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CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and the Middle East News Update

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News Excerpts

September 28, 2018

Ynet News

Netanyahu Reveals to UNGA 'Another Secret' Atomic Facility

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu revealed before the UN General Assembly on Thursday “another secret atomic facility” in Iran, some four months after he presented what he said was “conclusive proof” of a secret project underway in Iran for the development of nuclear weapons. “What I’m about to say has not been shown publicly before ... Today I’m revealing the site of a second facility, Iran’s secret atomic warehouse,” he said after a brief introduction praising his country under his leadership for opposing the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The new site Netanyahu identified sits a short distance from Shourabad where the Mossad pinched a trove of documents and evidence showing that Iran had archived its nuclear materials despite the nuclear deal. See also, [“Netanyahu claims Israel has found Iran's 'secret atomic warehouse'” \(Guardian\)](#)

Jerusalem Post

Abbas to Trump at UN: “What is Left to Negotiate”?

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas renewed criticism of the Trump administration at the United Nations on Thursday, questioning in a speech what is left to discuss after the American president sought to remove core issues from the negotiating table. The PA leader once again characterized the US government as too “biased” to mediate peace talks with Israel, but appeared to soften his stance of recent months, claiming that US President Donald Trump had no future role in negotiations at all, but stating that in an international context the Americans could play a part. Abbas opened with a scathing line. “Jerusalem is not for sale, and the Palestinian people’s rights are not up for bargaining,” he said, describing the Palestinian cause as just and blessed.

Ha’aretz

Iran Denies PM's 'Ridiculous' Secret Nuclear Facility Claims

Iran on Friday rejected Israeli accusations that it was concealing a “secret atomic warehouse,” after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu used his UN General Assembly speech to challenge Tehran. The claims were “baseless and ridiculous,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassem said, according to the Isna news agency. He added that the only recognized supervisory body for nuclear facilities was the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which had in certified Iran's nuclear program as peaceful 12 times in the past three years. See also, [“Iran furiously HITS BACK at Israeli claims of SECRET NUCLEAR WEAPONS as tensions soar” \(Express UK\)](#)

Times of Israel

US Envoy: World Should ‘Be Direct, Frank with Palestinians’

US peace envoy Jason Greenblatt on Thursday defended the US administration’s drastic funding cuts to the Palestinians, arguing that billions given to this cause over decades have failed to significantly advance the matter. Rather, he said in a speech to a conference of international donors, it was time to “realistically evaluate what works and what does not”. Greenblatt then urged donor countries to join the US in “being direct and frank with the Palestinian Authority about charting a new, sustainable path – one that improves all Palestinian lives.” The US peace proposal aims at improving the lives of Israelis and Palestinians, he said. See also, [“Israeli security needs trump Palestinian statehood, US envoy says” \(TOI\)](#)

EU Freezes €15m in Palestinian Aid over Textbook Incitement

The European Parliament's Budget Committee has voted to freeze €15m (\$17.6m) in aid to the Palestinian Authority till it commits to reform its textbooks, i24NEWS has learned. It decided to keep 5% of EU aid to the Palestinians "in reserve" until the Palestinian Authority commits to bring its school curriculum "in line with UNESCO standards for peace and tolerance in school education". A copy of the draft amendment seen by i24NEWS said the Palestinian textbooks "contain, across all subjects, numerous examples of violent depictions, hate speech—in particular against Israel—and glorifications of jihad and martyrdom". The decision comes a week after i24NEWS revealed that a new report found the new Palestinian school curriculum was designed "to prepare Palestinian children to join in the resistance against Israel". See also, ["European Parliament committee votes to freeze €15M to PA" \(JPost\)](#)

Times of Israel

UNRWA Gets \$118 Million in Alternative Funding to the U.S.

The Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA on Thursday received pledges of \$118 million from donor countries to help it overcome a crisis triggered by US funding cuts, Jordan's foreign minister said. Germany, Sweden, the European Union, Turkey, and Japan were among the countries that came forward with extra funds for UNRWA during a meeting held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Ayman Safadi told a news conference. UNRWA supports some 5 million registered Palestinian refugees and their descendants, and provides schooling for 526,000 children in the West Bank and Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. See also, ["Hope UN Member States Will Support Palestinian Refugee Agency After US Refusal" \(The Wire\)](#)

Ynet News

Netanyahu Meets Egyptian President at UN

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met Wednesday with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. The two leaders met amid continued efforts of Egyptian intelligence to mediate a possible long-term ceasefire arrangement between Israel and Hamas. Netanyahu's talks with Sisi late on Wednesday focused on "regional developments", the Israeli Prime Minister wrote on Twitter without elaborating. A spokesman for the Egyptian president issued a statement saying that the two leaders "discussed the peace process, and stressed the importance of renewing negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis in order to form a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian problem."

