



## 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*

with Iran and its strategic collaboration with North Korea, Israel has its own strategic interest in exposing Syria and building an operational alliance with the US to defeat Syria and Iran in the war that they wage with North Korean assistance against Israel and the US. That medium- and long-term interest ought to outweigh immediate concerns. And the outcry in the Defense Ministry

should simply be understood as an expression of dismay at the inevitable cost of building alliances.

The standoff between the administration and Congress on the nature of the Sept. 6 raid is illustrative of the second lesson for policymakers that the Syrian operation manifests. It goes to the heart of the need for policymakers in democratic societies to be open with their publics about the identity of their adversaries and of the nature of the war being waged against them in order to form a consensus about the nature of those adversaries and the need to combat them like the consensus that already exists in Israel about Syria.

Since September, Congressional leaders have given three main justifications for their need to understand what happened on Sept. 6. First, they have argued that lawmakers and the American public have a right to understand the significance of the target in light of what it says about North Korean nuclear proliferation activities.

Last year, the US signed an agreement with North Korea. North Korea pledged to disable its nuclear installation at Yongbyon and to give a full accounting of its other nuclear installations, its nuclear arsenal and materials and its nuclear proliferation activities. The US in exchange agreed to lift financial sanctions against Pyongyang, normalize relations between Washington and Pyongyang, remove North Korea from the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism, and provide economic assistance to North Korea. The US is still awaiting North Korean compliance. A disclosure of the nature of the target of Israel's Sept. 6 operation in Syria, Congress argues, is essential for assessing the reasonableness of the US's current North Korean policy.

Moreover, Congressional leaders - and most prominently among them, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Peter Hokstra - have argued that by failing to give a full accounting of the IDF raid, the administration is preventing lawmakers and the US public from making an educated assessment of the nature of the threat that Syria poses to US national security interests. Syria actively promotes war in Iraq by training Iraq-bound fighters on its soil and acting as the major transit point to Iraq for jihadists. Syria is the headquarters of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and several other Islamic terror groups. It is Hizbullah's logistical backbone. While all of these actions are sufficient to place Syria squarely in the camp of US enemies, its apparent nuclear proliferation with Iran and North Korea requires a reclassification of the threat posed by Syria from nuisance to strategic threat.

Finally, American lawmakers have argued that understanding the Israeli operation is essential for understanding the nature of the Iranian-Syrian-North Korean alliance. By preventing the release of details on the raid, the administration is denying Congress and the American public the ability to understand the rationale and the modes of operation of arguably the greatest threat to US national security. How can Congress support an ally like Israel if it doesn't understand why what Israel does promotes US national security interests? And how can Congress support US actions in the war if it isn't aware of the nature of the axis fighting the US?

WHAT IS most striking about the Bush administration's unwillingness to reveal the nature of the Israeli raid to Congress is how it seems to upset the administration's own war efforts in Iraq. Working together, under Iranian control, for the past five years Syria and Iran have been the major forces behind the war in Iraq. Jihadists of both the Sunni and Shiite variety enter Iraq from Syria and Iran. They receive training in both countries. They receive direction and orders from Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

And yet, rather than make clear to Congress and to the US public that the

## Events...

**Sunday, April 13, 7:30 PM**

**Michael Ignatieff**, Deputy Leader, Liberal Party of Canada, will speak on "Canada and Israel - A Personal Perspective on the Ties that Bind", at Holy Blossom, 1950 Bathurst Avenue.

## Commentary...

**Covering for the Enemy** By Caroline Glick

It has taken seven months, but it appears that the Bush administration has finally buckled under Congressional pressure and is ready to give US lawmakers a full briefing on the September 6 IDF bombing raid against the North Korean-built nuclear installation in Syria. Sunday it was reported that Congress has forced the administration's hand on the issue by making its approval of the administration's intelligence budget contingent on receiving a full briefing on the raid.

Israel, which initially was upset with the administration's insistence on silencing all discussion of the Sept. 6 operation, is now reportedly unhappy with the administration's decision to release its details. The administration is expected to provide the information at Congressional hearings later in the month and Israeli Defense Ministry officials are beside themselves.

