

Wednesday's "News in Review" Round-Up
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WEEKLY QUOTES

"... Nobody's going to deny that there's enormous frustration here." —U.S. President Obama on Tuesday, calling Syria a "crumbling" state and acknowledged that the United Nations remains "far from achieving" its goal of returning stability and normalcy to the war-torn nation, but he again ruled out direct U.S. military intervention. Obama added "Right now we don't think that there is a military

solution per se to the problem. But the situation's fluid, and we are continuing to explore every possible avenue to solve this problem because it's not just heartbreaking to see what's happening to the Syrian people, it's very dangerous for the region as a whole."

"This is the president at his worst. Self-pitying and self-absorbed, he wants to let us know how upset *he* is. He casts himself as a bystander in three years of inactivity punctuated by blunders (e.g. rubbing out his "red line" on the use of WMDs). And yet he still insists on the phony choice between direct military action and essentially doing nothing." —*Washington Post* columnist Jennifer Rubin. ([Washington Post](#), Feb. 12, 2014)

"...The lobbyist-in-chief...President Obama who, in his State of the Union Address, presented a rosy picture of the [Geneva] talks and threatened to veto new sanctions that Congress might pass." —*New York Post* columnist Amir Taheri. Endorsing Obama's stance, Sens. Carl Levin and Angus King penned a *New York Times* op-ed, "Don't Undermine the Iran Deal." In a rare sortie, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrote Levin endorsing his opposition to further sanctions. Taheri continues, "yet this position is based on a series of false premises. The first of these comes at the start of the Levin-King op-ed ("there are only two ways to keep Iran from developing a nuclear weapon: negotiations or military action")...there are only two examples of trying to persuade a nation to abandon its nuclear project through negotiations: North Korea and Iran, with no success in either case. There has been one case of stopping a nation's nuclear ambitions through war, that of Iraq in 1991 — but even then, what clinched the deal in the end was regime change in 2003... The second false premise of the Obama-Levin-King-Clinton analysis is that Hassan Rouhani, the new president of the Islamic Republic, is a "moderate" who ought to be supported against hardline rivals. In fact, nothing in Rouhani's record or his performance as president reveals him as moderate in any reasonable sense of that much-abused term... The third false premise in the Obama-Levin-King-Clinton analysis is that a "deal" has been reached with Iran. In fact, Iranian officials from Rouhani on down keep repeating that nothing has been signed. According to Ali-Akbar Salehi, the man in charge of Iran's nuclear project, that program will not change "by a single iota..." ([New York Post](#), Feb. 7, 2014)

"In our eyes, the U.S. is still the Great Satan and nothing has changed."—Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araktzi said Monday. "No one should think that the Geneva Accord created a friendship," Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* quoted him saying. "Hostility between us and the Americans still exists... We still have dozens of

controversial issues to address such as the Palestinians, Syrian human rights, oppression, global hegemony, and more." ([Algemeiner](#), Feb. 10, 2014)

"The Iranian nation and armed forces are ready for an all-out defense and protection of the country with all their power and they will respond to any aggression with reciprocal and inconceivable strikes." —Maj. Gen. Yahya Rahim Safavi, senior military aide to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, said his country would unleash Lebanon's Hezbollah on Israel should there be any military action against his country. His comments come just days after Iran's Northern Navy Fleet Admiral, Afshin Rezayee Haddad, said a "fleet" of Iranian warships is heading into the Atlantic Ocean to be stationed off the U.S. East Coast. ([WND](#), Feb. 12, 2014)

"Individuals who would have been previously removed from the battlefield by U.S. counterterrorism operations for attacking or plotting to attack against U.S. interests remain free because of self-imposed red tape." —Republican Representative Mike Rogers of Michigan, the chairman of the Intelligence Committee, during a congressional hearing. Rogers spoke angrily about the drone restrictions imposed by Obama. The new rules, he said, are "endangering the lives of Americans at home and our military overseas in a way that is frustrating to our allies and frustrating to those of us who engage in the oversight of our classified activities." The Obama administration is debating whether to authorize a lethal strike against an American citizen living in Pakistan who some believe is actively plotting terrorist attacks, according to current and former government officials. It is the first time American officials have actively discussed killing an American citizen overseas since President Obama imposed new restrictions on drone operations last May. ([New York Times](#), Feb. 10, 2014)

