is justly focusing on the Iranian issue, which constitutes an existential threat. This is the context in which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu conducted his visit in Washington D.C.

However, when the actual talks with the Palestinians are launched, Israel will have to avoid making the basic diplomatic mistake that previous governments have made in defining Israel's primary interests - especially when it comes to Jerusalem. For most of the past two decades, an asymmetry could be observed in how the two parties handled their struggle in the diplomatic sphere. While the Palestinians maintained that their goal was to achieve a Palestinian state whose capital is Jerusalem, most Israeli declarations sufficed with general statements that the goal is peace, or peace and security.

In other words, whereas Israel presented an abstract goal, the Palestinians spoke about a clear and well-defined purpose. As a rule, the side that presents clear objectives is the triumphant one in any political conflict. Little wonder, then, that the contemporary diplomatic discourse is focusing on the Palestinian narrative, and Israel's arguments have been swept aside. Thus the asymmetry between how the Israelis and the Arabs presented their arguments to the world became one of the central factors responsible for the ongoing erosion in Israel's diplomatic status.

This process comes despite the fact that Israel's claims rest on a broad base, and have in the past received solid international recognition, especially when it comes to Jerusalem. In 1967, for example, when the Israel Defense Forces entered East Jerusalem, the Soviet Union's attempt to label Israel as the aggressor failed. The world's leading jurists recognized its superior right to possess Jerusalem in light of the fact that Israel had entered the city in a defensive war. U.S. State Department Legal Advisor Stephen Schwebel, who also headed the International Court of Justice at The Hague, wrote in 1970 that "Israel has better title in the territory that was Palestine, including the whole of Jerusalem, than Jordan and Egypt."

The esteemed British jurist Elihu Lauterpacht expressed a similar view. Such views are significant in international law, as implied in the constitution of the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

Because of the historical circumstances of the Six-Day War, the United Nations Security Council did not insist on a full withdrawal to the 1967 borders, as clearly stated in Resolution 242. Moreover, former U.S. ambassador to the UN, Arthur Goldberg, mentioned at one occasion that Resolution 242 did not include Jerusalem, making it of a different status than the West Bank.

In 1994, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, announced at the Security Council that she rejects the assertion that Jerusalem is "occupied Palestinian territory."

The late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin stressed that there was no contradiction between the willingness to hold talks with the Palestinians and the insistence on Israel's legal right to Jerusalem. Two years after his government signed the Oslo Accords, Rabin reiterated in a speech to the Knesset his belief regarding the need to keep Jerusalem united. This position received further backing by a decisive majority in both houses of Congress in 1995.

Two Israeli governments that proposed to divide Jerusalem have come and gone since then, though they never reached a final agreement. Israel need not be bound to the protocols of a failed negotiation.

To protect Jerusalem, Israeli diplomacy must reestablish the unification of the city as a clear national goal, and not abandon the subject of Jerusalem exclusively to Palestinian spokespeople. (Haaretz May 24)

*The writer heads the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and was the Israeli ambassador to the UN.*

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### **Saying 'No' to America** By Yoram Ettinger

US-Israel concurrence is not a prerequisite for the advancement of peace and bilateral strategic cooperation. Israel should strive for a wider agreement with the US, but not at any price. Common ground with the US should not be at the expense of Israel's independent national security policy-making. It should not undermine Israel's control of land, which is critical to its survival.

The superiority of Israel's security considerations over agreement with the US – even at a painful cost to Israel – paved the road to the 1948 establishment of the Jewish state. "Much as Israel desired friendship with the US and full co-operation with it...Israel could not yield at any point which, in its judgment, would threaten its independence or its security..." stated Prime Minister Ben Gurion, when rejecting a brutal US ultimatum to refrain from declaration of independence and to accept a UN Trusteeship. Ben Gurion added that "(The US) would be gravely mistaken if (it) assumed that the threat, or even the use of UN sanctions, would force Israel to yield on issues considered vital to its independence and security..."

