

**IRAN, EMBOLDENED BY A FECKLESS WHITE HOUSE, INCHES
CLOSER TO NUCLEAR WEAPON & REGIONAL HEGEMONY**

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Isranet Daily Briefing, January 29, 2015

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WHITE HOUSE GOING NUCLEAR ON NETANYAHU

Michael Goodwin

[*New York Post*, Jan. 24, 2015](#)

Thou shall not cross Dear Leader. With their guttersniping failing to stop Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's planned March speech before Congress, White House aides are unloading their full arsenal of bile. "He spat in our face publicly, and that's no way to behave," one Obama aide told an Israeli newspaper. "Netanyahu ought to remember that President Obama has a year and a half left to his presidency, and that there will be a price." It is pointless to say petty threats do not become the Oval Office. Trying to instruct this White House on manners recalls what Mark Twain said about trying to teach a pig to sing: It wastes your time and annoys the pig. Still, the fury is telling. It reminds, as if we could forget, that everything is always about Obama.

How dare Israel be more concerned with the existential threat of Iranian nukes than with Obama's feelings? And what do members of Congress think they are, a separate branch of government or something? Yes, the presidency deserves respect, even when the president doesn't. Although Obama routinely ignores lawmakers and their role in our constitutional system of checks and balances,

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there is an argument afoot that Congress should have taken the high road and consulted him before inviting Netanyahu. The argument has a point — but not a compelling one. To give Obama veto power over the visit would be to put protocol and his pride before the most important issue in the world. That is Iran's march to nuclear weapons, and Obama's foolish complicity. His claim in the State of the Union that "we've halted the progress of its nuclear program and reduced its stockpile of nuclear material" would be laughable if it weren't so dangerous. The claim earned him three Pinocchios, with four being an outright whopper, by *The Washington Post*.

Outside the president's yes-men circle, nobody believes the mad mullahs will voluntarily give up their quest for the bomb. International sanctions made life difficult for the regime, especially with oil prices cratering, but Obama relaxed restrictions with nothing to show for it except negotiations where he keeps bidding against himself. He is desperate for a deal, and the Iranians know it, so they want to keep talking. They are gaining concessions and buying time, which means a reversal of their weapons program becomes much harder to achieve. The ticking doomsday clock is what led to the remarkable comments by Democrat Robert Menendez. After Obama warned that more sanctions, even if they would not take effect unless the talks collapsed, could scare off the Iranians, the New Jersey senator said Obama was repeating talking points that "come straight out of Tehran." That's a zinger for the ages — and has the added advantage of being true.

Any deal that leaves Iran with a capacity to make a nuke in weeks or months will ignite a regional arms race. As I have noted, American military and intelligence officials believe a nuclear-armed Iran will lead to a nuclear exchange with Israel or Arab countries within five years. Israel has the most to lose from an Iranian nuke, and Netanyahu can be expected to articulate a forceful argument against Obama's disastrous course. That's why House Speaker John Boehner invited him, and it's why the president is so bent out of shape and refuses to meet with Netanyahu. He doesn't want Americans to hear the other side. But we must. And Congress must not shirk its duty to demand a meaningful agreement with Iran, or none at all. An extra layer of sanctions waiting in the wings is good backup, but another pending bill is more important. It would demand that any agreement come before the

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Senate for a vote. Naturally, ~~Obama opposes it, but that's all the more reason why~~ it is needed. As Ronald Reagan famously said about Soviet promises, "Trust but verify." So must it be with Iran and, sadly, our own president.

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ENABLING IRAN'S NUKES

Omri Ceren

[Commentary](#), Jan. 15, 2015

The lies began at the very beginning, with assurances that American diplomacy had secured a "halt" in the Iranian nuclear program. Late on the night of November 23, 2013, President Barack Obama stood in the State Dining Room and announced that an interim agreement had been reached between Iran and the P5+1 global powers—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China—that "halted the progress of the Iranian nuclear program." The White House distributed a fact sheet emphasizing that Iran had promised to "halt progress on the growth" of its low-enriched uranium stockpile and to "halt progress on its plutonium track" to a nuclear weapon. Senior-administration officials held a late-night briefing to stress for reporters that the concessions added up to "a halt of activities across the Iranian program"—the word halt was used more than a dozen more times—and that the coming months would also see sustained progress in investigating Iranian research into nuclear detonations. Reporters would be told in subsequent weeks that the agreement even prohibited Iran from further testing on ballistic missiles.