"Egypt is again an open front for jihad." —Brian Fishman, a researcher in counterterrorism at the New America Foundation in Washington. "The world is being turned on its head, and, for the United States, the ability to rely on Egypt as a stabilizing force in the region — rather than a source of problems — is really being challenged." In just the last two weeks, Islamist militants have detonated a car bomb at the gates of the capital's security headquarters, gunned down a senior Interior Ministry official in broad daylight and shot down a military helicopter over Sinai with a portable surface-to-air missile. But perhaps most alarming to officials in Cairo and Washington are the signs that the swift increase in the scale and effectiveness of the attacks may come from a new influx of

fighters: Egyptians returning from jihad abroad to join a campaign of terrorism against the military-backed government. ([New York Times](#), Feb. 5, 2014)

"We've had to be much more active." —an Asaib Ahl al-Haq commander who goes by the nom de guerre Abu Sajad. Asaib Ahl al-Haq, or "League of the Righteous", also known as the Khazali Network, is a Shi'a Islamist insurgent group in Iraq, alleged to receive Iranian funding and have links to the Iranian Quds Force. "Those who are trying to incite sectarianism, we have to deal with them," he said, drawing his hand over his throat like a knife. More than 1,000 people were killed in January in Iraq, according to *Agence France-Presse*. That was the highest death toll since April 2008. ([Washington Post](#), Feb. 9, 2014)

"My view is that he [Jonathan Pollard] should be treated like other intelligence assets of allies...we spy on some allies and they have spied on us. Because they're allies, usually they have only been in prison for a few years. What I said is that people shouldn't be hung up on him being Jewish or Israeli. Pretend he's Greek and release him." —Former CIA director R. James Woolsey said last week. Woolsey specifically used the word antisemitism, referring to Pollard's ongoing 28 year sentence for espionage, in an interview Saturday, saying, "I certainly don't think that it is universally true, but in the case of some American individuals, I think there is anti-Semitism at work here." ([Jerusalem Post](#), Feb. 9, 2013)

"The most powerful of all the speeches was delivered by the Israeli ambassador, Ron Prosor, who spoke of his father's escape from Nazi Germany. "In the last century," he said, "this pattern of defamation, degradation and bloodshed has been the hallmark of an impending atrocity. Despite the pledges—even in this chamber—of 'never again,' we have seen the pattern repeat itself over and over again." To judge by the United Nations' treatment of the opportunity for an intelligent and enlightening debate about the lessons of war, the pattern isn't going to change anytime soon. I no longer fear the danger of world government—or hold out much hope for universal peace—after seeing the way the world behaves when it's talking to itself." —Andrew Roberts, historian, after attending last week's Security Council Open Debate on universal peace. ([Wall Street Journal](#), Feb. 5, 2014)

SHORT TAKES

FRUSTRATED BY KARZAI, U.S. SHIFTS AFGHANISTAN EXIT PLANS (Washington) —The U.S. military has revised plans to withdraw troops from Afghanistan to allow the White House to wait until President Hamid Karzai leaves office before completing a security pact and settling on a post-2014 U.S. troop presence, officials said. The option for waiting reflects a growing belief in Washington that there is little chance of repairing relations with Mr. Karzai and getting him to sign the bilateral security agreement before elections scheduled for the spring. "If he's not going to be part of the solution, we have to have a way to get past him," said a senior U.S. official. "It's a pragmatic recognition that clearly Karzai may not sign the BSA (Bilateral Security Agreement) and that he doesn't represent the voice of the Afghan people." The military plan is the most significant example to date of how the U.S. has sought to minimize its reliance on Mr. Karzai, whose refusal to sign the security agreement amid a flurry of anti-American statements has upset Washington policy makers. ([Wall Street Journal](#), Feb. 10, 2014)

