

Revival of a Military Option: Israel's Covert War Against Iran Is On

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After talks in Istanbul between Iran and the West on its nuclear program broke down on January 22, the danger of revival of a military option looms large. It may not come in the form of a direct, conventional US and/or Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear installations, but rather in the guise of the warfare of the future, with cyber-weapons and terrorism. Political forces opposed to such an escalation in the Iran conflict would do well to examine the reasons why dialogue on the nuclear issue has failed thus far, and reshape their approach to dealing with the Islamic Republic.

On the eve of talks between Iran and the West, the German weekly of record published a devastating expose' of Israeli covert operations against the Islamic Republic, including targeted assassinations. The cover story of the popular weekly *Der Spiegel*, entitled "David's Avengers: Israel's secret killer-commandos," hit the newsstands and arrived in subscribers' mailboxes on Monday January 17, just four days before talks were to open in Turkey, between Iran and the 5+1 group - the five UN Security Council permanent members plus Germany.

The well-researched story, subtitled, "The Invisible War," documents what every government knows but few will dare to say. "Sabotage and assassination attempts against Iranian scientists are regarded as standard weapons in the arsenal of the Israeli secret service, Mossad," runs the introductory blurb; "They are supposed to set back the mullahs' nuclear program. The latter react by arresting presumed perpetrators." The gist of the report is that, through a coordinated series of operations, from assassinations of nuclear scientists, support for ethnic terrorists, and computer virus attacks (Stuxnet), the Mossad has in fact succeeded in halting progress on Iran's nuclear program, thus postponing the date when the Mossad and others reckon that Tehran might achieve a military nuclear capability. A clear indication of Mossad's success cited is the assessment by outgoing chief Meir Dagan, that Iran could not reach that capability before 2015 at the earliest. Dagan, said to be opposed to military action against Iran on grounds it would backfire, is the one who led this invisible warfare. In contrast, those Israeli leaders ideologically committed to conflict with Iran, like Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak, and others, have trumpeted the notion that Iran is on the verge of developing the bomb, as a way of demanding enhanced sanctions as well as continuing threats of military action, by Washington, of course. (1) From the US, the assessment has tended to dovetail with Dagan's, because the Americans have been not only privy to, but complicit in the covert war.

There is no doubt that such a covert war is raging. On November 29, 2010, two Iranian nuclear scientists were subjects of assassination attempts: Majeed Shahriari died when a car

bomb exploded as he left his Tehran home, and his colleague, Feridun Abbasi Davani, narrowly escaped a similar attempt. On January 12, 2011, another nuclear physicist, Massoud Ali Mohammadi, died when a bomb placed on a motorcycle next to the driver's side of his car exploded. In this case, Iranian authorities arrested a co-national, Majeed Jamali Fash, who later confessed on television to the deed. He declared he had been recruited by the Mossad, trained in Israel, and paid \$50,000 for the crime. In addition, the deadly Stuxnet virus reportedly destroyed 20% of Iran's centrifuges. This, the "most sophisticated cyber-weapon ever produced" was developed in a joint US-Israel program and tested at Israel's nuclear plant in Dimona

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/16/world/middleeast/16stuxnet.html?pagewanted=all> and <http://www.jpost.com/IranianThreat/News/Article.aspxID=199475&R=R1>).

Noteworthy in *Der Spiegel's* report is its documentation of the historical continuity of this targeted assassination policy. In the 1970s and 1980s, Mossad's killer commandos went after "terrorists, persons who produced WMD or supplied them to Israel's enemies, as well as military leaders of the adversary." In this period, a long list of Palestinians from Fatah and Hamas, as well as Hezbollah leaders, turned up as corpses. But the policy goes back even farther to the earliest days of Israel's existence, in the work of groups like Lechi (Stern Gang) and others. *Der Spiegel* also recalls that leading Israeli political figures, including Yitzhak Shamir, Barak, and Deputy Prime Minister Moshe Yaalon served in such capacities.

The Israel Problem

Why *Der Spiegel* launched this timely expose' is an open question, at least for this author. Germany is part of the 5+1 process and the Berlin government has consistently aligned with the US in expanding sanctions, as well as ritually repeating the country's "historical" responsibility to safeguard Israel's security. All the more significant that such an expose' should appear in Germany. There evidently exists at least one faction in the political and security elites that knows that the complex crises hovering over the Middle East/Persian Gulf region cannot be solved without addressing the Israel problem.

