

Ynet-News, December 29, 2022 – Thursday

12.29.22 – Th- - - News Placed in December 28 spot – Wednesday
US lawmakers probe use of DEA & FBI spyware made by two Israeli firms

12.29.22 – Th- - - News Placed in December 27 spot – Tuesday
Biden repeats US commitment to 2-state solution in message to Netanyahu

12.29.22 – Th- - - News Placed in December 29 spot – Thursday
Netanyahu's 37th government approved by 63 of 120 Israel's parliament

12.29.22 – Th- - - News – Thursday
Jordan king weary of status quo with incoming Netanyahu government

12.27.22 – Tu- - - News Placed in December 26 spot – Monday
Thousands on Ashkelon beach gather strewn products of three shipping containers

12.29.22
US lawmakers probe use of DEA & FBI spyware made by two Israeli firms

12.29.22
U.S. Democrat lawmakers probe use of Israeli spyware by DEA, FBI
Congressman Adam Schiff demands details about the DEA's use of technology developed by Israeli Paragon firm; Senator Ron Wyden seeks explanations from the FBI over its purchase and testing of Pegasus spyware
Dennis Bihler|13:07

Two senior Democrats in the United States Congress, on Thursday called for an investigation into the purchase and use of spyware made by two Israeli firms, in an attempt to curb the use of hacking tools in the country.

Congressman Adam Schiff, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee turned to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) last week, asking for details about the agency's use of a spyware tool called Graphite, developed by the Israeli firm Paragon.

Graphite can invade mobile phones and harvest data, such as messages, videos, photos, and other files, mostly from the cloud.

"Such use could have potential implications for U.S. national security, as well as run contrary to efforts to deter the broad proliferation of powerful surveillance capabilities to

autocratic regimes and others who may misuse them," Schiff wrote in a letter sent to the agency.

He also called Anne Milgram, the DEA's administrator, to respond by January 15 to questions submitted in a classified addendum to the agency.

This follows a report the New York Times published earlier this month that the Biden administration allowed the DEA to deploy the tool, despite taking a public stand last year against the abuse of spyware and even blacklisting the Israeli firm NSO Group.

In a statement to The Times, the DEA said that "the men and women of the Drug Enforcement Administration are using every lawful investigative tool available to pursue the foreign-based cartels and individuals operating around the world responsible for the drug-poisoning deaths of 107,622 Americans last year."

Meanwhile, Democratic Senator Ron Wyden sent a letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), to obtain information about the bureau's purchase and testing of Pegasus spyware developed by NSO Group.

Wyden urged the FBI to explain why it decided not to use Pegasus, saying that it "remains unclear what triggered the decision by FBI leadership to forgo operational use of the tool".

"The FBI cannot continue to shroud in secrecy the rules that govern its hacking operations against Americans' phones and computers," he wrote. "The American people have a right to know the scale of the FBI's hacking activities and the rules that govern the use of this controversial surveillance technique."

12.29.22

Biden repeats US commitment to 2-state solution in message to Netanyahu

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Biden repeats U.S. commitment to 2-state solution in message to Netanyahu

After new government sworn in, White House releases statement saying Biden seeks to address regional challenges with Netanyahu but adds he will oppose policies that contradict 'mutual values'

Itamar Eichner|12:58

U.S. President Joe Biden on Thursday, issued a statement after Benjamin Netanyahu's new government was sworn in.

"I look forward to working with Prime Minister Netanyahu, who has been my friend for decades, to jointly address the many challenges and opportunities facing Israel and the Middle East region, including threats from Iran," Biden said in his statement.

"The United States is working to promote a region that's increasingly integrated, prosperous, and secure, with benefits for all of its people. From the start of my

Administration, we have worked with partners to promote this more hopeful vision of a region at peace, including between Israelis and Palestinians. We **aim to continue** this important work with Israel's new government under Prime Minister Netanyahu's **leadership**," he said.

And as we have throughout my Administration, the **United States will continue to support the two-state solution** and to **oppose** policies that endanger its viability or **contradict** our mutual **interests and values**," the president concluded.

The statement comes amid tensions between the administration and members of the newly seated government, after Netanyahu's coalition deals with his partners include a commitment to increase settlements on the West Bank and legitimize illegal outposts.

Washington is especially **concerned with** the role of **far-right** Itamar **Ben-Gvir** as the new national security minister (a post previously called Public Security Minister,) with extensive authority over the police, **and** the appointment of Religious Zionist Party head Bezael **Smotrich** to a ministerial post in the **Defense Ministry** with **authority over** the **West Bank civil** administration and coordination with the Palestinian Authority.