CIVILIAN CASUALTY COUNT JUMPS IN AFGHANISTAN (Kabul) —Last year was the most violent for civilians in Afghanistan since 2009, underscoring how noncombatants are increasingly bearing the brunt of war as foreign troops head home, according to a United Nations report. The U.N. report showed that civilian casualties rose 14% in 2013, with Taliban-led Islamist insurgents blamed for almost three-fourths of the total. More of the victims were women and children, it said. In all, 2,959 people were killed and 5,656 injured last year, compared with 2,768 killed and 4,821 injured in 2012. ([Wall Street Journal](#), Feb. 8, 2014)

SYRIA PEACE TALKS NOT MAKING MUCH PROGRESS (Geneva)—Peace talks between the Syrian government and opposition are not making much progress, international mediator Lakhdar Brahimi said on Tuesday after a face-to-face meeting of the warring parties in Geneva. As negotiations intended to end Syria's three-year-old war concluded the second day of this week's session, both sides had no advances to report. A main issue is the role of President Bashar al-Assad in a transitional governing body. The government says it will not discuss his leaving power while the opposition wants him out. Faisal Mekdad, Syria's Deputy Foreign Minister, said no agenda had been agreed for the talks, blaming the opposition's refusal to discuss the issue of "terrorism" which he says must be covered first. He said the government considers almost all those fighting it in Syria as "terrorists". ([Reuters](#), Feb. 11, 2014)

U.S. AND IRAN JOSTLE BEFORE NUCLEAR TALKS (Washington)—The U.S. and Iran

are staking out increasingly entrenched and opposing positions over Tehran's nuclear program, threatening the prospects of a vital foreign policy initiative of President Barack Obama. The U.S. Treasury Department on Thursday announced new enforcement actions against companies with links to Iran for allegedly evading American sanctions against the country and aiding its nuclear and missile programs. The enforcement comes as both Democrat and Republican lawmakers exert pressure on the Obama administration to toughen its posture against Iran ahead of Feb. 18 talks aimed at ending any nuclear-arms threat from Tehran. But Thursday's move strained Washington's diplomatic engagement with Tehran, which said that the move violated terms of the diplomatic process both countries had agreed on. "This is yet another instance of the lack of the U.S. government's good faith on the eve of the second round of negotiations and is an indication that the U.S. wants to impose a negative atmosphere," said Alireza Miryousefi, spokesman for the Iranian mission at the United Nations. "This action will not only fail, but also will face Iranian reciprocal answer." ([Wall Street Journal](#), Feb. 6, 2014)

TREASURY'S CHARGE SEES TEHRAN ENABLING AL QAEDA IN SYRIA (Washington) — The Obama administration charged that Tehran has allowed senior al Qaeda members operating from Iranian soil to facilitate the movement of Sunni fighters into Syria. The allegation by the Treasury Department on Thursday would suggest that elements of Iran's government or military were at least tacitly supporting the opposing sides of Syria's civil war. Iranian officials denied the accusations, saying Washington was harming diplomatic efforts aimed at ending the international standoff over Tehran's nuclear program. The Iranian government is Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's closest military and diplomatic ally. U.S., European and Arab governments have repeatedly charged Iran's elite military unit, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IRGC, of deploying soldiers to Syria to bolster Mr. Assad's regime, an accusation Iran has denied. U.S. officials, however, have intermittently accused Tehran and the IRGC of colluding with Sunni militant groups, who historically are enemies of Tehran's Shiite government, but also are fighting the U.S. and its allies. ([Wall Street Journal](#), Feb. 6, 2014)

AL QAEDA-LINKED MILITANTS IN IRAQ SECURE NEARLY FULL CONTROL OF FALLUJA (Baghdad)—Sunni militants fighting under the banner of Al Qaeda appeared to make gains across Anbar Province on Saturday, using snipers and rocket-propelled grenades in heavy street fighting as they secured nearly full control of Falluja and captured the strategic town Karma. One senior police official in Anbar said Saturday that "Falluja is completely under the control of Al Qaeda." The fighting

that has been going on for days has proved to be a crucial test for Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki's Shiite-led government, which is facing an escalating Sunni-led insurgency that threatens to tear the country apart. The unrest and the seeming inability of the Iraqi government forces to quell it underscores the steady deterioration of Iraq's security since the last American troops left two years ago. ([New York Times](#), Jan. 4, 2014)

