



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*

Commentary...

Ending Lebanon's Free Ride By Caroline Glick

Since Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Saniora bowed to Hizbullah's demands in Doha last month and agreed to grant the Iranian-controlled, Syrian-supported terror group control over his government, Lebanon has become an official agent of a terror group. That is, Lebanon, as a state, has become a sponsor of terror. But no one seems to notice or to care.

Truth be told, on the surface the situation in Lebanon is quite complicated. There is a power struggle of sorts going on today between Saniora's pro-Lebanese sovereignty March 14th movement and Hizbullah. Even in its diminished status, the March 14th movement is seeking to compel Hizbullah to subordinate its Iranian proxy army to the government. But this is an exercise in futility.

As Hizbullah demonstrated clearly during its armed insurrection in May that led to the Doha agreement, and as it continues to demonstrate in its attacks against Sunni neighborhoods in Tripoli, it is fully willing to use its militia to force its political opponents to accept its complete independence.

But then, while it is clear that the March 14th movement's leaders and supporters oppose Hizbullah's independence from central authority, it is far from clear that they oppose its terrorist operations. The fact of the matter is that none of Hizbullah's political opponents in Lebanon have anything but praise for its aggression against Israel and its clear intention to continue its war against Israel for its Iranian commanders.

MAKING THIS point this week, Lebanon's Finance Minister Muhammad Shatah, explained, "We are all in agreement that it will be crazy not to benefit from Hizbullah resistance capabilities, but the dispute is whether this will be done within the state or outside." The widespread support that Hizbullah's terror war against Israel enjoys in Lebanon was prominently displayed on July 16 when convicted baby killer Samir Kuntar and his fellow Lebanese terrorists were released to Lebanon by Israel in exchange for the mutilated corpses of IDF soldiers Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser who were killed in Hizbullah's raid on their military position in Israel on July 12, 2006.

All of Lebanon's supposedly moderate leaders were at the Hizbullah-controlled Beirut airport to accord Kuntar a hero's welcome. President Michel Suleiman embraced Kuntar - who crushed four-year-old Einat Haran's skull - and his fellow terrorists as "our freed heroes." Sa'ad Hariri, the head of the March 14th movement, referred to Kuntar's release as "an historic day of joy." Saniora hailed the corpses-for-murderers swap explaining, "The success of Hizbullah in the negotiations led by a third party is a national success for the party and for the struggle of the Lebanese because it secured national goals which Israel always refused to respect." And Druse leader Walid Jumblatt hailed Kuntar's release as "a national holiday."

HIZBULLAH'S DOMESTIC intimidation and international terrorism is enabled by the Lebanese military which refuses to confront it. And this is nothing new. During the 2006 war, when Suleiman commanded the Lebanese armed forces, the Lebanese military actively collaborated with Hizbullah units. Then, as now, Hizbullah was a coalition partner in Saniora's government.

During the war, the Lebanese military guided Hizbullah in attacking the INS Hanit along the Lebanese coastline with an advanced, Iranian-supplied Chinese C-802 missile. The Lebanese military pays pensions to the families of Hizbullah fighters killed in battle. Since the war, the Lebanese military enabled Hizbullah to reassert its control over south Lebanon, to expand its control north of the Litani River and to massively rearm.

Moreover, throughout the war, Saniora acted as Hizbullah's mouthpiece. He condemned all Israeli efforts to defend its territory from wanton aggression and

championed all of ^{בס"ד} Hizbullah's demands in cease-fire negotiations. By the same token, the Saniora government backed all of Hizbullah's attacks against Israel - attacks which forced a million Israelis to flee their homes or live in bomb shelters for the duration of the war.

IN JULY 2006, understanding the Saniora government's collusion with Hizbullah, Israel's immediate reaction to Hizbullah's abduction of its soldiers

and bombardment of northern Israel was to hold Beirut accountable. In his first press conference of the war, just hours after Goldwasser and Regev were abducted and their comrades killed, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert made this point explicitly. He declared, "This morning's events were not a terror attack. They were the act of a sovereign state that attacked Israel, without reason and without provocation. The government of Lebanon, of which Hizbullah is a part, is attempting to destabilize the region. Lebanon is the responsible party, and Lebanon will pay the consequences for its actions."

