

A week of military and diplomatic success for Israel; failure and humiliation for Iran and the PA

On the political and military fronts, Israel outmaneuvers its enemies.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu secured another diplomatic victory for Israel with the dramatic announcement that Chad and the Jewish State would be reestablishing diplomatic relations. The Muslim majority nation had severed ties in 1972 following intense pressure from Libya, its menacing neighbor to the north, which at the time was led by the dictator, Col. Muammar Qaddafi. But following a visit by Chad's President Idriss Déby to Jerusalem and a reciprocating visit by PM Netanyahu to N'Djamena, forty-seven years of animosity instantly vanished.

Israel's historic diplomatic achievement occurred despite intense efforts by the Palestinian Authority and Iran to torpedo the initiative, and reflects a rise in Israel's standing on the African continent and in the Muslim world at large. Indeed, Israel has much to offer in terms of military expertise, cyber technology, water technology and agricultural technology, commodities that are in high demand in parched, battle-plagued Africa.

Upon Netanyahu's return flight to Israel, Sudan granted permission for Netanyahu's plane to fly in airspace controlled by Khartoum. This may seem to be insignificant but considering that Sudan was once firmly in Iran's camp and served as an Iranian transit point for arms shipments to Gaza, the gesture was remarkable.

Following the breakthrough with Chad, Jerusalem announced that it is preparing to host Mali's Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga in the "coming weeks." The West African Muslim majority nation severed diplomatic relations with Israel during the 1973 Yom Kippur War but is now set to restore full diplomatic ties.

Muslim nations from the Near East to Africa are coming to terms with the fact

that the source Mideast's instability is not Israel and its conflict with the so-called "Palestinians" but rather Islamic fundamentalism. Shia Iran is recognized as a malign regional influence while ISIS and the Muslim Brotherhood represent bad actors of the Sunni persuasion. In this context, moderate Muslim nations like Oman, which recently hosted Netanyahu in a well-publicized visit, see Israel as an ally rather than a foe.

Palestinian efforts to isolate Israel have failed miserably and this is a reflection of a rejectionist, maximalist political policy rife with short-sighted, unrealistic goals. In the arena of diplomacy, Israel, led by its savvy statesman Netanyahu, has completely outmaneuvered and outclassed the PA's crusty octogenarian president, Mahmoud Abbas.

In addition to its political fortunes, Israel this week scored impressive military successes. On January 20, in a rare daylight raid, Israel struck what was believed to be a weapons storage facility near Damascus. Iran, which provides Hezbollah with \$800 million in annual military assistance, uses Syria's Damascus airport as a waystation for transit of weapons to Hezbollah. Soon after the attack, Iranian Quds Force operatives launched a Fateh 110 short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) at northern Israel. The missile, which is made in Iran, incorporates Chinese components and carries a ½ ton warhead. Had it landed in a populated area, it could have caused massive civilian casualties.

Israeli missile defense crews detected the launch and intercepted it with a Tamir interceptor fired by an Iron Dome battery. Israeli skiers enjoying themselves at the Golan Heights ski resort watched the drama unfold as Israel's wonder weapon blew the Iranian missile out of the sky. As an aside, the U.S. Army recently announced that it will be acquiring two Iron Dome batteries with 12 launchers, 240 interception missiles, two battle-management systems and two radar systems to shield American ground troops from missile, rocket and drone threats. On January 20, Iron Dome proved that it is as adept at shooting down ballistic missiles fired by Iran as it is at shooting down Qassam and Katyusha rockets fired by Hamas.

Israel could not let the Iranian aggression stand unanswered. In the early hours of Monday morning, Israel launched massive and successive strikes against Quds Force munition storage sites, intelligence sites and training camps, reducing them to ash. According to the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the

attack caused the death of at least 21 enemy combatants of whom 12 were Iranian, six were Syrian regime soldiers and three were foreign mercenaries of unspecified nationality. An Israeli warning to the Syrians to keep their anti-aircraft defenses in check went unheeded and so, Israel was forced to destroy a number of Syrian anti-aircraft platforms. The Israeli Army released dramatic video footage showing the destruction of Syrian anti-aircraft batteries.

Syria's anti-aircraft defenses are formidable but despite the presence of Russian SA-17, SA-22, S-200 and S-300 anti-aircraft batteries, Israel retains complete air supremacy over the skies of Syria. Syria's main patron Russia responded angrily to the Israeli strikes referring to them as "arbitrary." But the Russians, who assured Israel that they would keep Iran far from Israel's borders, have not kept up to their end of the bargain. A report which surfaced in Arab media alleged that a visit by Quds Force Commander, Qassem Soleimani, to a location less than 40km from the Golan Heights triggered the Israeli reaction. Israel's intelligence apparatus in Syria is excellent and Israeli intelligence units had apparently been monitoring Soleimani's movements.

This was a good week for Israel both militarily and politically. Israel continues to charter inroads on the African continent while at the same time, its military stands ready to check aggression emanating from nefarious elements to the north, south and east.

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