Netanyahu has repeated attempted to **calm the concerns** expressed by the U.S. **claiming** he will be the one to **decide policy** for his government and that no **steps will be taken** without **coordination with him**.

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Netanyahu's 37th government approved by 63 of 120 Israel's parliament

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Netanyahu's government approved by Israel's parliament

Country's **37th government** voted in as first act of newly elected speaker Amir Ohana, first openly gay politician to hold position; Cabinet to meet for its first time later in day
Ynet, Agencies|08:50

The **Knesset** on Thursday, **voted in favor of Israel's 37th government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu**.

The vote was held under the gavel of newly elected speaker of Knesset, Amir Ohana, the first openly gay politician to hold that position.

Netanyahu's government received **63 of 120** possible **votes** in parliament, the speaker of parliament said. He will hold his first cabinet meeting later in the day.

The coalition, made up of Jewish ultranationalist and religious parties, has already prompted an unprecedented uproar from Israeli society, including the country's defense establishment, businesses, LGBTQ community, secular Jews and others. The new government has promised to curb the power of the country's independent judiciary and

expand illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank that will deepen the conflict with the Palestinians.

After over a year in opposition, Netanyahu (73) secured a comeback in the latest election, the nation's fifth in less than four years, to extend his record-setting tenure as prime minister.

As Netanyahu took the oath of office, more attention was focused on his alliance with Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, two ultranationalist hardliners who have already shown how determined they are to impose their agenda during weeks of fraught coalition talks.

Ben-Gvir, filmed recently brandishing a pistol at Palestinians in East Jerusalem, will oversee police forces as security minister, while Smotrich's Religious Zionism party will have unprecedented control over the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Together they have succeeded in leaving Netanyahu, a dyed-in-the-wool security hawk and a scourge of liberal opinion for more than two decades, on the left of his governing coalition.

"The new government is determined to restore ... quiet and personal security to the citizens of Israel," Netanyahu told parliament on Thursday before his swearing in.

Its platform, which stated that "the Jewish people have exclusive and indisputable rights" over the entirety of Israel and the Palestinian territories and will advance settlement construction in the West Bank. That includes legalizing dozens of wildcat outposts and a commitment to annex the entire territory, a step that would draw heavy international opposition by destroying any remaining hopes for Palestinian statehood and add fuel to calls that Israel is an apartheid state if millions of Palestinians are not granted citizenship.

12.29.22

Jordan king weary of status quo with incoming Netanyahu government

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With Temple Mount issue in mind, King Abdullah II says while his country is ready for but not interested in conflict, Amman has its 'red lines'

Gilad Meiri|01:54

Before Israel's new right-wing government is sworn-in, King Abdullah II of Jordan has made his concern clear: The status quo at the Temple Mount must be maintained.

In a sit-down interview with CNN's Becky Anderson, the Jordanian Monarch stressed the issue of Jerusalem and the holy sites that could possibly be compromised by Otzma Yehudit Chairman and incoming National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and his cohorts in the new government.

In his latest **speech before the United Nations**, King Abdullah said **"Jerusalem is of urgent concern**. Undermining Jerusalem's legal and historical **status quo triggers global tensions.**"

In the CNN interview, he was just as resolute. "Jerusalem is a city that is supposed to bring us all together but **extremists** on all sides **create conflict**. The violence really did pick up in the spring," he said.

Speaking of the presence of Arab Christians in Jerusalem, he said: "My concern is there are **challenges** that they are facing **from policies** on the ground. If we continue to use Jerusalem as a soapbox, things **could get out of control** pretty **quickly**. We are fortunate to have in Jerusalem the oldest Arab-Christian community in the world. In recent years they've come under pressure."

Reverting back to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Abdullah was asked how worried he was about what was to come. "We have to be worried about **the next Intifada**," he said. "**Neither** the Israelis nor the Palestinians **will benefit** from it."

Regarding the incoming government and Netanyahu's return to power, he said: "End of the day, the Israelis have the right to choose who will lead them. We're all big boys here and we're all prepared to move on. We will work with anybody and everybody as long as we can bring people together. People like those on the **far-right in Israel are** not just **under a Jordanian microscope**. They're **under an international one**."

Reverting to an old joke to make his point, he said: "We've learned living between Iraq and a hard place. If people want to get into a conflict with us, we're quite prepared. I like to look at the glass half full, but we do have red lines. I have to believe that there are **a lot of people in Israel** who are as **concerned** as we are.

"There are issues we have to deal with, whether we're Israelis, Palestinians or Jordanians. I believe regional integration is going to be the secret to breaking down barriers. When I'm invested in your success, because your success is my success, at the end of the day it means we can move forward.