Israel *is* the problem. First, it is the only nuclear military power in the region, yet has neither signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, nor therefore allowed the International Atomic Energy Agency to pry into its facilities. Yet, the major world powers have tacitly adhered to the "don't ask, don't tell" policy whereby Israel does not acknowledge its nuclear warheads, but asserts it will never be the first to use them. And whenever anyone raises the issue at the IAEA or UN, it is shot down.

Secondly, Israel has cheerfully ignored any and all international pressure to seriously engage in negotiations towards peace with the Palestinians. The most blatant expression of Tel Aviv's impudence in this regard has been its categorical refusal to halt settlements on occupied Palestinian land including East Jerusalem. Now, with release of the Palestine Papers by *Aljazeera*, insult has been added to injury. The leaked papers make two claims: that the Palestinian Authority, desperate to clinch a deal, made wide-ranging concessions on all critical issues (refugees, land, East Jerusalem, settlements) and that the Israelis consistently demanded more. (How the documents were obtained and given to *Aljazeera* is an important question. And, who filmed the negotiating sessions? Did the participants know they were being filmed? If one asks *cui bono?* - who benefits? - then Israel would be the likely answer: the leaks have discredited, if not humiliated, the Palestinian leadership, potentially fuelling the conflict between it and Hamas, while the Israelis come across as

obstinately committed to keeping the occupied territories and expelling the Palestinians from a purely Jewish state - nothing new.)

Prior to the release of the Palestine Papers, the Palestinian Authority, rightly fed up with continuing settlement expansion, had appealed to the UN to declare the settlements policy illegal. Despite pressure from Washington not to present a resolution to the Security Council, the Arab League did just that on January 19. The text states that "Israeli settlements established in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, are illegal and constitute a major obstacle to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace." The language reflects earlier statements made by US President Obama himself, as well as other members of the Quartet, and aims at placing the US and its partners between a rock and a hard place. The resolution has up to 120 co-sponsors, and could pass the Security Council on condition the US were not to use its veto. Presumably, no vote will be cast until the Quartet meets, perhaps in early February at the annual Wehrkunde conference in Munich, Germany. Although Secretary of State Hillary Clinton opposes the resolution, Obama, who had rejected the legitimacy of the settlements in his Cairo speech, is under pressure to let the resolution pass. A group of former diplomats has issued a letter to Obama, demanding that he instruct the UN ambassador to vote for it. (2)

This appeal to the UN comes at a time when one after another member nation is declaring its recognition of a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, and with a capital in East Jerusalem. Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Guyana, and Ecuador have recently taken this step, to be followed by Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Peru (<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/01/10/world/main7230639.shtml>). Other Central American states as well as those in Africa are expected to add their names to the 109 or more who have recognized Palestine. (3) Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayad is planning to bring the issue to the UN in September. While a two-thirds majority in the General Assembly is almost within reach, in the Security Council the US could kill it with a veto. But pressure on Washington is coming also from those quarters; during a visit to Palestine in January, Russian Federation President Dmitry Medvedev stated that Russia's recognition of the Palestinian State in 1988 still held. (4) If the General Assembly delivers a majority vote, this will be a step towards welcoming Palestine as a UN member. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has ruled out a unilateral declaration of independence, but as Abdallah Frangi, his foreign policy advisor, told the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on January 20, "This would strengthen our position. Israel would then no longer be negotiating with the Palestinian Authority but with a state, whose territory it has largely occupied."

Add to this the turning tide in Europe. While Spain is expected to be the first on the old continent to recognize a Palestinian State, a report compiled by EU consuls in Jerusalem and Ramallah recommended that East Jerusalem be treated as the Palestinian capital, that Israeli products from there be boycotted, and that EU officials not visit Israeli government offices beyond the Green Line, among other measures (<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/diplomats-say-east-jerusalem-should-be-treated-as-palestinian-capital-1.336109>). As *Haaretz* notes, the fact that the EU is not only issuing complaints, but taking *operative* steps is new, and could "constitute the foundations for sanctions against Israel." *Haaretz* columnist Akiva Elder wrote that the report reflects "a dramatic, negative change in the international community's attitude toward Israel in general, and East Jerusalem in particular" (<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/eu-stance-on-east-jerusalem-reflects-negative-turn-toward-israel-1.336112>). A further indication of this dramatic turn is the expansion of

the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaign worldwide (See “The ‘South Africa moment’: Palestine, Israel and the boycott,” <http://www.isj.org/index.php4?id=680&issue=128>).