Defense officials fear that the revelation of Syria's rogue activities will push Syrian dictator Bashar Assad over the edge. They caution that today, in the aftermath of terror-master Imad Mughniyah's assassination in Syria in February, and with heightened tensions along Israel's borders with Lebanon and Syria, Assad may view the exposure of his nuclear proliferation activities as an invitation to throw caution to the wind. He may embrace his exposure as a full-fledged member in the North Korean-Iranian-Syrian axis of nuclear proliferating, terror-sponsoring states and take actions commensurate with his status.

Both the Defense Ministry's concerns about the consequences of exposing the Israeli operation and Congress's demand that the details of the raid be revealed demonstrate important lessons about the constraints and imperatives that fighting long, complicated wars place on policymakers in democratic societies.

ISRAEL'S POSITION reflects a conflict between immediate and long-term interests. Israel has an immediate interest in dissuading Syria from attacking either directly or through any of Syria's multiple terror proxies. It also has an interest in protecting intelligence sources and methods which may be compromised by a disclosure of the operation.

Israeli politicians have no need to inform the Israeli public of the nature of the raid because among the Israeli public, there is a consensus regarding the nature of the threat that Syria poses to the country. Israelis understand that Syria cannot be permitted to acquire certain arsenals and they understand that some things are better left unreported. The Israeli public's relative sophistication on the issue did not spring from nowhere. Syria has been in a declared state of war against Israel for 60 years. And every time that Israelis have permitted ourselves to believe that Syria might be interested in ending that state of war, through their own actions the Syrians have been quick to dispel the notion.

While Israel's immediate interests are understandable, in the medium and long terms, given the rogue nature of the Syrian regime, its strategic alliance

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war in Iraq is not an Iraqi war per se but a key battleground in a regional war in which Iran and Syria have combined forces on multiple fronts in a bid to defeat the US and its allies, the Bush administration obfuscates that central truth. For the past five years, key administration officials have repeated the bizarre claim that Iran and Syria share the US's interest in bringing stability to Iraq and that responsibility for ending the war rests solely on the shoulders of Iraq's government rather than on the shoulders of the foreign governments who are waging the war.

The administration itself then holds a major portion of responsibility for the fact that five years after US-led forces toppled Saddam Hussein's regime, the majority of Americans believes that the US doesn't have an interest in what happens in post-Saddam Iraq and should simply remove its forces from the country at the first opportunity. If the administration was less concerned about obfuscating Syrian and Iranian centrality in the war, there can be little doubt that more Americans would understand why it is essential that the US not allow Iraq to fall into their hands. Indeed, a larger number of Americans would understand that Iran and Syria are waging this proxy war against coalition forces and Iraqis in a bid to advance their goal of regional dominance.

Notably the US official who has been most consistent in highlighting Iran's central role in Iraq is US Commander in Iraq General David Petraeus. Petraeus and his officers, whose job it is to win the war in Iraq, apparently understand what the administration has spent the past five years ignoring. They understand that to secure the public support necessary to fight a long war, they need to tell the American public what the war is about, who the US is fighting and what is at stake.

Last week the Iranians rejected yet another European-American offer to appease them in a North Korean-styled deal in exchange for a pause in their uranium-enrichment activities. The Iranians also introduced a new set of advanced centrifuges to their Natanz nuclear installation which are apparently better equipped to enrich uranium to weapons grade than the current 3,000 centrifuges now operating at the facility. The Iranians also promised that on Tuesday April 8 - a day they have designated their celebration of nuclear power day - they will provide more "good news" about their atomic program.

So as it wages war against the US in Iraq and against Israel in Lebanon and Gaza, supported by its Syrian and North Korean allies, Iran moves brazenly and swiftly forward in its bid to acquire nuclear weapons. And as it moves, it drags the US and Israel ever closer to a great war. The question is how can the US be expected to handle the coming conflagration when it demurs from explaining its eminently more manageable current situation either to itself or to its public? (Jerusalem Post Apr 7)

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### **Shelve the 'Shelf Agreement'** By Hillel Halkin

A recent cartoon in an Israeli newspaper showed Prime Minister Olmert making a hole in a kitchen wall with an electric drill while the president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, stands behind him, ready to hand him a board and some brackets. "Shelf Agreement," said the caption.