Those statements were, on the whole, false. But on that night, the president and those around him badly needed them to be true. So they pretended they were. By

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November 2014, the six-month interim Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) announced that night had been extended into a year (a contingency that had been formally built into and anticipated by the original text). The parties, unable to seal an agreement even after twelve months, then extended negotiations through the summer of 2015. The move stoked long-standing fears that the Iranians were using negotiations as a stalling tactic as they inched toward a bomb, but the president and his administration insisted that there was no harm in having more talks. Rerunning the claims from that first night, they insisted that Iran's program had been "frozen" by the JPOA—and that the Iranians were living up to their end of the bargain by keeping it frozen. Those claims remain false.

It is a worthwhile exercise to go back and see how the Obama administration's desperate quest began and why the president and his people are still clinging to hopes about these negotiations, which they have every reason to know are, in truth, delusional. Throughout 2013, domestic criticism of the Obama administration's overtures toward the Islamic Republic was building. There were broad suspicions of conciliatory moves to Tehran, but nothing definite; as we now know, as of the beginning of the year, the State Department was still flatly lying to reporters about the existence of secret bilateral talks between Washington and Tehran. But in the summer of 2013, the victory of Hassan Rouhani in the Iranian presidential election emboldened those around Obama, and eventually the president himself, to escalate the ongoing outreach.

But by fall, Washington and its allies still had little to show for their efforts. Iran was still steadily progressing toward having a nuclear weapon, and Iranian leaders were still regularly boasting that nothing could stop their progress. Congressional leaders were eager to move forward on crippling sanctions legislation aimed at testing that braggadocio. The Obama administration had a different approach. Advisers in and around the White House insisted that Rouhani and his foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, could prevail upon the Iranian establishment and cut a deal addressing the country's nuclear program. The duo just needed to be shown a little more goodwill; new pressure would scuttle their efforts back home. Congress was skeptical but continued watching from the sidelines even as Iranians marched closer every day to nuclear-weapons acquisition. On November 10, 2013, a much anticipated summit in Geneva— aimed at immediately stopping that very

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~~march in anticipation of further negotiations—collapsed.~~ France's foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, discovered late in the talks that his P5+1 counterparts were preparing to acquiesce to a deal that lacked robust checks on Iran's plutonium work. He publicly blasted the terms as "a sucker's deal," and the talks ended. Everyone agreed to reassemble in two weeks to try again.

American diplomats had failed and had looked bad doing it. They had been ready to sign, per the French, an agreement that fell short of stopping Iran's drive toward a weapon. The Foundation for Defense of Democracies estimated that the Iranians had been offered roughly \$20 billion in financial relief to take the deal, far in excess of what the administration could justify. Congressional leaders were beside themselves. The Obama administration had reassured them that it would strike a tough bargain with Iran only if Congress gave U.S. diplomats some breathing room. Instead, the diplomats had been willing to trade billions of dollars for a toothless entente. Well, if American negotiators lacked sufficient leverage to extract meaningful concessions from Iran, Congress would provide it to them. Legislation was prepared and shared that would immediately impose a new round of sanctions on Iran.