Israel's initial strategy for fighting the war was to disable Hizbullah's war machine by bombing Lebanese infrastructure targets such as highways, the airport, bridges, electricity grids and the telecommunication systems. All of these facilities enabled Hizbullah's war effort. It is possible that if Israel had in fact attacked Lebanon's national infrastructures, the blow to Hizbullah's war machine might have been strategically debilitating. In that event, the task of land forces charged with defeating Hizbullah forces on the ground would have been smoother.

But US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would have none of it. Already in the earliest stages of the war, she began putting pressure on Israel not to attack Lebanese infrastructure. Her demand was formalized in the G-8 declaration three days after Hizbullah initiated hostilities.

Rice's support for Saniora's government was so strong and consistent, that she eventually forced Israel to cave to all of Hizbullah's demands in UN Security Council Resolution 1701 which set the terms of the cease-fire at the end of the war. Rice defended her support by noting the democratic character of the March 14th movement and its success - with US and French support - in forcing most Syrian forces to depart Lebanon in April 2005.

Despite the Lebanese government's and military's open and active collusion with Hizbullah throughout the war, in its aftermath, US support for Saniora's government and his military expanded exponentially. In the year following the war, US aid to Lebanon grew from \$41 million to \$520 million. US military assistance to the Lebanese military since the war has been in excess of \$410 million, making Lebanon the second largest recipient per capita of US military aid.

US military support for Lebanon grows even as the Lebanese armed forces demonstrate at every turn that they collaborate with Hizbullah. It was supplemented after the Lebanese military, under Suleiman's command, refused to prevent Hizbullah's coup in May. Moreover, the day before Suleiman gave Kuntar the red carpet treatment at the Beirut airport, Maj.-Gen. Robert Allardice, the US Central Command's director of strategy, plans and policy, visited Beirut and announced an additional \$32 million in military aid.

Since 2006, the US has given Lebanon some 285 Humvees, 200 cargo trucks, helicopter parts, assault rifles, grenade launchers, anti-tank weapons and urban warfare bunker weapons. Another 300 Humvees, mobile communications systems, several hundred anti-tank missiles and coastal patrol craft are on order.

Israel has recently begun openly expressing its alarm about these weapon transfers. Given Hizbullah's now inarguable control over Lebanon and its sway over its military forces, it is all but a foregone conclusion that these weapons will likely be used by Hizbullah and its allied forces in the Lebanese army in any future war with Israel. In recent weeks, senior Defense Ministry officials have been dispatched to the Pentagon in an attempt to convince the US to stop the weapons transfers. Yet while the Pentagon was only too happy to give Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Gadi Ashkenazi an unrequested medal, it has rebuffed all of Israel's entreaties.

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ALL OF this is depressingly familiar. In many ways, the Saniora government is to Hizbullah in Lebanon what the Fatah terror group is to Hamas in the Palestinian Authority. As is the case in Lebanon, the US trains, finances and arms Fatah. It supports Fatah politically against Israel, claiming that Fatah has earned its support through its moderation relative to Hamas. But as events have shown repeatedly, Fatah is a terrorist organization and is only too happy to collude with Hamas in attacking Israel and to form governments with Hamas so long as Hamas doesn't embarrass it too much.

Notably in the case of the Palestinians, the US cut off its assistance to the PA after Fatah and Hamas formed their unity government last year and only reinstated that assistance after Hamas ended the unity deal by seizing control of Gaza from its Fatah partner. In Lebanon's case, US support for the country has grown as Hizbullah's control of the government and the military have become more open. Indeed, today Rice is openly pressing Israel to surrender Mt. Dov and Ghajar village to Lebanon even though Lebanon has no legal claim to either. And this she does by claiming that an Israeli capitulation to Hizbullah's demands will strengthen Saniora who is controlled by Hizbullah - and believing that this will be a good thing.

With even the Olmert-Livni-Barak government calling openly for a revision of Resolution 1701 to curtail the Lebanese military's ability to facilitate Hizbullah's rearmament and assertion of control over southern Lebanon, and with even Britain finally classifying Hizbullah's militia as a terror group, the time has come to revisit US policy.

US Jewish leaders and counterterror champions on Capitol Hill should begin a campaign to compel the State Department to place Lebanon on its list of state sponsors of terror. At a minimum, US military and financial assistance to the Hizbullah-controlled government should be abrogated immediately.