A "shelf agreement" is now being touted as the most feasible next step toward an ultimate resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The idea is a simple one. On the one hand, Israel and the Palestinians are to arrive at an immediate agreement on such final-status issues as borders, security arrangements, Palestinian refugees, etc. On the other hand, since the Palestinian Authority is too weak at the moment to implement such an agreement against the opposition of Hamas and other armed groups in Palestinian society, it will be "shelved" until the time comes when it can be carried out.

Meanwhile, it is said, the agreement's existence on the shelf will reduce tensions, since the Palestinians will know, not only that they will get their promised state, but the exact terms on which they will get it. Better yet, as long as the Palestinian Authority is unable to put an end to terror, Israel will be under no obligation to put the agreement into practice. Only once Israeli security needs are met will it be taken down from the shelf. In this fashion, the Palestinians will be given a horizon of hope and Israel will risk nothing.

But this is nonsense. The horizon of hope could prove to be an infinitely receding one and Israel will risk a great deal.

What Israeli negotiators will have to concede in order to get the Palestinian Authority to sign such a "shelf agreement" is clear: A near total retreat to the 1967 borders, land swaps for any Palestinian territory annexed, a re-division of Jerusalem, the admission to Israel of at least a small number of 1948 refugee families, and so on, and so forth. Each one of these concessions will involve a further attrition in Israeli positions that already have been whittled down considerably in the past. Each will involve doing things that a succession

of Israeli governments since 1967 has promised never to do.

And what will Israel get in return from the Palestinian Authority? A theoretical commitment to live alongside Israel as a good neighbor once conditions for such coexistence are ripe. This commitment will not have to be honored at any particular point in time, nor will the agreement be revoked if it is not. The Palestinian Authority can take five years to reach the point at which it is ready; it can take 10; it can take 20. The agreement will remain all this time on the shelf, neatly wrapped and marked, "Do not touch."

And why indeed, once such a "shelf agreement" is signed, should the Palestinian Authority be in any hurry to take it off the shelf? Hamas and other radical Palestinian groups will be against it; why start the civil war with them that dismantling terrorist organizations will entail, and hazard a possible repeat in the West Bank of the Hamas takeover in Gaza, if this can always be put off for another day? What will there be to lose by postponing a full-scale war against terror for another year, and another, and yet another?

But Israel will have much to lose. In the first place, it will be chained to a series of concessions on which it will be unable to renege no matter how much the international or Middle-Eastern situation changes. Hamas may take over the West Bank; Iran may get the bomb; Islamic fundamentalists may seize control of Egypt; the Hashemite regime in Jordan may topple: the "shelf agreement" will remain, inviolable, on its shelf. Any attempt to change it in Israel's favor will be received with loud protests, not only from the Arab world, but also from Europe and America.

Moreover, while the agreement is sitting on the shelf, Israel will have to go on fighting Palestinian terror with all the sacrifice and expense that this involves. And what will happen to the nearly 100,000 Israeli settlers who will be required by the agreement to leave their West Bank homes?

If they are evacuated, Israel will be exposed at a great financial cost to a frightful national trauma that not only will have no benefits, but also will decrease even further the pressure on the Palestinians to make progress.

If the settlers stay where they are, they will be living with a death sentence hanging over them, with all the anger, despair, and dangerous readiness to take the law into their own hands that this may involve.

Indeed an Israel-Palestinian "shelf agreement" is such a bad idea that one may well wonder how Israel could possibly even consider it, let alone enter into actual negotiations on the basis of it, as the Olmert government, if it has not already done so secretly, is apparently on the verge of doing. The depressing answer is that it is this government's political desperation alone that has brought it to such a point. With Mr. Olmert's popularity remaining stuck in the low two digits at the polls, and an increasingly wobbly coalition, some kind of ostensible progress toward peace that can be paraded before the Israeli public seems to the prime minister his only hope for staying in power.