The US ultimatum included a military embargo and a threat of economic sanctions. But, Ben Gurion determined that sovereignty and national security – rather than concurrence with the US – constituted supreme strategic values. He realized that an agreement with the US would be transient, non-binding (according to the US Constitution) and subject to US interpretation, while national security would be a fixture largely controlled by Israel. Ben Gurion's order of national priorities transformed Israel from a sympathy-deserving remnant of the Holocaust to a potential strategic partner.

The 1979 Israel-Egypt peace treaty was initiated by Prime Minister Begin, in defiance of a policy introduced by President Carter and National Security Advisor Brzezinski. While Begin insisted on a direct Jerusalem-Cairo dialogue, which minimized the Palestinian role, Carter and Brzezinski lobbied for an international conference, which would highlight the Palestinian issue. Begin's and Sadat's determination not to allow the peace process to become a hostage in the hands of the Palestinian issue and radical regimes forced Carter and Brzezinski to abandon their own policy and jump on the bandwagon.

The first Intifada (1987-1992) escalated US-Israel disagreements, fueled by the US-PLO dialogue. President Bush Sr. and Secretary Baker did not waste an opportunity to condemn Prime Minister Shamir as a supposed obstacle to peace and persona non-grata in Washington, DC. However, regional and global challenges, and Shamir's steadfastness in face of internal and external pressure, yielded the dramatic enhancement of US-Israel strategic cooperation: Upgrading Israel to "Major Non-NATO Ally," inclusion of Israel in "Star Wars" and US funding of most of the anti-ballistic missile "Arrow" project, expansion of joint military exercises, increasing pre-positioning of US military ammunition and supplies in Israel, upgrading of the port of Haifa for the Sixth Fleet, participation of Israeli defense contractors in Pentagon contracts in Europe, emergency assistance following the 1991 Gulf War, etc.

The US Administration was not at ease with Shamir's demand to stop issuing refugee certificates to Soviet Jews, and to force the USSR to fly Jewish immigrants only to Israel. Shamir's readiness to risk disagreement with the US stopped the 95% dropout rate among Jewish Olim and produced a wave of one million immigrants to the Jewish State, which has catapulted the country demographically, technologically, medically, culturally and militarily.

In 1967 and in 1981, President Johnson and President Reagan pressured Israel against a unilateral military action against the Egypt-Syria-Jordan axis and Iraq's nuclear reactor. Prime Minister Eshkol and Prime Minister Begin defied US (and global pressure,) wrecked the Nasser-led anti-US Arab axis and destroyed Iraq's nuclear project, thus advancing drastically US' and Israel's national security. Eshkol and Begin realized that sovereignty and national security – rather than concurrence with the US – constituted the top strategic values. Will Prime Minister Netanyahu follow in their footsteps, avoiding temptation to transform common ground with the US into the top strategic value? (Ynet May 27)

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### **The Simple Truth Can Help Bring Peace** By Max Singer

An often-overlooked piece of Palestinian behavior is key to the pursuit of peace. The Palestinians teach their people that no Jewish kingdom ever existed in the land they call Palestine, and that there was never a Jewish temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Presumably some Palestinians know these teachings are false, but for most they are "facts" learned in school and taken for granted. These falsehoods are deliberately spread by the Palestinian leadership. To publicly deny them is to be viewed as disloyal, and anyone who tries to assert the truth risks retribution.

This is not just a matter of ancient history - it's not merely an "alternative narrative" which needn't be contested because it's just talk. This false story helps explain the Palestinian refusal to make peace, because so long as Palestinians think the Jews were never here before, they will see Jews as a foreign colonial implant with no moral claim or right to the land. Modern Israel's claim to land in Palestine depends on the Jews' historic connection to the territory. Without this history, the nation of Israel would be merely foreign invaders, not a people who can be seen as returning home.

When a powerful foreigner comes and takes your territory just because he wants it, you have no honorable way to yield your rights. Accepting such a foreign invasion would be a cowardly sacrifice of honor. By insisting that this is what happened, the Palestinians' leaders are in effect burning their bridges behind them, so that their people will be forced by their honor to fight on, and prevented from making an honorable peace.