The current government of Lebanon is only expected to remain in power for another year. Hizbullah is expected to be the big winner in Lebanon's parliamentary elections scheduled for next year. As Lebanese parliamentarian Samir Franjeh from the March 14th movement explained in a media interview this week, "Weapons eliminate the principle of majority [rule]. In... 2005 the March 14 [movement] won a majority of parliamentary seats in the elections. The result was practically eliminated by the use of force. Having armed factions [running for elections in 2009] would limit the freedom of voters."

It is reasonable for the US to seek to support pro-Western democrats in the Arab world. It is unreasonable for the US to be bankrolling a terror-controlled regime populated by terrorists and democrats who support their aggression. This is particularly the case when the same terrorists are waging war not only against Israel, but against America's own forces in Iraq.

Olmert's July 12, 2006 declaration is still apt. Lebanon must be forced to suffer the consequences of its support for Hizbullah. (Jerusalem Post Jul 29)

Demographic Optimism, Not Fatalism By Yoram Ettinger

Anyone suggesting that Jews are doomed to become a minority west of the Jordan River is either grossly mistaken or outrageously misleading.

According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, the annual number of Jewish births has increased by 40 percent between 1995 (80,400) and 2007 (112,543), while the annual number of "green line" Arab births has stabilized around 39,000 during the same period.

Among Jews, the secular sector is mostly responsible for the impressive increase, especially immigrants from the former Soviet Union, whose fertility rate shifted from Russian rate of one child per woman to the secular Israeli Jewish rate of 2.2 children. The Arab-Jewish fertility gap has been reduced from six children per woman in 1969 to 0.7 child in 2007.

In the Arab community, the fertility rate (3.5 births per woman) has declined 20 years faster than projected - due to successful integration into Israel's health, educational, financial and commercial infrastructures - while Jewish fertility rate is rising (2.8 births per woman). In Jerusalem, Arab and Jewish fertility rates have converged - 3.9 births per woman - for the first time since 1948. Currently, Israel's Jewish fertility is the highest in the industrialized world.

The Bennett Zimmerman-led American-Israel Demographic Research Group (AIDRG) documents a substantial decline in the Arab population growth rate in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), as well as in Gaza, primarily due to annual average net-emigration of more than 10,000. Prior to 1967, Jordan's King Hussein had encouraged emigration, but that slowed down in 1968 due to the new Palestinian access to Israel's health, educational and employment base.

Following the second Intifada in 2000, emigration shifted to a higher gear, peaking (25,000 annually in 2006 and 2007) with the rising price of oil, which has increased demand by Persian Gulf sheikdoms for Palestinian work force.

At the same time, the Jewish state benefited from continued aliyah.

Through audits of Palestinian births, deaths, school enrollment and voter registration records, kept by the Palestinian Ministries of Health and Education, Palestinian Election Commission and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, AIDRG was able to document the decline in Arab fertility.

This decline is attributed to accelerated urbanization, expanded education, evolving career mentality, higher divorce rate, higher median wedding age, decline in teen pregnancy and intense family planning, led by the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

In fact, such a decline is typical of today's Muslim countries, forcing the U.N. Population Division to reduce global population projections by 25 percent. The unprecedented drop in Muslim fertility has been led by Iran's ayatollahs and mullahs - from 10 children per woman 25 years ago to 1.8 children today.

AIDRG also has documented a 1.1 million (40 percent) artificial inflation in the official number of Palestinians in Gaza, Judea and Samaria (2.7 million, not 3.8 million) and a 53 percent inflation in the official number of Palestinians in Judea and Samaria alone (1.5 million and not 2.3 million).

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) includes in its census some 400,000 overseas residents, it adds more than 200,000 Israeli (Jerusalem) Arabs who are also counted as Green Line Arabs, and it ignores about 200,000 emigrants (since 1997), etc.

The World Bank 2006 survey of education in Gaza, Judea and Samaria documents a 32 percent gap between the number of Palestinian births claimed by the PCBS, and those documented by the Palestinian Ministries of Health and Education. The World Bank attributes the gap to reduced fertility and escalated emigration.

A solid 67 percent Jewish majority exists on 98.5 percent of the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean (without Gaza), compared with a 33 percent and an 8 percent minority - west of the Jordan River - in 1947 and 1900 respectively.

There is a demographic problem, but there is no demographic machete at the throat of the Jewish state. Moreover, the demographic momentum has shifted to the Jewish sector.