Ha'aretz

Noble Energy Buys 39% Stake in Egyptian Gas Pipeline Company

In a key step toward starting natural gas exports to Egypt, Israel's Delek Drilling and the U.S. firm Noble Energy said Thursday they were acquiring, together with Egyptian East Gas Company, a 39% stake in the Egyptian company that owns a pipeline running between Israel and Egypt. The two — partners in Israel's Tamar and Leviathan gas fields — said they were paying \$518 million for the stake in Eastern Mediterranean Gas and expect to complete the deal and related transactions by early next year. EMG's pipeline, which connects the Israeli national pipeline network from Ashkelon to the Egyptian pipeline network near El-Arish, has not been functional for several years following a series of terror attacks on it when it carried gas from Egypt to Israel. "This is a historic transaction, that renders Egypt a regional energy center" said Delek Drilling CEO Yossi Abu.

Trump's U.N. Speech Pitting Globalism Against Patriotism Proves the President has no Idea What Patriotism Means

By Daniel B. Shapiro, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel

- Midway through his speech to the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday, President Donald Trump delivered his central message: “We reject the ideology of globalism and accept the ideology of patriotism.” Talk about a false choice.
- It’s not particularly original for Trump to warn of the creeping threat to American sovereignty of global institutions. This trope has been a standard of a certain breed of American politician for decades. I served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff in the 1990s when its then-chairman, Sen. Jesse Helms, launched an all-out assault on U.S. funding of the United Nations. In the years since, more than one Republican presidential candidate in has flirted with actually withdrawing the U.S. from the world body, claiming that it poses a threat to American sovereignty.
- This idea is poppycock, but that doesn’t mean there aren’t people who believe it. The United Nations and other global institutions are easy to criticize, and they often deserve it. Bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, and the way they have provided an outsized voice for rogue nations can make these bodies hard to defend. The need for reform is clear. There are also obvious downsides to globalization; some countries, including the United States, have watched jobs and industries migrate overseas and found global problems like terrorism, transnational crime, and public health crises harder to manage. These problems have made global organizations with so-called global solutions easy targets for a certain kind of nationalist ideologue.
- But setting up participation in international institutions as the opposite of patriotism is the ultimate straw man comparison. It confuses the shortcomings of such bodies with the devaluing of their intended missions. It casts organizations that we need to make us safer and more prosperous as threats to U.S. sovereignty. And it ignores the last 70 years of history, when such international institutions served to safeguard and advance American interests far more than anyone else’s. Trump was specifically critical of the U.N. Human Rights Council, from which the United States withdrew this year, and the International Criminal Court. Both are highly problematic organizations. Neither poses the remotest threat to the United States, as administrations of both parties have worked to ensure over the past few decades.
- But Trump’s criticism, lacking any proposal for an alternative structure, symbolizes an about face for America on universal human rights standards, an area in which we once led. It also ignores the ICC’s limited successes, like the its bringing a measure of justice to Balkan war criminals. Human rights abusing regimes like Russia and China, and Burmese war criminals slaughtering the Rohingya, are celebrating Trump’s approach. That’s not patriotism; it’s weakness.
- Further, the demonizing of “globalism” has become a convenient excuse for the United States to shirk other responsibilities. In his speech, Trump defended the U.S. withdrawal from a global compact on migration. Today, when there are more refugees on the move than at any time since World War II, only international efforts can prevent destabilizing conflicts from spilling across

borders and destroying lives. Yet the United States is closing its gates, taking in only a fraction of the refugees it did just a few years ago. That's not patriotism; it's shortsighted cruelty.

- Ignored in the speech, but clearly relevant in this context, is Trump's withdrawal from the Paris climate accord. A global crisis involving sea-levels rising and superstorms and droughts expanding cries out for U.S. leadership. But buying into the myth of reduced American sovereignty, Trump walked away. That's not patriotism; it's burying your head in the (increasingly hot) sand.
- Trade is where Trump's true passion for tearing down global institutions is most evident, despite the tremendous prosperity the United States has achieved under current rules. Pressing other countries to further open their markets is fair, and greater support for affected U.S. workers is reasonable. But Trump's approach of throwing up protectionist walls and launching trade wars will fail. That's not patriotism; it's fear of competition.
- Trump's speech suggests no knowledge of history. In that sense, it aligns with his broader approach to international affairs: He talks down NATO, shames partners like Canada and Germany, attacks international cooperative bodies like the European Union and the World Trade Organization and cozies up to autocrats like Russian President Vladimir Putin and praises groups like Poland's ruling Law and Justice Party, which is rolling back democratic norms. In every case, it is the opposite of the approach that has served U.S. interests for decades.
- But that's Trump. He genuinely wants to tear down longstanding structures and norms: Freer trade, universal human rights, standing with allies. Whether influenced by aides like Stephen Miller or Steve Bannon, or drawing on his own ill-informed views, Trump believes that America should go it alone, that alliances and agreements weaken us, that values have no place in foreign policy. It's an immature middle schooler's approach to foreign affairs — machismo and selfishness that mask hidden insecurities. And it will make the United States weaker and less able to lead, because fewer will follow.
- America doesn't need to fear and shun the world to have a distinct identity. It can be proud and confident while also using the structures we have built to rally others to our cause and advance our interests. Such an approach does not cede our sovereignty but does understand that fulfilling our international responsibilities expands American influence to our own, and the world's, benefit. That's patriotism.