Democrats and Republicans from the House and Senate sent the president letters objecting to the reported contours of an emerging deal. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid took to the floor and declared that after the Thanksgiving recess, he would present and support bipartisan sanctions legislation against Iran if diplomacy continued to falter. The P5+1 meeting was to be held that weekend. Given all of this, President Obama badly needed Iranian leaders to accept an agreement immediately freezing their uranium, plutonium, and ballistic-missile programs in exchange for limited sanctions relief, and he needed it stat. The agreement that administration officials purported to have secured would have been a diplomatic masterstroke. It would have immediately frozen activity across the three core areas of Iran's nuclear-weapons program—uranium enrichment, plutonium-related work, and ballistic-missile development—while dealing with the verification issue that hangs over the entire program. In exchange, the West would have provided what the White House fact sheet characterized as limited, temporary, and reversible relief from some sanctions. It would have lasted for only six months, a decent amount of time to test diplomacy. No diplomatic concessions

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would have been made up front.

But since American diplomats couldn't get Iran to agree to a deal in which it would do any of those things, what they actually brought home was the Joint Plan of Action. It allowed Iran to continue making sustained progress along its uranium and plutonium tracks, contained no restrictions on ballistic-missile development, failed to open up Iran's atomic facilities to verification, provided sufficient economic relief to stabilize Iran's economy, and would last for at least 18 months. And it wasn't even a deal yet. The parties were committed to the contours of a deal that would be outlined and implemented sometime in the future, which would turn out to be January 2014. Until then an "interim before the interim" period took hold, during which Iran was allowed to speed ahead with its nuclear program with zero new restrictions. It was only enough, it seems, to allow the White House to tell lawmakers that progress had been achieved—and that they would have to continue sitting on the sidelines lest they spoil it...

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IRAN'S EMERGING EMPIRE

Charles Krauthammer

[Washington Post](#), Jan. 22, 2015

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While Iran's march toward a nuclear bomb has provoked a major clash between the White House and Congress, Iran's march toward conventional domination of the Arab world has been largely overlooked. In Washington, that is. The Arabs have noticed. And the pro-American ones, the Gulf Arabs in particular, are deeply worried. This week, Iranian-backed Houthi rebels seized control of the Yemeni government, heretofore pro-American. In September, they overran Sanaa, the capital. On Tuesday, they seized the presidential palace. On Thursday, they forced the president to resign. The Houthis have local religious grievances, being Shiites in a majority Sunni land. But they are also agents of Shiite Iran, which arms, trains and advises them. Their slogan — "God is great. Death to America. Death to Israel" — could have been written in Persian.

Why should we care about the coup? First, because we depend on Yemen's government to support our drone war against another local menace, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). It's not clear if we can even maintain our embassy in Yemen, let alone conduct operations against AQAP. And second, because growing Iranian hegemony is a mortal threat to our allies and interests in the entire Middle East. In Syria, Iran's power is similarly rising. The mullahs rescued the reeling regime of Bashar al-Assad by sending in weapons, money and Iranian revolutionary guards, as well as by ordering their Lebanese proxy, Hezbollah, to join the fight. They succeeded. The moderate rebels are in disarray, even as Assad lives in de facto coexistence with the Islamic State, which controls a large part of his country. Iran's domination of Syria was further illustrated by a strange occurrence last Sunday in the Golan Heights. An Israeli helicopter attacked a convoy on the Syrian side of the armistice line. Those killed were not Syrian, however, but five Hezbollah fighters from Lebanon and several Iranian officials, including a brigadier general. What were they doing in the Syrian Golan Heights? Giving "crucial advice," announced the Iranian government. On what? Well, three days earlier, Hezbollah's leader had threatened an attack on Israel's Galilee. Tehran appears to be using its control of Syria and Hezbollah to create its very own front against Israel.

The Israelis can defeat any conventional attack. Not so the very rich, very weak Gulf Arabs. To the north and west, they see Iran creating a satellite "Shiite Crescent" stretching to the Mediterranean and consisting of Iraq, Syria and

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Lebanon. To their south and west, they see Iran gaining proxy control of Yemen. — And they are caught in the pincer. The Saudis are fighting back the only way they can — with massive production of oil at a time of oversupply and collapsing prices, placing enormous economic pressure on Iran. It needs \$136 oil to maintain its budget. The price today is below \$50. Yet the Obama administration appears to be ready to acquiesce to the new reality of Iranian domination of Syria. It has told the *New York Times* that it is essentially abandoning its proclaimed goal of removing Assad. For the Saudis and the other Gulf Arabs, this is a nightmare. They're engaged in a titanic regional struggle with Iran. And they are losing — losing Yemen, losing Lebanon, losing Syria and watching post-U.S.-withdrawal Iraq come under increasing Iranian domination.

