

Ynet-News, May 27, 2020 – Wednesday

05.27.20 – We - - - News Placed in May 26 spot – Tuesday

UN Finnish troops may deploy along Lebanon-Israel border to help Lebanese mandate

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Iran intelligence hacked a Gantz cellphone data making him vulnerable to extortion

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Police tasked to find officials who speculated on investigation of Netanyahu

05.27.20 – We - - - News

US to end sanction waivers in 60 days for international work at Iran nuclear sites

05.25.20 – Mo - - - News Placed in May 25 spot – Monday

Iran spent \$30 billion in 2019 on Syria's Assad rebellion to build a port in the country

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05.27.20

Lebanese PM visits UN Peacekeepers amid dispute over mandate

Visit comes as Israeli officials demand UNIFIL receive greater freedoms in southern Lebanon; Hezbollah calls increased UN involvement violation of country's sovereignty

Associated Press| Published: 05.27.20 , 19:49

Lebanon's prime minister visited United Nations peacekeepers in the country's south near the border with Israel on Wednesday, describing the presence of the force in the volatile area as a necessity.

The visit by Prime Minister Hassan Diab comes amid a war of words between Israeli and Lebanese officials, including the powerful Hezbollah group, over the mandate of the UN force, known as UNIFIL. The force has been deployed in southern Lebanon since an Israeli invasion in 1978.

Israel is calling for major changes in the way the mission in southern Lebanon operates on the ground, demanding that it have access to all sites and freedom of movement and that it report back to the Security Council if it is being blocked.

The head of Lebanon's Hezbollah group, Hassan Nasrallah, said late Tuesday that Lebanon will not accept a change of mandate for UNIFIL to allow it to raid and search areas, calling it a violation of the country's sovereignty. Nasrallah said the U.S. is pressuring Lebanon to accept such a change.

“They want to reduce UNIFIL numbers? Go ahead. Increase them? Go ahead,” Nasrallah said, adding if they also want to leave it will be no problem. “But we consider expanding its mandate an infringement on Lebanese sovereignty.”

Diab said the **presence of the troops** was “**necessary** and urgent” in light of the ongoing “violations by Israel of Lebanon’s sovereignty by land, sea, and air.”

The quibble over the UNIFIL mandate comes up every year before the mandate is renewed in the summer.

The peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon was originally created to oversee the withdrawal of Israeli troops after the 1978 invasion. The mission was expanded after a 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah militants so that **peacekeepers** could **deploy** along the **Lebanon-Israel border to help Lebanese troops extend their authority** into their country’s **south** for the first time in decades.

Israel has repeatedly accused Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants of impeding the peacekeepers from carrying out their mandate.

On Tuesday, residents of the southern village of Blida protested against UNIFIL troops, accusing the **Finnish battalion conducting patrols** of damaging cars in the village.

UNIFIL said it was investigating the incident.

UNIFIL includes more than 9,400 ground troops and over 850 naval personnel in a Maritime Task Force.

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Regev: Gantz is not ready to become prime minister

Likud MK questions defense minister's competence to lead country, raises old speculations Iranian intelligence hold sensitive data on him; Gantz storms out of meeting with Netanyahu, demands apology

Nevo Ziv, Raz Shechnik | Published: **05.27.20**, 19:14

Transportation Minister Miri Regev lashed out at Defense Minister Benny Gantz in a Yedioth Ahronoth interview that will be published on Thursday, saying he is not ready for the premiership.

"I don't think he is ready to become prime minister. He is simply not ready," said Regev. "Let's see what will happen in a year and a half. We'll see whether he'll learn from the best and come prepared for the role."

The Blue & White chairman is expected to assume the position of prime minister in 18 months as part of a rotation deal with Likud Chairman Benjamin Netanyahu.

Regev also raised old speculations that Iranian intelligence has allegedly hacked a cellphone belonging to Gantz and compromised sensitive data, making him vulnerable to extortion by Israel's enemies.

"You need to ask Defense Minister Benny Gantz whether we have anything to worry about," said Regev.

Regev, who is designated to become foreign minister under Gantz, is one of the closest people to Netanyahu within the Likud ranks and some in the political system believe the things she said were completely coordinated with Netanyahu in an attempt to create a rift between the two and prevent the rotation deal from materializing in a year and a half.

A Likud official issued a response to Regev's remarks and said that the time for personal attacks is over now that a unity government of Likud and Blue & White has been formed. "The [election] campaign is over and now's the time for unity. It's time to stop the personal attacks from all sides," said the official. "The elections are behind us and the shared goals are ahead of us and we must join hands for the sake of Israel."