Israel’s tarnished image continues to fade, even at home. At year’s end, a Tel Aviv district court judged that former President Moshe Katsav was a rapist and sexual molester while occupying the highest office of the land. And a new political mobilization is spreading throughout the country, as human rights activists take to the streets to protest Avigdor Lieberman’s investigation into allegedly illegal funding of NGOs. A Peace Now director leading the demonstrations said at a rally on January 15 that “the Lieberman threat ... is a greater threat than Iran.”

Thus, as Iran and the 5+1 met in Istanbul, the political and moral stature of Israel had shrunk considerably.

Swap or No Swap

“Common knowledge” has it that the conflict revolves around Iran’s insistence on pursuing nuclear technology to complete the entire cycle, while the West, suspicious of Tehran’s ultimate motives, demands that the Islamic Republic give up its enrichment program, if not the nuclear program in toto. As I have argued, this is not an accurate depiction of the dispute; in reality, it is a contest between national sovereignty and independence as opposed to technological apartheid (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=18235>).

In an attempt to solve the ostensible problem of suspected military ambitions, the IAEA proposed that Iran send its low-grade enriched uranium abroad in exchange for high-grade fuel. This proposal, discussed in Geneva in October 2009, was rejected by Iran, on grounds that delivery would be uncertain and too late. It then offered its own proposal, that the IAEA safeguard about 30% of Iran’s uranium inside the country, while a supplier would be found. The West said no to this idea. Then, in May 2010, Brazil, Turkey, and Iran announced a breakthrough formula whereby such a swap could take place in Turkey.⁽⁵⁾ The response of the West was immediate rejection, not because the formula was faulty, but because it had been impertinent on the part of Brazil and Turkey—after all, only third world countries –to assume an initiative which the Great Powers had not condoned. Instead of supporting it, the US, UN, and EU responded with more sanctions against Iran.

In early October, then-Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki indicated Iran was ready to enter talks, whereupon Catherine Ashton, Foreign Policy representative of the EU, extended a formal invitation to meet, which Iranian chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili then readily accepted. The first meeting took place on December 6 in Geneva, and was extended for a second day. Although the Geneva gathering occurred in the wake of scientist Shahriari’s killing, countervailing positive signals came from others quarters. The Gulf Cooperation Council issued its backing at the end of a two-day summit on December 7, and reasserted the “right of all countries in the region to develop civilian nuclear energy within the standards and under the supervision of the ... IAEA.” This includes Israel (<http://www.arabnews.com/middleeast/article210541.ece>).

Although Iran had said it did not want to focus on the nuclear issue, its dialogue partners made sure that that would become the main focus of the multilateral discussions. Iran’s

proposal to discuss cooperation on regional issues was rejected. Tehran's representatives held bilateral talks with Russian and Chinese counterparts as well. Although no breakthrough occurred, all parties described the meeting as constructive and positive. The concrete result was the decision to meet again in January, this time in Istanbul.

The fact that the Istanbul talks yielded no results should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with Iranian politics and mindset. Prior to the meeting, literally all the Iranian politicians had stressed that what they demanded was simply to be treated as equals in an atmosphere of "cooperation, not confrontation," a phrase repeated ad infinitum. Following the December gathering, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said the talks had been "very good," and that now it was time for the West to "change the policy of confrontation to engagement." He went further: "We are in favor of cooperation and they should come and cooperate with us and build us 20 nuclear plants." He added that the right to enrichment was "not negotiable," a posture adopted by Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, negotiator Jalili, and virtually every other official.

The problem was that officials from the 5+1 group continued to insist that Iran's right to enrichment – or indeed to a nuclear program at all – was a matter for *others* to decide. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's earlier pronouncement that Iran may be allowed to resume enrichment "at some future date once they have demonstrated that they can do so in a responsible manner," was typical, and utterly counterproductive. At the outset of the Istanbul talks Iranian negotiator Saeed Jalili said that Iran would negotiate only if its NPT-guaranteed right to enrich were acknowledged, and if the sanctions against it were lifted. These were "prerequisites," he said, not "preconditions." After the collapse of the talks, Lady Ashton said it was such unacceptable "conditions" that had led to the breakdown.