When it comes to long-term social, economic, aliyah and national security policy decision-making, demography constitutes a source of hope and optimism, not fatalism and pessimism. (Washington Jewish Week Jul 27) *The writer, a member of the American-Israel Demographic Research Group, was minister for congressional affairs at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, 1989-1992.*

May an American Comment on Israel? By Daniel Pipes

May I, an American citizen living in the United States, comment publicly on Israeli decision making?

Yoram Schweitzer wants me not to judge decisions made by the Israeli government.

I recently criticized the Israeli government for its exchange with Hizbullah in "Samir Kuntar and the Last Laugh" (The Jerusalem Post, July 21); to this, the eminent counterterrorism expert at Tel Aviv University, Yoram Schweitzer challenged the appropriateness of my offering views on this subject. In "Not That Bad a Deal" (July 24) he explained to Jerusalem Post readers how the "contents and tone" of my analysis "patronizing and insulting, overlooking as they do the fact that the government and public have the right to decide for themselves . . . , and to shoulder the resulting price." He also criticizes me for offering an opinion on Israeli issues from my "secure haven thousands of miles away."

Schweitzer does not spell out the logic behind his resentment, but it rings familiar: Unless a person lives in Israel, the argument goes, pays its taxes, puts himself at risk in its streets, and has children in its armed forces, he should not second-guess Israeli decisionmaking. This approach, broadly speaking, stands behind the positions taken by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and other prominent Jewish institutions.

I respect that position without accepting its discipline. Responding to what foreign governments do is my meat and potatoes as a U.S. foreign policy analyst who spent time in the State and Defense departments and as a board member of the U.S. Institute of Peace, and who as a columnist has for nearly a decade unburdened himself of opinions. A quick bibliographic review finds me judging many governments, including the British, Canadian, Danish, French, German, Iranian, Nepalese, Saudi, South Korean, Syrian, and Turkish.

Obviously, I do not have children serving in the armed forces of all these countries, but I assess their developments to help guide my readers' thinking. No one from these others countries, it bears noting, ever asked me to

withhold comment on their internal affairs. And Schweitzer himself proffers advice to others; in July 2005, for example, he instructed Muslim leaders in Europe to be "more forceful in their rejection of the radical Islamic element." Independent analysts all do this.

So, Schweitzer and I may comment on developments around the world, but, when it comes to Israel, my mind should empty of thoughts, my tongue fall silent, and my keyboard go still? Hardly.

On a more profound level, I protest the whole concept of privileged information – that one's location, age, ethnicity, academic degrees, experience, or some other quality validates one's views. The recent book by Christopher Cerf and Victor S. Navasky titled *I Wish I Hadn't Said that: The Experts Speak - and Get it Wrong!* humorously memorializes and exposes this conceit. Living in a country does not necessarily make one wiser about it.

Ehud Barak, the most highly decorated soldier in Israeli history, made mistakes.

During the Camp David II summit meeting of 2000, when Ehud Barak headed the government of Israel and I disagreed with his policies, more than once, my critique was answered with a how-dare-you indignation: "Barak is the most decorated soldier in Israeli history – and who are you?" Yet, analysts now generally agree that Camp David II had disastrous results for Israel, precipitating the Palestinian violence that began two months later.

It is a mistake to reject information, ideas, or analysis on the basis of credentials. Correct and important thoughts can come from any provenance – even from thousands of miles away.

In that spirit, here are two responses concerning Schweitzer's take on the Samir al-Kuntar incident. Schweitzer argues that "to fail to do the utmost to rescue any citizen or soldier who falls into enemy hands would shatter one of the basic precepts of Israeli society." I agree that rescuing soldiers or their remains is an operationally useful and morally noble priority, but "utmost" has its limits. For example, a government should not hand live citizens to terrorists in return for soldiers' corpses. In like manner, the Olmert government's actions last week went much too far.

Another specific: Schweitzer claims that, "relatively speaking, the recent exchange with Hizbullah came at a cheap price. It is debatable whether Kuntar's release granted any kind of moral victory to Hizbullah." If that deal was cheap, I dread to imagine how an expensive one would look. And with Kuntar's arrival in Lebanon shutting down the government in giddy national celebration, denying Hizbullah a victory amounts to willful blindness. (Jerusalem Post Jul 28)

The Iranian Shell Game By Emanuele Ottolenghi

Ever since a defector exposed the existence of Iran's nuclear program in 2002, the regime in Tehran has routinely protested its innocence in the face of charges that it is developing fissile weapons of mass destruction and the missiles on which to carry them. Its nuclear program, Tehran claims, has only civilian purposes, and it is allowed to pursue such a program under the terms of the binding international treaties to which it is a signatory.