The Palestinian leadership's willingness to look foolish by denying well-known historic facts - including basic Christian history - demonstrates the importance to them of denying their people the moral and psychological basis for an honorable peace.

The United States can make an important step toward peace by publicly assuring the Palestinians that there were indeed ancient Jewish kingdoms in the land, and a Jewish temple on the Temple Mount before

the birth of Muhammad. There are plenty of Muslim sources that the US can use to teach these facts.

Denial of the Jews' ancient connection to the land is much more important than Holocaust denial. Israel's claim to the land has nothing to do with the Holocaust. The international decision that Palestine should be a Jewish homeland was made by the League of Nations a generation before the Holocaust. Jews claim the land based on their continuous emotional and religious attachment to it since ancient times - not as compensation for six million dead.

Since Palestinians and other Arabs care about honor, we should make it possible for them to recognize that there can be an honorable peace with the Jews. (Although there would still be Muslim objections to Jewish rule in Israel.)

Israeli diplomats should call on the US to end the Palestinians' denial of history, even though the State Department apparently regards the truth as something offensive to Arabs.

What better public disagreement can Israel and the US have than a disagreement about whether to allow the Palestinians to continue denying Jewish history? What better diagnostic tool can there be to determine when Palestinians are truly ready to live with Israel than looking at whether they are willing to acknowledge the Jews' connection to the land?

*The writer, a founder of the Hudson Institute, is a senior fellow there and at the BESA Center of Bar-Ilan University. (Jerusalem Post May 26)*

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### **Are Settlements The Problem?** By Hanoch Daum

Somehow, the settlements are again the most burning and problematic issue in the Middle East. The Netanyahu-Obama meeting reintroduced this matter. As if this is the problem around here. As if the entire mess stems from the settlements. As if all we need to do is to remove Migron or Kalgaron for quiet to prevail. If only we evacuate another settlement unilaterally, life in the Middle East will change for the better.

And so what if history proves otherwise. So what if the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza led to more bloodshed and by now has enabled Hamas, at any given moment, to place tens of thousands of Israelis under the threat of Qassam rockets.

I am not a member of the Greater Israel camp. I assume, with some regret, that one of these days we shall have to renounce this vision, and I'm hopeful that the settlement blocs that remain in our hands will comprise as many Jews as possible. Yet according to all indications, that day, where we shall reach an agreement with someone on the other side, is so distant that it is completely unclear why this issue has become so urgent at this time.

After all, it has been proven already that even when Israel evacuates settlements nothing happens, and it was also proven that when an Israeli prime minister offers the Palestinians a withdrawal from 98% of the territory, including east Jerusalem, there is nobody on the other side that would sign such deal. It is clear to all of us that even if there is someone out there who decides to sign, Hamas will not feel bound by the agreement and will continue to fight us, under more convenient circumstances.

For a long time now I've wanted to build a house in my community, located in Gush Etzion. It isn't an isolated settlement or a controversial community. Even according to the leading leftists, I live in a settlement bloc that will be annexed to Jerusalem in the future. Even within the framework of the Geneva Accord, the one signed by Beilin (strange that we've seen wars around here since then,) our community is on the Israeli side.

Yet despite all of this, there is almost no construction in my community. There is plenty of space, under Israeli ownership, yet there are no construction permits. Every apartment that becomes available here draws dozens of interested buyers, prices are going up, and a new house here has become something that only people with quite a bit of money can afford.

It is important to note that quite a few people want to buy a house in Gush Etzion for reasons that have nothing to do with ideological motives. For a religious family, there is something very appropriate about this way of life: A religious community, religious education, synagogues, proper companionship, and great proximity to Jerusalem. Not that there is anything wrong with people who have a political agenda, yet this is not the reason why so many people wish to build a house here.

This is the farthest thing from building a new settlement. We are talking about children who got married and wish to live near their parents. There is no shortage of space for new homes. The only thing missing is the defense minister's signature. (Ynet May 23)

### **Promises and the Promised Land** By Oliver North

On May 14, Israelis celebrated their 61st Independence Day. Less than 96 hours later, Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, arrived at the White House in an effort to ensure that the Jewish state will survive to commemorate another anniversary.