What really happened was something else. Behind the scenes, the 5+1, in the person of Ashton, actually put forward a "proposal" to Iran, which amounted to a demand Tehran could not even consider. As reported by *Reuters* and mentioned only en passant in very few other media, the new proposal increased the amount of low-enriched uranium that Iran must ship abroad, from the 60% discussed in 2009 to 90% (2,800 kilograms), and called for nearly all its 20% enriched uranium (40 kilograms) to leave the country. As the *New York Times* put it, the aim was "to leave Iran, again, with less low-enriched uranium than required to build a bomb, and with no uranium enriched to 19.75 percent." So, "Iran here did not even agree to an expert-level meeting on the proposal, diplomats said."⁽⁶⁾ No wonder.

Despite this affront, Jalili said Iran was open to further talks, and Ahmadinejad delivered a major speech saying the same. Ashton stated the EU's doors and telephone lines "remain open." So, formally speaking, contacts still exist.

The Subjective Factor: Ahmadinejad in New York

Why the 5+1 group's position is unacceptable to Tehran is important to understand. It is a cultural question more than anything else. I do not know in detail what else went on in Istanbul, but I think I do have some insight into the thinking of Iran's elites.

In September, I had the opportunity to participate in a meeting with Iranian President Ahmadinejad. In what has become somewhat of a tradition, he meets with various groups on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, be it editors of major press, members of the Iranian-American community, or others. The meeting I took part in was a gathering of about 50 Americans: university professors, think-tankers, diplomats, Iran experts, and book

authors. There were no neocons or war mongers on hand, but individuals seriously interested in promoting understanding, and providing positive input into the policy-making process in Washington. The session, which was slated to last an hour and a half but ended up being twice as long, constituted, in my eyes at least, a fairly representative example of the nature of the Iranian-American dialogue.

Unfortunately, it was not a normal dialogue, but rather a case study in mutual mistrust. At times, it appeared as if the two sides were speaking mutually exclusive political-cultural languages. Although the good intentions of both sides were not in question, the ability of either side to effectively grasp the rationale of the other side – the way the other side thinks – remained in doubt. For example: Ahmadinejad opened with a proposal to discuss what he called a “reform in world management,” meaning a new approach to organizing the world economy and international relations, to reestablish legitimacy of institutions and solve urgent political crises from the standpoint of justice. Only one or two people picked up on this theme, while the others preferred to focus on the nuclear program, Iran’s repression of dissidents, factionalization in the Tehran leadership, and so forth.

More important, in a sense, than the content of the questions – and answers – was the tone in which they were delivered, a tone which implicitly communicated underlying assumptions which were either diplomatically uncouth or outright offensive to the other side. One US participant, who said he was eager to improve US-Iranian relations, asked whether Ahmadinejad would nominate an envoy to discuss with a US envoy, were Obama to propose such a formula again. The Iranian president’s reply was, essentially, we don’t need envoys; “I’m prepared to sit down and talk with Obama,” so why not do so? The implicit message was: Obama talks to other heads of state, why not to me?

This is a central concept in Iran’s political thinking, and reemerged several times in the discussion. When asked what Iran wanted the US to say or do, to indicate the kind of change in attitude that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had called for in August 2010, the Iranian president answered that if the US wanted to deal with Iran from a position of superiority and if it defined conclusions before negotiations that would not work. If the US treated Iran as its equal, fine.

This came up again regarding the dynamics of the process toward nuclear talks. One American participant said, the US wants to focus on the nuclear issue and you do not. So what can be done? Another questioner followed up, asking whether talks had been held up because Ashton was demanding that the nuclear issue be at the top of the agenda. Ahmadinejad restated his main point: if they define the result of the negotiations prior to the talks, then what is the sense in negotiating? Let us first agree on the agenda, then start talks. If they dictate the issue of the talks from a position of superiority, it will yield nothing.