Hence the strategy of reaching an unimplementable treaty with the Palestinians that can be signed with great fanfare and installed in a display window, where it will gather dust while future prime ministers rack their brains over what to do with it. It should be shelved before it reaches any shelves. (NY Sun Apr 8)

*The writer is a contributing editor of The New York Sun.*

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### **Teaching Violent Intolerance: The Tiny Ticking Time Bombs in the Middle East** By Suzanne Fields

'Tis education forms the common mind; just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined. -- Alexander Pope

Parents, teachers, preachers and politicians have always understood the wisdom Alexander Pope boiled down to aphorism in the 18th century. What and how you teach determines the child's character and curiosity as a man or woman. Like plants, children require nourishment and demand care, and by depriving them of the oxygen of countervailing ideas, their growth is stunted and their minds warped.

Alexander Pope is not on many reading lists in the Middle East, but there's abundant evidence -- played out in Iraq, Iran and Palestine every day -- that the Islamists have engraved these two lines of Pope's poetry on their culture. The result is in the textbooks of their schools, perverting knowledge and turning children into what one Middle Eastern scholar calls "tiny ticking time bombs."

The cartoons aimed at small children in Iran, available on the Internet, are terrifying. One depicts a little boy and George W. Bush as puppets. St. George he is not, but the little boy in the cartoon wields the sword of Islam, swearing at a tender age to reap vengeance on the American president. When the president asks where his parents are, the child replies that the president has killed his father in Iraq, his mother in Lebanon and his brothers in Gaza.

When the president invites him to visit the White House for treats and toys, the boy tells him there is no White House because it has been converted into a mosque. Then the boy stabs the president, over and over again. The fantasy wish is fulfilled.

Unlike a fairy tale, which uses fictional characters to liberate a child's imagination to deal with issues of good and evil, this Islamist cartoon incites primitive blood lust. It's a theme not all that unusual in the propaganda, tracked by the Middle East Media Research Institute, which monitors and translates newspapers, magazines, radio and television broadcasts and other media across the Middle East.

A new study of Iranian textbooks conducted by Freedom House reveals a consistent and pernicious doctrine of discrimination against the "infidel" world, a doctrine especially virulent against the United States and Israel, but extends to Europe and Russia as well. The survey examines the content of 95 compulsory textbooks covering the sciences, humanities and religious curriculum as taught in eleven grades. These books discourage critical questioning; the harsh Islamic political order is "sacred" and to oppose it thwarts "divine will."

The study confirms the findings of an Israeli think tank that demonstrate how Iranian textbooks encourage martyrdom in children of tender years. The children are encouraged as early as the second grade to follow the malignant teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini, who led the Islamist revolution in Iran, urging Muslims to make use of "the passionate and the martyrdom-seeking youths."

Iran is depicted as the model Muslim state and the protector of Palestinian rights. The Palestinians themselves are attentive students. The Palestinian Authority continues to publish textbooks teaching children in Gaza and the West Bank that a legitimate State of Israel does not exist. Western values of learning, tolerance of opposing viewpoints, democracy and brotherhood are roundly mocked and ridiculed. Mahmoud Abbas managed to delete some of the hate language, but after Hamas came to power the emphasis on armed jihad was restored. A poem in a 12th grade textbook is typical: "I swear by Al-Aqsa Mosque and those plains/I shall not return the sword to its sheath and shall not lay down arms."

"Palestinian Textbooks: From Arafat to Abbas and Hamas" follows studies of textbooks used in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iran. The report is published by the American Jewish Committee and the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education. These studies show why the peace process in Palestine so often seems a vain and idle dream. Politicians and diplomats continue to talk of hope and a two-state solution. Palestinian children are taught only the audacity of violence.

None of these facts surprise, but drawing attention to the powerful indoctrination pervasive throughout the Middle East shows how changing the violent reality in the region will be a long and arduous task. Political solutions will be the easy part; first, the culture must be changed. Violent cartoons against the West and disinformation purveyed in textbooks produce a forest of bent twigs.

Alexander Pope had another aphorism useful to temper expectations of the easy pursuit of peace: "Some people will never learn anything because they understand everything too soon." (Townhall.com Apr 7)

*The writer is a columnist with The Washington Times.*

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### **Judenrein Palestine** By Moshe Arens

What makes the removal of the outposts in Judea and Samaria seem like a mission impossible for Israel's defense minister? Most will agree that they were put up illegally, and like all illegal structures in a country in which the rule of law is supposed to prevail, they should never have been put up in the first place, and they should be removed. But behind the government's intention to remove them lurks a ghost. It is the ghost of the uprooting of the settlers in Gush Katif. The Gush Katif settlers were there for many years and their settlements were perfectly legal - no one will contest that. And yet they were forcibly removed from their homes by orders of the Israeli government.