If Iran is telling the truth and desires solely nuclear energy—which would be peculiar, to say the least, considering that under its sands rest the world's second largest natural-gas reserves and the world's fifth largest crude-oil reserves—its behavior these past six years makes no sense. The regime would seem to have had everything to gain from making it crystal-clear to the world that it has no intentions of developing nuclear weapons. Instead, it has rejected repeated and alluring incentives designed to seduce it into demonstrating the non-existence of the efforts it continues to insist it is not undertaking. In the process, it has had to suffer painful economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations and the United States. Its six years of defiance and stonewalling have led to increasing diplomatic isolation.

As a matter of simple logic, then, it is only rational to conclude that Iran is working, and working very hard, to become a nuclear power. But there may be logic of a different and no less compelling kind behind its actions. For, at the end of these same six years, many in the West remain fiercely committed to the idea that discussing the dangers of Iran's pursuit of nuclear power—let alone discussing how to stop it—represents a greater threat to the world than does the Iranian pursuit itself.

For a significant portion of the world's foreign-policy makers and intellectuals, any confrontation with Iran on the matter of its nuclear program is dangerously provocative and therefore to be avoided. In particular, prominent European leaders have roundly denounced the supposed "adventurism" of the Bush administration and insisted that (in the words of one leading German Social Democrat) "military options must be taken off the table." Authoritative American voices joined this chorus in the wake of a 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate that declared (in an assertion supported

by no other intelligence agency in the world) that Iran had suspended its nuclear-weapons program in 2003. More recently, elements within Western foreign-policy establishments have gone a step further and have begun to suggest that the world can "live with" an Iranian bomb.

And here we see why Iran's behavior over the past six years has been neither irrational nor foolhardy but rather shrewd, calculated—and successful. Even while loudly repudiating allegations that it is pursuing a military program, the regime has used every technique at its disposal to sow confusion and encourage divisions among its adversaries. These techniques have been of vital importance in gaining time for Iran as it has worked tirelessly toward a *fait accompli* by procuring the technology necessary for the development of nuclear weapons—including most saliently through the purchase of equipment and materiel that it cannot, by treaty and international law, possess.

Iran's efforts to gain equipment vital to a secret nuclear program are mostly centered in Europe. In this, the involvement of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the elite branch of the nation's military, has been pivotal. The IRGC occupies a key place in the Iranian regime. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president, is a former senior officer of the corps, as are the head of the nation's security services and the chief of its information ministry. Iran's homegrown missile, the Shahab, is a product designed and built by the IRGC.

The IRGC is also reliably believed to be in charge of the nation's nuclear program. The two UN resolutions sanctioning Iran for its nuclear activities were targeted at senior IRGC officials. And the United States government, noting the IRGC's relationships with Hizbullah, Hamas, and the Iraqi insurgents, has declared the IRGC to be a terrorist organization.

Consider now a few cases, beginning with a single public-works project inside Iran.

- Two European concerns—Wirth, from Germany, and Seli, from Italy—sold tunnel-boring equipment to Iran for its Ghomroud water project. Wirth's contract was concluded after Germany's export-control agency, BAFA, determined that the machines involved in this project, being intended only for civilian use, were not subject to embargo.

Overseeing the tunnel project, however, was Sahel Consulting Engineers, a company owned by the IRGC. Nor is this connection a secret. The website of Wirth's subsidiary in Iran features images of the Ghomroud construction site. The sign welcoming visitors to the project bears the logo of the IRGC, and the same logo is visible above the tunnel entrance.

Seli, for its part, sold its tunnel-making goods to an Iranian company called Ghaem. This sale, too, was found to be exempt from any restrictions or embargoes. But the U.S. Treasury has designated Ghaem as yet another subsidiary of the IRGC. Seli, in the meantime, is also involved in other important projects in Iran, among them the much larger Kerman water-tunnel project. That deal, worth 134.6 million euros over five years, was signed in 2004—with the active involvement of Sahel Consulting Engineers.

Unquestionably, the equipment has been used to dig water tunnels at Ghomroud and Kerman. Once the digging is finished, though, the equipment belongs to the subsidiary businesses of the IRGC, which can do with them what they wish.

Intelligence photographs have regularly indicated that much of Iran's clandestine nuclear program is being built deep underground, in bunkers accessible by means of tunnels. The machinery and technology for constructing such tunnels can only have been provided by Wirth and Seli. The purchase of this equipment by Iran is perfectly legal. The uses to which it may sooner or later be put are something else.