Another American asked whether or not Iran would develop nuclear weapons in the event that the powers-that-be in the world were to “allow” it. And if so, why: for prestige, or regional deterrence? Ahmadinejad’s answer surprised many: first, he said, nuclear weapons do not confer prestige, but only cause mass deaths. We don’t want a permit to produce weapons, he said, but seek only to develop nuclear energy. Even if we were “allowed,” we wouldn’t want to develop them. And, he added, if we wanted to develop them, we would say so and then do so; i.e. we don’t need your permission. “Who can prevent us?” he asked, “No one.” In another connection, he asked rhetorically, why should anyone with nuclear energy have to convince the US first? Why does the US have to “allow” Iran to have nuclear power? The implicit message was: we Iranians reject the idea that any other nation or power should

have the right to dictate to us whether or not we develop these or other weapons. We are a sovereign state.

He added that nuclear weapons were utterly useless anyway in the current strategic context: Israel's 200 warheads proved to be irrelevant in the wars with Lebanon and Gaza and could not be deployed. Possession of a strategic nuclear arsenal did not prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union, and so forth.

On regional crises, a similar dynamic developed in the discussion. One former diplomat asked if there were a possibility for cooperation to stabilize the Afghan situation, given that the US and Iran shared common perspectives there. Ahmadinejad agreed there were common interests but stressed the problem was the US believed in a military solution, which in Iran's view, did not exist. Once the US accepted this fact, cooperation would be possible.(7)

The double standard applied by the West to Israel vs. everyone else was a major theme. Asked whether Iran, as a participant in a possible conference on a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East, would pose preconditions, Ahmadinejad responded with another question: "What country has nuclear weapons in the region?" As the American replied, Israel, he went on to say, ok, fine, the IAEA should disarm Israel, and then there would be no such need for a conference, since no one else in the region possesses these weapons.

The Iranian president referred to the double standard in several connections. As for the IAEA's pressures on inspections, he said, if Iran were a friend of the US, they would have a different behavior, and if Iran were a member of the P5, they would get different treatment from the IAEA.

A clear case of double standards is the attitude of the international community to Israel. Ahmadinejad referenced the vehemence with which UN Security Council resolutions against Iran have been implemented, to the tune of tough sanctions, while no action has been taken against Israel for violating decades of resolutions.

On historical issues, he denounced the unequal treatment meted out to Iran and Iraq after the 1980-1988 war. Asked whether the UNSC, which had played a role in bringing about a ceasefire in that terrible conflict, might be used to solve other problems in the Mideast today, Ahmadinejad stated: we need a world in which all have equal rights. The UN Secretary General, he said, had designated the Iran-Iraq war as an imposed war by Saddam Hussein, but, at the time, the Security Council remained mute. After the war, Iran received no compensation, although Kuwait is still enjoying them from the 1991 war.

Heated debate broke out around the issue of the Brazil-Turkey-Iran agreement last May, on a formula for providing Iran nuclear fuel, as referenced above. One participant, who termed the US's rejection of the deal "regrettable," asked if it might still provide the basis for diplomacy. Implicit in his question was: if the US shot it down, can it have a future? Ahmadinejad simply asserted that the Tehran Declaration was still valid since it rested on a strong legal basis. He criticized those who, seeing this development as a defeat, responded with sanctions; "they don't want to solve the problem, but only to put us under their foot and squeeze us." He went on to state that this deal had established a new trend in international relations, in that two nations (Brazil and Turkey) outside of the veto powers, had established a political role for themselves, which he called a "cultural achievement." He said the sanctions levied against Iran as a response were actually intended to punish Turkey

and Brazil.

Although overall the discussion highlighted mistrust and misunderstanding, there were a few technical matters where they found agreement. Ahmadinejad readily accepted one proposal from a Pugwash representative for dialogue among independent experts, and solicited a specific proposal. He welcomed a call for relaxing visa requirements for Americans eager to study Farsi and related subjects in Iran.

Being a part of this discussion process for me was an educational experience. Although I have been involved in dialogue with Iranians since 1991, this was the first time I had the opportunity to experience US-Iranian interaction at this institutional level. It is not a question of whether one likes Ahmadinejad or not; it is a question of trying to enter into the mind of the other, to gain some insight into how the other side thinks.