The nightmare would be hugely compounded by Iran going nuclear. The Saudis were already stupefied that Washington conducted secret negotiations with Tehran behind their backs. And they can see where the current talks are headed — legitimizing Iran as a threshold nuclear state. Which makes all the more incomprehensible President Obama's fierce opposition to Congress' offer to strengthen the American negotiating hand by passing sanctions to be triggered if Iran fails to agree to give up its nuclear program. After all, that was the understanding Obama gave Congress when he began these last-ditch negotiations in the first place.

Why are you parroting Tehran's talking points, Mr. President? asks Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez. Indeed, why are we endorsing Iran's claim that sanctions relief is the new norm? Obama assured the nation that sanctions relief was but a temporary concession to give last-minute, time-limited negotiations a chance. Twice the deadline has come. Twice no new sanctions, just unconditional negotiating extensions. Our regional allies — Saudi Arabia, the other five Gulf states, Jordan, Egypt and Israel — are deeply worried. Tehran is visibly on the march on the ground and openly on the march to nuclear status. And their one great ally, their strategic anchor for two generations, is acquiescing to both.

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IRAN AND THE STATE OF OBAMA-LAND

Ruthie Blum

[Jerusalem Post](#), Jan. 25, 2015

In his State of the Union address last Tuesday, US President Barack Obama painted a rosy picture of America's condition at home and abroad, presenting a delusional list of his own accomplishments since taking office six years ago. A careful dissection of each of his falsehoods - which were nearly as numerous as the standing ovations he received from the Democrats in the room every time he punctuated a sentence - could fill the pages of a lengthy book. But the abridged version is as follows: Everything would be even rosier if the Republicans were to stop opposing his policies, which not only have been making Americans healthier, wealthier and wiser, but have bridged gaps with countries all over the world. One didn't know whether to laugh or cry while watching the lame duck remind us that he still has two more years of damage to inflict and veto powers to exercise.

Of most relevance to Israel, and to Americans who grasp the real and present danger of radical Islam, was the president's position on the Islamic Republic of Iran. To lead into it, Obama first took credit for "stand[ing] united with people around the world who've been targeted by terrorists - from a school in Pakistan to the streets of Paris. We will continue to hunt down terrorists and dismantle their networks, and we reserve the right to act unilaterally, as we've done relentlessly since I took office to take out terrorists who pose a direct threat to us and our allies." Purposely omitting the religion and stated goals of these generic "terrorists," he went on to assert that "for the first time in a decade, we've halted the progress of [Iran's] nuclear program and reduced its stockpile of nuclear material," and assure Congress that he "will veto any new sanctions bill that

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threatens to undo this [diplomatic] progress.”

The giggles of glee from the mullahs in Tehran could be heard across the globe. You see, they have been speeding up their development of long-range missiles, while increasing their anti-Western rhetoric and openly threatening Israel with destruction. Oh, and with serious “retaliation” for Israel having killed a Revolutionary Guards commander during an airstrike on Hezbollah honchos in Syria last Sunday. Nor are Shi’ites the only Islamists emboldened by Obama’s behavior. The Sunni radicals - most notably Islamic State (the IS terrorist organization that has been committing mass atrocities against “infidels” the world over) - are just as buoyed by a weak and supplicant White House. Still, it is Iran that is on the brink of possessing nuclear weapons. This is why Speaker of the House John Boehner extended an invitation to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday to address Congress in early March. If anyone can spell out the Iranian threat - and how it relates to and governs the terrorism that Obama claimed to be fighting - it is Netanyahu. The timing of the invitation, which Netanyahu promptly accepted, was eerily apt. On Wednesday morning, an Arab terrorist from the Palestinian Authority boarded a bus in Tel Aviv and stabbed more than a dozen people, wounding several critically.