The removal of the settlers from their homes in Gaza was part of a policy, or if you like an ideology, that cannot be called by any other name but Judenrein Palestine. In other words, certain parts of western Palestine, or using the generally accepted terminology in Israel, certain parts of the Land of Israel, need to be cleared of all Jews. This is the declared policy of the Olmert government, and it presumably is part of Tzipi Livni's negotiating position in her talks with her Palestinian counterparts.

Can you blame many Israelis, including many who do not countenance the erection of illegal outposts, for feeling less than enthusiastic about the removal

of the outposts, when their removal is seen as no more than a prelude to the forcible removal of the settlements in Judea and Samaria that were established legally, just as were the settlements in Gush Katif?

The concept of removing all Jews from a certain region is surely repugnant to any person not prepared to deny somebody's rights on the grounds of his ethnic or religious origin. It brings back the worst memories of the tragedy that befell the Jewish people in World War II. When it is applied to a part of the Land of Israel it is also contrary to the very foundations of Zionism, a movement based on the right of Jews to settle and live in their land, a right that has received international recognition.

And yet, not only the Olmert government's ministers, but many Israeli citizens who insist they are confirmed Zionists, and of course those who claim no such affiliation, all of liberal views, subscribe to this concept. Presumably this is because they consider this view to be part and parcel of making peace with the Palestinians. What kind of a peace can this be when nobody Jewish will be allowed to live within the borders of Israel's neighboring state?

The settlement policy condoned by successive Israeli governments and promoted by the settlers' movement over the years created a patchwork of Jewish settlements dispersed throughout Judea and Samaria, and not concentrated in settlement blocs. As a matter of fact, Gush Katif and Gush Etzion were the only large settlement blocs beyond the Green Line, and the former exists no more. The architect of this settlement strategy was none other than Ariel Sharon, who for years urged the settlers to occupy each "hilltop."

And it was he who, as prime minister, so graciously received Talia Sasson in his office when she presented him her report proving that many of the outposts he had encouraged and authorized were illegal, something he must have been well aware of. Both of them must have been smiling to themselves at this meeting.

It is generally agreed that Israel should not incorporate all of Judea and Samaria, with its large Arab population, within its borders. But does it necessarily follow that all areas not incorporated within Israel's borders need to be cleared of all Jews? The Palestinian negotiators currently engaged in the phantom negotiations with Israel's foreign minister are in any case not capable of making and carrying out any commitments.

But when and if serious Palestinian negotiators appear, it will have to be made clear to them that the continued presence of Jews on territory over which they will have sovereignty in the future, and the assurance of their safety, must be part of a durable peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. An agreement that does not include such a provision will not be an agreement worthy of being called a peace agreement. (Haaretz Apr 8)

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### **An Abbas of Failure** By Barry Rubin

"Rice Wins Concessions from Israel," read the Washington Post headline after Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's recent visit. Rice herself told reporters her goal was to further Israel-Palestinian Authority talks by getting Israeli concessions to "improve the quality of life" for Palestinians.

She listed 10 different Israeli concessions, which included removing 50 roadblocks, easing checkpoint procedures, giving PA security forces more leeway in Jenin, increasing travel and work permits, backing economic projects, letting 700 US-trained PA security men deploy, and giving the PA armored vehicles and night-vision goggles.

Rice claimed success, saying talks are now "moving in the right direction."

Are they? Will these concessions make the PA more stable or moderate? No.

One wonders if we'll ever see the headline: "Rice Wins Concessions from Palestinians." I doubt it.

How should one score this outcome: Israel 10, PA 0, because Israel might get international credit for taking risks for peace? Or the opposite - PA 10, Israel 0 - since the former got all the material gains?

Certainly, the PA isn't bragging. On the contrary, it denies Israel gives anything. Neither does the PA take advantage of either these measures or of the huge aid it receives to improve its people's quality of life. That's something only Westerners care about.