- Many European companies are also selling highly sophisticated technology to Iran, and are doing so through businesses that are already known to have diverted such technology to industrial activities related to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. The deals concluded by these Iranian businesses, or "end-users," can appear as legitimate as building water tunnels.

For example, Iran's Samamicro distributes high-precision tools made by a number of European companies, including Austria's Grabner Instruments, a leader in laboratory-testing equipment for the petrochemical industry, and Mahr GmbH, a German company producing high-precision measuring instruments. The value of such tools for illicit nuclear purposes is beyond dispute.

Italy's Iveco and Germany's Mercedes have also built an assembly line in Iran. No doubt the assembly line is used to produce trucks, as it is intended to do. But it is equally appropriate for producing launch ramps for missiles. Then there is Austria's KTM, which makes off-road leisure motorbikes. As can be clearly seen in official photographs, such bikes are being used by the IRGC to create mobile units trained to fire rocket-propelled grenades.

● And then there is military equipment per se. Most European military exports to Iran are flatly outlawed—but not all. The problem, once again, is the possible diversion of authorized equipment to illegitimate ends.

A patrol boat called the Levriero, made by the Italian company FB Design and used by Italy's customs police to fight smuggling at sea, was purchased by Iranian emissaries in the 1990's together with the boat's manufacturing frame and design plans. Thanks to those plans, Iran is now able to produce the vessel locally. Iranian-made copies of the Levriero took part in a peculiar incident this past January in the Straits of Hormuz, when IRGC speedboats seemed bent on provoking a confrontation with U.S. warships. They may also have participated in the March 2007 high-speed chase in the Shatt-el-Arab waterway that led to the kidnapping of fifteen British sailors.

Even when military goods are supplied to Iran under tight controls and for specific purposes, nothing is quite what it seems. In 2003, the United Kingdom and Italy supplied night-vision equipment to Iran's police for their anti-drug units. Quantities of this high-tech gear reportedly turned up inside the headquarters of Hizballah in southern Lebanon during the latter's 2006 confrontation with the Israeli army.

In 2005, Iran purchased 800 high-precision sniper rifles from the Austrian firm Steyr-Mannlicher, once again for ostensible use by police anti-narcotics units. When the United States imposed sanctions on Steyr-Mannlicher over this sale, Austria's defense ministry protested that it had been "unimpeachable." Fourteen months later, U.S. troops in Iraq seized more than 100 of the Steyr-Mannlicher rifles during a raid on an insurgent position. Steyr-Mannlicher denied that the guns had come from its consignment to Iran—which may have been true, since an exact replica of the rifle, apparently made in Iran, went up for sale at an arms fair in Tehran in 2006.

In brief, European and other Western companies, acting often with the blessing of their governments, have supplied Iran with a variety of sophisticated tools, putatively for benign or even worthwhile aims. Soon after the merchandise reaches its destination, it is systematically diverted to non-civilian use. By this means, proceeding with or without the knowing collusion of its Western suppliers, Iran has been spectacularly successful in evading the international sanctions regime.

But there is another, simultaneous aspect to Iran's success. This has been its campaign, waged on the diplomatic front, to prevent the international community from determining just what are its intentions, its strategies, and above all the state of its capabilities in the area of nuclear weapons.

The job of making that determination has fallen to Mohammad ElBaradei, the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a branch of the United Nations. Since 2003, at regular intervals, ElBaradei has been reporting back to the UN on what the IAEA has been able to learn from the Iranians and other sources. His reports have conveyed much sobering information, a tone (whether feigned or not) of urgency, and no indication of progress whatsoever. To the contrary, what they disclose are the successful workings of an Iranian policy aimed at occluding the IAEA's perspective through steady denial, the provision of incomplete or misleading information, and plain stalling.

On June 18, 2003, faced with mounting signs of a possible military nuclear program, ElBaradei announced: "We need to solve this issue as soon as we can."

Two months later, in late August, he worried:

The information [we have procured] was in contrast to that previously provided by Iran. In addition . . . there remain a number of important outstanding issues, particularly with regard to Iran's enrichment program, that require urgent resolution.

A few days after that, he permitted himself a faint note of impatience:

Iran should not wait for us to ask questions and then respond; it should come forward with a complete and immediate declaration of all its nuclear activities. That would be the best way to resolve the issues within the next few weeks.