SUICIDE BOMB INSTRUCTOR BLOWS UP HIS STUDENTS (Baghdad) —Would-be suicide bombers got to meet their 72 virgins a bit early Monday when their clumsy tutor accidentally detonated an explosives-packed car during a how-to-bomb lesson at their Iraqi terror camp. The blast, at a training camp disguised in an orchard in a Sunni area north of Baghdad, killed the instructor and 20 of his students, Iraqi officials said. The camp, outside Samarra, was run by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, an extremist Sunni group that recently broke with al Qaeda and has specialized in car bombings, officials said. A police officer said the camp members were attending a lesson on making car bombs and explosive belts when a glitch set off one of the devices. ([New York Post](#), Feb. 10, 2014)

BLASTS KILL 10 AT PAKISTANI PORN CINEMA (Peshawar) —At least 10 people were killed and 16 others wounded in a grenade attack on a Pakistani cinema famous for showing pornographic films, according to local officials. Police said two grenades were thrown in the auditorium of the Shama cinema in the north-western city of Peshawar, close to the country's restive tribal belt. The attack comes barely a week after another attack in the city killed four people at the Picture House cinema. The city, close to the border with Afghanistan, is in the frontline of the Pakistan's Islamist insurgency and its movie houses - known for showing bawdy movies to marijuana smoking audiences - are frequent targets. The city's cinemas have been under intense pressure from Islamist extremists in recent years and several have closed. CD shops have also been targeted as well as barbers, who have been warned not shave beards or cut hair too short. ([Telegraph](#), Feb. 12, 2014)

EU SLAMS TURKISH MOVE ON WEB CURBS (Istanbul)—Turkey's parliament passed a bill that would allow authorities to shut websites without a court ruling, in a move critics slammed as an effort by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to silence dissent and expand his media control. Lawmakers led by the premier's Justice and Development Party, or AKP, approved the measure late Wednesday, despite charges that it would significantly curtail free speech and intrude on personal

freedoms. The draft law to broaden the telecommunications monitor's powers comes just weeks after the government moved to tighten its grip on the judiciary, removing thousands of police officers, prosecutors and judges from their posts. "Erdogan wants to turn the Internet into his own portal," Turkish lawmaker Umut Oran said in an interview, adding "this law is to cover up Erdogan's illegal activities, injustices and bribery allegations. It also aims to prevent the surfacing of future charges." ([Wall Street Journal](#), Feb. 6, 2014)

AMID TRUCE WITH ISRAEL, HAMAS STRUGGLES TO REIN IN ROCKETS (Gaza)— Officially, a 14-month-old cease-fire between the Islamist militant group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, and its enemy, Israel, is holding. Unofficially, it is a truce that grows more tense by the day as Hamas struggles to rein in armed factions that are not completely under its control. This kind of escalation has led to two wars in the past five years, and there is a palpable sense today that another could be on the horizon. Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon warned recently: "If Hamas doesn't know how to impose its authority on terrorist organizations operating from its territory," it will "pay a heavy price." Rocket fire from Gaza toward Israel is increasing; there were 28 launched in January, according to the Israeli military. ([Washington Post](#), Feb. 7, 2014)

RUSSIAN JEWS REMEMBER ISRAELI ATHLETES MURDERED AT 1972 GAMES (Sochi) — They gathered Sunday in sorrow and celebration, Jews saying a prayer for the 11 Israeli athletes killed by terrorists at the 1972 Munich Olympics. The Munich massacre visited the specter of terror on the Olympics, introducing a fear felt intensely even today. A band of Palestinians scaled an Olympic Village fence and took members of the Israeli Summer Olympics team hostage. Before the attack was over, 11 Israelis and a German policeman were dead. "If once Jews were afraid to show their Jewishness," said Berel Lazar, the chief rabbi of Russia, "today they are proud." About 200 people assembled at a hotel just outside the Olympic gates Sunday. Jews from the city of Sochi joined Israeli delegates, embassy officials from Moscow and American visitors from the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, a branch of Hasidism founded in Russia in 1775 and centered in the Smolensk region for 100 years. ([Ha'aretz](#), Feb. 10, 2014)