Battling terrorism is nothing new to Israelis. But whenever there is an attack in the White City, it serves as a reminder that the bloodshed against Jews and Israelis really has nothing to do with the so-called “occupation” of lands won in the Six Day War. The Palestinian leadership and media make no bones about their viewing the entire state of Israel as illegitimate and deserving of elimination. Like their Islamist brethren across the Middle East, the Palestinians are players in a global jihad against Christians and Jews. Obama doesn’t see it that way. On the contrary, as he pointed out in his address, he considers “the deplorable anti-Semitism that has resurfaced in certain parts of the world” to be on a par with “offensive stereotypes of Muslims.” He was thus far more angry about the “breach of protocol” made by Boehner and Netanyahu, for arranging a trip to Washington to warn about Iran, than about the terrorist attack in Tel Aviv.

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And then came the real clincher: a ~~Bloomberg~~ news service report according to which the head of the Mossad told a congressional delegation visiting Israel the previous week that he opposed new sanctions on Iran, on the grounds that this would be “like throwing a grenade into the [diplomatic] process.” Though this did not sound the least bit plausible (and not merely because it goes against Netanyahu’s stance on the matter), it created a big media stir, which spurred an investigation into the allegation. On Thursday, Mossad chief Tamir Pardo issued a statement denying the claim. It turns out that what he had said was, in fact, the opposite - that sanctions have been effective, and that more “sticks,” not fewer, are needed in the “carrot-and-stick” approach with the Islamic Republic. Secretary of State John Kerry, however, was quick to use the misquote as proof that Netanyahu’s demand for tougher measures against Iran is both unreasonable and runs counter to the assessments of Israel’s top espionage echelon.

Each new incident revealing the depths of animosity on the part of the Obama administration toward Israel, coupled with its sidling up to the likes of Cuba, gives an energy boost to the enemies of Western democracy. But Obama is more concerned with the weather. No challenge - no challenge - poses a greater threat to future generations than climate change,” he said, as Israelis in the Golan Heights and the Galilee prepared their bomb shelters for the next round of Iranian-sponsored rocket rain.

On Topic

[Ambassador Ron Dermer Explains Bibi’s Upcoming Visit to Washington \(Video\): Jewish Press, Jan. 26, 2015](#)—Israel’s Ambassador to the U.S., Ron Dermer, explains to his audience why PM Netanyahu had a moral obligation to come before Congress and speak about the Iranian nuclear threat, just as he had a moral obligation to go to France and march in the rally.

[Netanyahu's Speech: Jerusalem Post, Jan. 25, 2015](#)— Israel has traditionally been a

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[Iran Goes Ballistic](#): Yoel Guzansky & Yiftah S. Shapir, *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter, 2015—While discussions of Iran's growing strategic threat focus almost exclusively on its nuclear capabilities and objectives, Tehran's massive ballistic missile arsenal poses a clear and present danger to both the oil installations of the Persian Gulf monarchies and to the Western military presence in the region.

[An Iranian Nuclear Weapons Program in What was Formerly 'Syria'](#): J.E. Dyer, *Jewish Press*, Jan. 18, 2015 —It was evident a year and a half ago that there would be no restoration of Syria, as we know it, under the Assad regime.

[U.S. Must Connect the Dots Between Iran Talks and Hezbollah Violence](#): Jonathan S. Tobin, *Commentary*, Jan. 28, 2015 —The instinct in Washington is to dismiss the latest flare-up in violence along Israel's northern border as just another incident in a long-running cycle of violence involving Hezbollah and the Israel Defense Forces.

[Cheap Oil Won't Stop Iran](#): Mark Dubowitz & Jonathan Schanzer, *National Interest*, Jan. 27, 2015—As President Obama made clear in his State of Union address on Tuesday, U.S. officials are reasonably confident that they have Iran just where they want it.

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