The "best way," indeed—but that is clearly not how the Iranians saw it. By November 2003, without any evidence of Iranian cooperation, ElBaradei reported:

Iran's nuclear program, as the agency currently understands it, consists of a practically complete front end of a nuclear-fuel cycle, including uranium mining and milling, conversion, enrichment, fuel fabrication, heavy-water production, a light-water reactor, a heavy-water research reactor and associated research-and-development facilities.

These words should have been enough in themselves to confirm what Iran was up to. But they were uttered just as the American failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq had become a dominating fact on the international horizon. As it happens, ElBaradei himself had been a not-insignificant player in efforts at the United Nations to stymie the U.S. effort to topple Saddam Hussein, and he was not about to present a dossier that might now incriminate

Iran beyond the shadow of a doubt. Despite the facts adduced in his report, he continued to caution that there was still no conclusive evidence of a military program.

Almost exactly two years later, with still more facts surfacing, ElBaradei was, as ever, polite:

In order to clarify some of the outstanding issues related to Iran's enrichment program, Iran's transparency is indispensable and overdue. And once again the Iranians evidently felt otherwise. On January 27, 2006, ElBaradei wrote of repeated requests for a meeting with Tehran to discuss information that had been made available to the [UN] about alleged studies, known as the Green Salt Project, concerning the conversion of uranium dioxide into UF₄ [the immediate precursor of fissile uranium] . . . as well as tests related to high explosives and the design of a missile re-entry vehicle, all of which could involve nuclear material.

A month later, on February 27, 2006, he again reported failure:

Iran has yet to address the other topics of high-explosives testing and the design of a missile re-entry vehicle.

And a few months after that, on June 8, 2006:

[But] since the last report, . . . Iran has not expressed readiness to discuss these topics further.

The Iranians went on ignoring him. On August 31, 2006, he wrote:

Iran has not expressed any readiness to discuss these topics since the issuance of the . . . report in February 2006.

More than a year later, after Iran had endured two rounds of UN sanctions for its failure to comply with the IAEA, nothing had improved:

Iran has not agreed to any of the required transparency measures, which are essential for the clarification of certain aspects of the scope and nature of its nuclear program.

On February 22 of this year, ElBaradei conveyed Iran's response to mounting signs of a clandestine military program:

Iran stated that the allegations were baseless and that the information which the agency had shown to Iran was fabricated.

Forever tactful, the IAEA gave Iran another chance to come clean—to which Tehran summarily replied that "this was its final assessment on this point." The agency then showed Iranian officials a warhead design that it had obtained from the hard drive of an Iranian computer and deemed "quite likely to accommodate a nuclear device." Iran once more replied that "the schematic layout shown by the agency was baseless and fabricated."

This past May, ElBaradei caught the attention of Western news media with his latest report. In it, he duly noted that Iran had failed to explain the existence of a diagram for an underground testing facility; failed to explain the testing of explosive detonators normally used for nuclear weapons; and failed to explain the existence of documents (including a short video clip) relating to the modification of Iran's Shahab-3 missile to enable it to accommodate a nuclear warhead. Perhaps most disturbing in the report was this offhand passage about work being done by a scientist at the Institute for Applied Physics (IAP), an Iranian military research facility:

The [IAEA] has also inquired about the reasons for inclusion in the curriculum vitae of an IAP employee of . . . [an] equation for the evolving radius of a nuclear-explosion ball with photos of the 1945 Trinity test.

That would be the explosion of a plutonium bomb in the New Mexico desert on July 16, 1945. Why would an IAP scientist have been working on this equation? One reason might be that his employers saw a possible application for it in Iran's current circumstances.

ElBaradei has been at his task for more than five years. Even now, he will not come out and declare that Iran has a program to develop and deploy nuclear weapons. In fact, what five years' worth of mounting information in ElBaradei's own reports indicates is that this program can only have advanced. Notwithstanding the levying of sanctions by the United Nations and the United States, notwithstanding the ever-diffident nagging of the IAEA, the Iranian strategy of obfuscation, duplicity, and delay has worked.

"All warfare," Sun Tzu wrote,

is based on deception. When able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away.

It is also true that, in diplomacy no less than in war, deception works because those being deceived prefer to live within the deception rather than to acknowledge the sobering facts staring them in the face, and thereby to accept the frightening responsibility of having to act to address and reverse them.

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