JEWISH GROUPS REJECTING HUNGARY'S GRANTS FOR HOLOCAUST EVENTS (Budapest) — Several Jewish organizations in Hungary as a form of protest will not accept government grants for memorial events marking the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust. The groups are protesting what they consider the state's

whitewashing of Hungary's role in the Holocaust. In a statement released Wednesday, the Frankel Synagogue Foundation said it decided to reject the funds to "draw attention" to several instances of what it called the state's distortion of Holocaust history and the role of the regime of Miklos Horthy, who led Hungary into World War II as an ally of Nazi Germany. The incidents, the synagogue statement said, "are incompatible with granting support for memorial events that pay tribute to the victims of mass murders or an honorable way of thinking." Hungary has named 2014 as Holocaust Memorial Year, marking the 70th anniversary of mass deportations of some 450,000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. ([Jewish Press](#), Feb. 6, 2014)

JEWISH PASSENGERS ON BELGIAN TRAIN TOLD TO GET OFF AT AUSCHWITZ (Brussels) —Jews on a recent train in Belgium were treated to a twisted announcement on the train's speaker system: that they should get off at Auschwitz and take a shower. *JTA* reported the bizarre incident, which is believed to have been the work of adolescents who stole the keys that operate the loudspeaker. The incident of Jan. 31 prompted the Belgian rail company SNCB to file a complaint with police over incitement to hatred. According to *RTL*, the suspects gained access to the speaker system during rush hour, at 5 p.m., while traveling from Namur to Brussels. One of the passengers said in French, "Ladies and gentlemen, we are approaching Auschwitz. All Jews are requested to disembark and take a short shower." ([Tablet](#), Feb. 11, 2014)

SPAIN OK'S JEWISH RETURN BILL (Madrid) —More than five centuries after Spain's Jews were forced to flee, convert to Catholicism or face execution without trial, their descendants are being invited to return and take up dual citizenship. Spain's government has approved a draft bill that will allow descendants of those Sephardic Jews who were expelled in 1492, under the crusading Catholic rule of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, to seek dual citizenship. The new law would offer the prospect of an EU passport to up to 3.5 million people worldwide, many in Israel but others thought to reside in France, the United States, Turkey, Mexico, Argentina and Chile. Spanish consulates in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are among those said to be facing a flood of requests for more information since the plan was announced. An estimated 300,000 Jews resided in Spain before the infamous Spanish Inquisition of the 15th Century, when the "Reyes Catolicos" reconquered Spain from its Arab rulers and ordered Jews and Muslims to convert to the Catholic faith or leave the country. ([Telegraph](#), Feb. 11., 2014)

Frustrated over Syria: Jennifer Rubin, *Washington Post*, Feb. 12, 2014 —Well, now the president is frustrated! After three years, 136,000 or so dead, use of chemical weapons, creation of a jihadi haven, millions of refugees flooding through the area and a strategic boost for Iran and Russia, President Obama has decided he is miffed.

Why Israel Should Attack Iran Now: Lawrence Solomon, *Times of Israel*, Feb. 10, 2014—Many consider the Geneva negotiations over Iran to be a betrayal of Israel by America. Yes, it certainly is a betrayal. But is anyone really surprised?

Spain: Sephardic Jews are Welcome Back... Maybe: Soeren Kern, *Gatestone Institute*, Feb. 12, 2014—The Spanish government has approved a law that would allow descendants of Sephardic Jews expelled from the country in 1492 to seek Spanish nationality without requiring them to relinquish their citizenships in other countries.

Rob Coles, Publications Editor, *Canadian Institute for Jewish Research/L'institut Canadien de recherches sur le Judaïsme*, www.isranet.org Tel: (514) 486-5544 - Fax:(514) 486-8284. <mailto:ber@isranet.org>



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