After leaving the hotel, Ahmadinejad drove to the *CNN* studio to give an interview to Larry King. Here another political-cultural non-dialogue unfolded. Larry King naively asked his guest what he thought of the perspectives for a Middle East settlement with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Ahmadinejad, without pausing a second to reflect, shot back that Netanyahu was a criminal, with the blood of thousands of Palestinians on his hands, and should be brought before a court of law and judged. Not only Larry King was shocked. Again, it is not a question of whether or not you like Ahmadinejad. The question is, in light of the Gaza war and Mavi Marmora event, was his characterization slanderous?

The Next Step

Where does this leave us? Formally speaking, the non-dialogue dialogue could resume. But, unless there is a change in approach, it will lead nowhere. More likely, the failure of the Istanbul gathering will be exploited as a pretext for those in Israel and the West who have argued that only sanctions and the military option can yield results. *Der Spiegel* has published the facts of the invisible war which is underway, with assassinations, computer sabotage, and ethnic terrorism. Given the reign of lawlessness in Israel – as documented again by the recent “investigation” that justified the military’s assault on Mavi Marmora – one should expect a continuation and escalation of this new form of warfare, especially the deployment of cyber-weapons and targeted killings.

The ball is in the US’s court. Obama, who raised hopes with his verbal pledges to impose justice in the region, is on the dock. How he responds to the UN move on Israeli settlements, and to the increasing political pressure to replace rhetoric with action, will be a test case. The release of the Palestine Papers has thrown a political hand grenade into the equation, and the shrapnel could hit far and wide. Other developments in the region should signal to Washington that time is running out. The crisis is heating up in Lebanon, where the Israeli plan to use the tribunal on the Hariri assassination to incriminate and thus eliminate Hezbollah has backfired. Iraq remains explosive and Tunisians are introducing a revolution into Arab politics. In this context, the “West” would do well to rethink its much touted dedication to the sacrosanct principles of justice, equality, and peace, and redefine its priorities and policies.

1. “Military strike on Iran is what unites Netanyahu and Barak,” Haaretz, January 18, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/military-strike-on-iran-is-what-unites-netanyahu-and-barak-1.337686>

2.

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/former-u-s-diplomats-to-obama:support-u-n-draft-condemning-israeli-settlements-1.338565?localLinksEnabled=false>. The letter contained this statement: "If the proposed resolution is consistent with existing and established US policies, then deploying a veto would severely undermine US credibility and interests, placing us firmly outside of the international consensus, and further diminishing our ability to mediate this conflict."

3. It was apparently in response to these international moves that Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman proposed a map of a Palestinian state with "provisional borders," which chief negotiator Saeb Erekat dismissed as "an invention and a joke." The leaked Palestine Papers reveal that this map was nothing new.

4. Medvedev's visit to the region was remarkable for many reasons. Although Israel cancelled his visit, on the pretext of a strike at the foreign ministry, Medvedev went ahead to visit Jericho and Amman. While in Palestine, he and Abbas opened the Jericho museum, which Russia built on land returned to it in 2008. Reports say his trip promoted independence and religion. He explicitly called for an immediate settlement freeze, during a joint press conference. Abbas said the Russian president's visit would "revive the Russian presence in the Holy Land."
<http://www.wallwritings.wordpress.com/2011/01/22/medvedevs-palestine-jordan-trip-promoted-religion-and-independence/>

5. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=20278>. On December 16, *The Telegraph* leaked a story in the context of the Geneva talks, according to which Iran was negotiating with Turkey, Russia, and France for a new swap, whereby it would send 1,000 kilos of low-grade uranium and its stockpile of 20%-enriched uranium to a secure place, in exchange for fuel rods supplied by France and Russia (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran-in-secret-talks-on-nuclear-swap-in-bid-to-end-sanctions.html>). Nothing came of it.

6.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE70L1E120110122?feedType=RSS&feedName=Iran&virtualBrandChannel=10209>. On how the major press ignored or obfuscated the outrageous details of this package, see <http://www.enduringamerica.com/home/2011/1/23/iran-nuclear-snapshot-how-the-us-media-missed-the-important.html>.

7. In August 2010 Obama told journalists in the White House that he thought Iran should be part of solving the Afghan crisis through regional stability talks. "Iran should be part of that and could be a constructive partner," he said. See <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/04/AR2010080406238.html>

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