Gantz reportedly cut short a meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu after learning of Regev's attacks on him, demanding an apology.

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05.27.20

Minister to police chief: Find officer who 'threatened' PM

Amir Ohana, who oversees police, demands that acting commissioner use every means at his disposal to find the person who speculated about new investigation into Netanyahu share payout and said prime minister would be subject to rigorous questioning

Eli Senior | Published: 05.26.20 , 18:03

Minister of Public Security Amir Ohana on Tuesday asked Acting Israel Police Commissioner Motti Cohen to use all measures possible, including a polygraph, to locate a police official whom Ohana claims made a threatening remark regarding Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The alleged incident occurred on Monday, a day after Netanyahu launched a vehement attack on law enforcement officials as he arrived at Jerusalem District Court for the start of his corruption trial.

Ohana was outraged when senior police officials addressed the possibility that Netanyahu might be subjected to a further police probe regarding a massive payout for his shares in a steel company.

In his letter to Cohen, the minister wrote: "Yesterday, 'a senior police official,' meaning a coward hiding behind a veil of anonymity, said the following: 'Lahav 433 [criminal

investigations bureau] investigators did an excellent job ignoring all the pressure exerted upon them. They will continue to do so if the attorney general decides on another investigation into [Netanyahu's] shares. We will treat him with respect, but as in previous investigations - we will give him no quarter.'

Ohana further stated: "In our short time together, I came to see how important the prestige and image of the police are to you. As you can see, they are important to me as well. Such a person, who makes such threats to the prime minister, severely harms the image of the police, its status and its prestige in the eye of the public."

05.27.20 – We - - -

US to end sanction waivers in 60 days for international work at Iran nuclear sites

05.27.20

Sources: U.S. to end sanction waivers allowing work at Iran nuclear sites

Decision seems designed to tighten 'maximum pressure' policy against Tehran since Washington pulled out of nuclear deal in 2018; U.S. provides 60 days to wind down international activities

Reuters| Published: 05.27.20 , 22:05

The United States has decided to end sanctions waivers allowing Russian, Chinese and European firms to continue work at certain Iranian nuclear sites, a U.S. official and another source familiar with the matter said on Wednesday.

The decision, first reported by the Washington Post, seemed designed to tighten the U.S. "maximum pressure" policy against Tehran since Washington pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal in 2018. That deal had provided Iran with relief from economic sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear program.

The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the move applied to Iran's Arak heavy water research reactor, the provision of enriched uranium for its Tehran Research Reactor and the transfer of spent and scrap reactor fuel abroad. However, the sources said the United States would provide 60 days to wind down international activities - which were designed to make the Iranian nuclear program less capable of producing weapons - at the sites.

They also said it would extend for 90 days a waiver allowing international support for the Russian-built nuclear reactor at Bushehr.

It was not immediately clear why Washington had decided to scrap the waivers, which it repeatedly extended after pulling out of the nuclear deal on the argument that such projects were aimed at making Iran's nuclear program less capable of producing weapons.

05.25.20 – Mo - - -

Iran spent \$30 billion in 2019 on Syria's Assad rebellion to build a port in the country

05.25.20

Iran spent up to \$30 billion on propping Syria's Assad, lawmaker says
Tehran's expenses into bolstering government forces in Syria said to be near twice its annual defense budget throughout 2019, about 6.5% of its GDP that year
i24NEWS| Published: 05.25.20 , 21 :52

The Iranian regime may have invested up to \$30 billion into bolstering Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, a lawmaker revealed in an estimate of the cost of Tehran's involvement in the country's bloody, nearly decade-long civil war.

The estimate comes from Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh - an outgoing member of the Iranian parliament's security and foreign policy panel - who shared the account with Etemad newspaper in an interview published Wednesday.

The \$30 billion budget is estimated to be about twice as high as Iran's own defense budget last year, Bloomberg reports.

The International Monetary Fund estimates that it comprises approximately 6.5 percent of Iran's GDP in 2019.

Iran was one of the first foreign players to get involved in the Syrian crisis, sending militias to back the besieged Assad regime as early as in 2011, when anti-government protests turned into a massive rebellion.

Besides support on the ground, Iran also backed Assad with money and oil, and was able to secure a foothold in the Syrian economy in return, getting a major share of the telecom market and receiving a green-light to build a port in the country.

Its encroachment in Syria was part of an effort to build a land bridge to its regional proxies, such as Lebanon's Hezbollah, and was viewed with concern in Israel, who - is believed - initiated an airstrike which killed at least four pro-Iranian militia members and three civilians on the outskirts of Damascus.