To comprehend its world view and strategy, consider PA leader Mahmoud Abbas's March 29 speech to the Arab summit in Damascus. That presentation, along with the summit itself, shows the trap in which Arab politics is stuck.

Even Abbas's opening Koran quote presents a paradox: "If you will aid the

cause of Allah, He will aid you and plant your feet firmly." Abbas's rivals, both in Hamas and among his own Fatah radicals, say that's what they do: follow divine will and feet-planting by rejecting concessions and continuing war to total victory.

His second point is a professed confidence "that we all do agree that... a joint Arab stand and action suffices" to bring success. This line, used for 50 years, is wrong on both counts: there's no Arab unity and even if there were it wouldn't suffice. Indeed, this was a most divisive Arab summit, with the Saudis and Jordanians leading opposition to Syria's attempt to seize control of Lebanon.

His third theme was that while Palestinians "remain committed to the option of a just peace, the two-state solution... Israel pursues its aggression and occupation, the construction of settlements, and the Judaization of Jerusalem." Rather than portraying Israel's current government as wanting a deal, he says it aims to seize all but "a few isolated areas."

This is the government that withdrew completely from the Gaza Strip and is willing to pull out of most of the rest of the territories. Yet according to Abbas, it "seeks to undermine the possible establishment of an independent state on the land of the Palestinian people."

But if so, how can the Palestinians make peace with Israel? Why is Hamas wrong in saying that only victory through violence can work?

IN ABBAS's telling, Israel's aggression is unprovoked. He speaks of "barbaric attacks, causing hundreds of defenseless victims," and its evil intent to "undermine the possibility of reaching a peace agreement...."

He ignores constant attacks on Israel from Gaza and offers no credible way to deal with them. He merely asks Hamas to give him Gaza and return to being one party in a PA-dominated system. This won't happen. Hamas will keep attacking Israel and trying to take over the West Bank. For all this, he blames not Hamas - with whom he desperately tries to conciliate - but only Israel.

Here's the trap: Hamas (and elements in Fatah) attack Israel, Israel responds, Abbas cites this as proof Israel doesn't want peace and that negotiations cannot succeed. His bottom line: "The Israeli government seeks by the power of its occupation to impose a political solution on the ground according to its own wishes."

Meanwhile, instead of competing with Hamas, the PA uses Western aid to subsidize Hamas, spending, according to Abbas, 58 percent of its budget on Gaza and paying salaries for 77,000 employees there, more than it has itself! In theory, this projects PA influence; in practice it ensures Hamas holds power. He gives Hamas money unconditionally while begging it for Gaza.

While Abbas has no strategy for regaining Gaza or making peace with Israel, his rivals have a clear, simple program appealing to reigning passions and world view. As Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah puts it: "The Zionist entity can be wiped out of existence. Our nation is stronger now than ever before." Only "Zionist-American propaganda" - in which he includes Abbas - wants to fool Arabs and Muslims into thinking they "don't have any hopes of winning."

The U.S. State Department excused Abbas's speech as just rhetoric. But that's untrue. Abbas feeds the Hamas-Iran line by demonizing Israel and implying negotiations are useless. He's not even trying to win his own people's support by improving their lives.

We've become so used to this behavior that we forget there's an alternative. Abbas could say: "Israel is ready to make peace with us if we prove we'll keep our pledges. Let's defeat the radical Islamists, stop the attacks on Israel that breed conflict, end incitement to violence, reform our own regimes, align with the West and get an independent state."

Israel needs to work with Abbas and keep him afloat as the lesser of two evils. But Abbas is incapable of making peace or regaining Gaza. His PA regime might fall to Hamas or be taken over, on his not-distant retirement, by still-dominant Fatah radicals even more eager to ally with Hamas and return to armed struggle.

Here's where Rice and much Western policy is wrong. By not demanding and getting PA concessions and by giving money unconditionally, they ensure not only that peace will fail but that there will be decades of conflict ahead. (Jerusalem Post Apr 7)

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### **The Risks of Fortification** By Uzi Landau

I was on a solidarity trip to Sderot and the Gaza vicinity communities, when in one of the Qassam ridden kibbutzim I met Assaf - a local resident and a father of four. Two of his daughters, he said, were currently serving in the IDF, so when the Color Red alert sounds, he knows they are safe.