In 1948, when Israel was founded by survivors of the Holocaust, they pledged, "Never again!" Then the tiny Jewish state, about the size of New Jersey, had a population of fewer than 850,000 and was surrounded by hostile neighbors intent on its destruction. Today 7.2 million people call Israel their home, and the country has the only functioning democratic government in the neighborhood. As it was in the beginning -- and is now -- powerful opponents in the region remain committed to annihilating what they describe as "the Zionist entity." Unfortunately, the theocracy in Iran is bent on acquiring the means of achieving that goal, a threat the Obama administration appears unwilling or unable to do anything but talk about.

This past week's Obama-Netanyahu "summit" at the White House had but two items on the agenda: the O-Team's quest for an Israeli-Palestinian "two-state solution" for "peace in the Middle East" and the Israelis' plea for U.S. help in stopping Tehran's race to acquire nuclear weapons. After a 90-minute one-on-one meeting, the two leaders sat for an Oval Office "press availability," during which they tried their best to make it appear that the U.S. and Israel are of one mind on these issues. It was a good try, complete with jocular exchanges and smiles, but it just isn't so.

Washington remains wedded to the naive hope that if Israel simply withdrew from all territory it captured during the 1967 Six-Day War, tranquility in the volatile Middle East would be assured. According to the O-Team, "a two-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians are living side by side in peace and security" somehow will motivate the Iranian government to abandon its quest for a nuclear arsenal and oft-stated aim of "wiping Israel off the map."

Prime Minister Netanyahu apparently understood the role he was handed in this piece of political theater -- the warm-up act for next week's White House seances with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. All of this is but preamble to the much-anticipated June 4 address from Cairo, in which Mr. Obama is pledged to describe his "new approach to the Muslim world." Thankfully, for our own good and that of Israel, Netanyahu didn't stick entirely to the White House script. The Israeli prime minister did agree to "start peace negotiations with the Palestinians immediately" and called for broadening "the circle of peace to include others in the Arab world." But he never deviated from his most serious concern, the paramount threat to the survival of Israel and peace of any kind: a nuclear-armed Iran. He carefully avoided endorsing a "two-state solution" and did not agree to withdraw from the Golan Heights or accede to shuttering Israeli settlements on the West Bank and Jerusalem. Nor did Netanyahu embrace the idea that the ayatollahs in Tehran will be dissuaded from acquiring nuclear arms -- and the means of delivering them -- just because Palestinians and Israelis somehow are living in comity.

Unfortunately, the O-Team offers little evidence that it shares Israeli anxieties about Iranian weapons of mass destruction or the imminent deployment of Russian S-300 surface-to-air missiles to protect nuclear sites in Persia. Mr. Obama did say that "Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon" would "be a threat to Israel and the United States" and that it would be "destabilizing" and "extraordinarily dangerous." But he then insisted, "We are engaged in a process to reach out to Iran and persuade them that it is not in their interest to pursue a nuclear weapon and that they should change course." In short, nothing is going to be done to stop the Iranian nuclear program until after the June 12 Iranian elections and Mr. Obama and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have a chance to stroke palms, sip tea and chat.

In subsequent discussions at the departments of State and Defense, Netanyahu was reminded that Washington could shut off the flow of financial aid and military hardware to Israel in an instant. It turns out this same message also was being delivered in Tel Aviv by CIA Director Leon Panetta. None of this is good news for Israel or the United States.

Asked by a reporter in the Oval Office whether he was concerned that his "outstretched hand has been interpreted by extremists, especially Ahmadinejad (and others), as a sign of weakness," Mr. Obama replied, "Well, it's not clear to me why my outstretched hand would be interpreted as weakness." Just hours later, the Iranian regime successfully launched a 1,200-mile-range Sajjil-2 ballistic missile. So much for clarity, weakness and the wisdom of offering an outstretched hand to genocidal despots. (Townhall.com May 22)