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Netanyahu's UN Speech Was One His Most Convincing and Effective Performances

By Yossi Verter, political commentator at Ha'aretz

- **Placard after placard, aerial photo after aerial photo, sensational revelation ahead of dramatic expose – Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech Thursday at the United Nations was one of his most professional, persuasive and effective appearances. Well equipped with Israeli intelligence achievements, he formulated a precise and credible indictment against Iran and its proxies in the Middle East.**
- **Netanyahu has apparently fallen in love with the effect he had with his document and CD show in the Prime Minister's Office in May. He makes public use of the Mossad's achievements more than any other prime minister in recent history. This has political significance, of course: in the collective imagination, the prime minister is seen as the person without which this would not have happened. And indeed, Israeli intelligence has chalked up considerable achievements in the past. Previous prime ministers did not run to the UN General Assembly waving these secret materials like a cheerleader waving pompoms.**
- **Israelis watching Netanyahu certainly did so with mixed feelings. On the one hand, they appreciated his phenomenal skills as a presenter on an international level of the Israeli case. On the other, fear crept into the hearts of some: Where is all this good, in the bad sense, leading us, if not to all-out war in the north?**
- **Netanyahu could not have been clearer in his threats against Hezbollah, which is hiding facilities to upgrade precision missiles within spitting distance of Beirut International Airport. "We won't let them get away with it." He will have to make good on the check he waved publicly. An attack on these facilities will certainly lead to a response that could develop into an all-out conflict.**
- **Netanyahu's speech was 40 minutes long. Most of it was devoted to Iran. The evidence that indicates the presence of a nuclear storage facility in downtown Tehran, not far from the storage facility from which hundreds of CDs and notebooks were taken by the Mossad in February, will have to be checked. It may be assumed that the Mossad operatives will get fed up with the many emails that will be circulated in the coming days and weeks among European capitals in an attempt to persuade their leaders who are still holding fast to the nuclear agreement to wake up and listen to the music Netanyahu is playing for them. This will be the push that comes after the revelation.**
- **Netanyahu has appeared many times before the UN General Assembly over the past decade. His speeches are usually about Iran. As long as a Democratic president was in the White House, leading a different policy, Netanyahu looked and sounded like a stubborn child, a rejected nudnik, repeating his frightening apocalyptic messages like a broken record.**
- **Over the past two years, and more so over the past year, the world has changed. President Donald Trump has taken his country out of the nuclear agreement, imposed paralyzing sanctions on the Iranian government and transferred the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem.**

Netanyahu could appear this time self-assured and arrogant, like a rooster atop the mud of his poultry run. Trump is behind him, one hundred percent.

- He gave the American president the reward of his sustained applause during Trump's speech. In the visitors' gallery, the prime minister's entourage gave a standing ovation to their "Donald." This embarrassing show of Israeli provincial sycophancy, with the notable absence of Sheldon and Miriam Adelson, the casino owners, for whom Netanyahu's charm has faded in the shadow of Case 2000.
- Anyone expecting a statement heralding even the slightest hope of renewed negotiations with the Palestinians was disappointed. The right wing declared business as usual. The all-clear was sounded in the settlements. It could be seen that peace-shmeace with the Palestinians was of interest to him like his speech interested the American TV channels on Thursday, riveted as they were to the hearing on Capitol Hill.
- For a moment, the day before yesterday, it looked as though something good was threatening to move on the Israeli-Palestinian front. The American president expressed his love for the idea of two states (and afterwards did a reversal in a typical act of shallow trickery). The Israeli prime minister uttered the word "state" for the first time in a while spiced with a thousand reservations and conditions. Suspicious minds immediately accused him of moving to the left in order to buy the hearts of the legal elites soon deciding about his three bribery cases.
- The schedules definitely match: the investigations will near completion around the beginning of 2019. Trump's peace plan is supposed to be presented at around the same time. Elections will be held either before or after or in tandem. But this train, the investigations train, cannot be stopped, even if Netanyahu disguises himself as Shimon Peres.

SUMMARY: Netanyahu has apparently fallen in love with the effect he had with his document and CD show in the Prime Minister's Office in May. He makes public use of the Mossad's achievements more than any other prime minister in recent history. This has political significance, of course: in the collective imagination, the prime minister is seen as the person without which this would not have happened. And indeed, Israeli intelligence has chalked up considerable achievements in the past. Previous prime ministers did not run to the UN General Assembly waving these secret materials like a cheerleader waving pompoms. Israelis watching Netanyahu certainly did so with mixed feelings. On the one hand, they appreciated his phenomenal skills as a presenter on an international level of the Israeli case. On the other, fear crept into the hearts of some: Where is all this good, in the bad sense, leading us, if not to all-out war in the north?