He listens to hear where the sounds of the exploding Qassam rockets come

from - that way he knows which of his sons in the kibbutz to call and check on first.

The homes in his kibbutz are not fortified and he would like to see them be made so, at least for time being. He would rather see the problem solved in a different way, but that - he knows - is up to the politicians. For now - and as long as the rockets keep falling - they should have their homes fortified.

Onwards we go, to the Black Arrow Monument, dedicated to the heroic acts of the paratroopers in the 1950s; dedicated even more to the proactive policy dictated by David Ben Gurion for the young, nearly borderless, Israel, with its flaccid population and its barely existing army. The best defense is a good offence, the land must be processed to an inch of the border and we will not tolerate any attacks on Jews.

The determined Israel did not stand for any kind of attack on its citizens knew one thing for sure - it is not shelters that will protect Israeli citizens, but rather the fierce, all-out war against terror.

Looking down from the Nabia Meri Observation Point, with Gaza, Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun laid out below us, we saw the smoking tails of two rockets making their way to Israel. One landed on their side. The other disappeared in the skies. Later we learned it landed in a kindergarten in one of the kibbutzim in Sha'ar Hanegev Regional Council.

I can understand Assaf. The State has to provide him and his family with basic security; and if it can't - it must supply them with the proper fortification. But no sensible person can comprehend the gap between young Israel's aggressive policy and the weakness demonstrated by the strong, well-established Israel, 60 years later.

The truth, as big a paradox as it may sound to Assaf and his counterparts, is clear: A policy calling for fortification poses a risk for Israel's safety. With the exception of strategic facilities the likes of hospitals and schools, townships should not be fortified.

Fortification carries a destructive message, suggesting Israel is willing to stand for its citizens to be living under fire, cementing in world view a reality legitimizing terror organizations targeting civilians as a starting point for any negotiation.

We've brought this predicament on ourselves. From the moment we allowed populated area to be hit without launching an immediate response, making it abundantly clear we will not stand for it, the following has happened: Our enemies have concluded hurting Jews is allowed; our friends - and naturally our foes - around the world have come to the same conclusion; and worst of all - so have we.

Our own failure to respond has made us accustomed to the targeting of civilian populations, especially away from Tel Aviv. What other way is there to explain our measly response to the hundreds of Qassam rockets fired on the Gaza vicinity communities in the two-and-a-half years since the Gaza pullout?

Ariel Sharon made them a dramatic promise at the time: If even one rocket is fired, he said, Gaza will tremble and the world will understand. The only thing trembling so far, are kindergarten walls.

Olmert was right. We cannot fortify ourselves senseless. But he cannot reiterate that without providing kindergarten children with the proper defense and for the kindergarten walls to stop trembling he cannot avoid the decision to enter Gaza. Not because we want to, but because we have no other choice. We learned that lesson six years ago, when Operation Defensive Shield was forces on us, after months of upholding a "strength in restraint" policy and dozens of bloody terror attacks.

The terror ceased only when we raided its hubs in Jenin and Nablus. The only reason it is still emanating from Gaza is that we were hesitant to go in; and the more hesitant we are, the more resolved Hamas and Hizbullah get. They see Sderot as a test-case and unless crushed there, the next war will see the tens of thousands of missiles they have - and the thousands more they will undoubtedly get - launched at our larger cities right off the bat.

But a mass offence is not enough. Thing must have a conclusive end. Our response must be so disproportional the enemy would realize it's just not worth the effort. A conclusive end is a must simply because anyone firing on Sderot and Ashkelon already knows Ashdod, Rishon Lezion and Tel Aviv are within reach.

Our victory in the Gaza fort must be overwhelming not only for Assaf and his neighbors, for the grocers in Sderot, or for the Dichter family in Ashkelon. They must be defeated so that kindergarten walls in Tel Aviv will never tremble. (Ynet Apr 3)

*The writer, a former Likud Cabinet Member, is the founder of Eretz Nehederet, which leads weekly solidarity tours from Tel Aviv to Sderot.*