"But that's **not going to happen unless there's a future for the Palestinians**."

Meanwhile, **outgoing Defense Minister Benny Gantz spoke to Palestinian Authority President Abbas on Wednesday**. Reportedly, **Gantz stressed** the importance of the **bilateral ties** that have been built in recent years between Israeli security forces and the Palestinian Authority, and **urged to keep** an open channel of **communication to sustain those ties**.

Additionally, **Gantz said** that unilateral moves against Israel, like the ones the **PA is trying to advance in the UN**, will **undermine** relations and security **coordination** between the two sides.

Ben-Gvir's accession to power also **raises concerns about tensions simmering around the Temple Mount** as the incoming police minister expressed many times in the past his belief **Jews must be allowed to pray freely on Temple Mount**. In a closed-off area, shoulder-to-shoulder with apprehensive Muslims, some fear this **could lead to** these **tensions** boiling over and possibly leading **to a third Intifada**. While Netanyahu and other members of his **incoming government stated there will be no changes to the status quo** in Jerusalem, the Temple Mount was not specifically mentioned.

Relations between Israel and Jordan have seen ebbs and flows throughout the years.

In 2017, an Israeli security guard killed a Jordanian man who stabbed him at the entrance to the Israeli embassy in Amman. Another Jordanian bystander was accidentally shot and killed in the altercation. All Israeli personnel inside the embassy were instructed not to leave.

While the situation was eventually solved via diplomatic channels, a widely shared photo of the security guard being embraced by Netanyahu upon his return to Israel caused an uproar in Jordan.

After that incident, three Muslims killed two Israeli security guards on the Temple Mount, which prompted Israel to place metal detectors at the entrances to the holy site, a move that did not sit well with Mohammad Ahmad Hussein, the Mufti of Jerusalem, who instructed Muslims coming to the site not to go through the metal detectors, further enflaming tensions.

With Netanyahu affirming his wish to strengthen West Bank settlements, Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister Nabil Abu-Rudeineh said that it stands in contrast to international law and that Israel must adhere to UN resolutions.

12.27.22

Thousands on Ashkelon beach gather strewn products of three shipping containers

12.27.22

Thousands loot beached shipping containers in southern Israel

While students and volunteers helped clean the coastline, others preferred to purloin goods strewn onshore after containers detached from nearby cargo ship due to violent storm

Matan Tzuri|Yesterday | 09:22

Hordes of Israelis descended on the beach in the southern city of Ashkelon Tuesday night and Wednesday morning for a chance to purloin some loot from several shipping containers that fell overboard a cargo ship and washed ashore.

The action concentrated in two main locales — three containers chock-full of plastic products, such as pacifiers, disposable utensils, baby bottles, etc., that washed up on the city's southern shore; and another container with electrical appliances, wrapped gifts and even jewelry that has washed up on the northern beach.

Thousands of Israelis descend upon Ashkelon coast to plunder a beached shipping container

"Collecting this is a mitzvah. Either it'll all go to waste or pollute the ocean, so it's better we take it," one industrious civilian told Ynet as he kept drawing goods from the water.

"There's some really good stuff here, it'll be a shame if it all goes to waste. Many people here took stuff home but also gave some to charity. There's also cleaning supplies here like detergents, brooms, sponges and rags."

The shipping company that owns the containers has yet to arrive at the scene to retrieve them and the goods from the water.

“This is a scandal. Where are the owners? What do they think will happen to these containers while they're here?” lamented another civilian.

“Of course they'll get looted. They caused some serious damage, so let them come and fix it.”

Meanwhile, dozens of school students and volunteers from around the area arrived at the beach to help with the cleaning.

The foreign ship from which the containers fell was waiting in the middle of the stormy sea to enter the port of Ashdod. As a result of the inclement weather, nine containers detached from the ship and fell into the water, some of which are still being searched for.

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Ynet-News, December 25, 2022 – Sunday

12.25.22 – Su- - - News Placed in December 25 spot – Sunday
Russia demands ownership of 3 churches on Mount of Olives, Jerusalem

12.25.22 – Su- - - News – Sunday
Doctors should be allowed to opt out of care not aligning with Jewish law

12.21.22 – We- - - News Placed in December 23 spot – Friday
Netanyahu secures votes to form government, must be sworn by January 2

12.21.22 – We- - - News Placed in December 22 spot – Thursday
IDF soldier apprehended running large-scale weapons trafficking on military bases

12.21.22 – We- - - News – Wednesday
Netanyahu to secure MK positions & swear in new government on December 28

12.20.22 – Tu- - - News Placed in December 20 spot – Tuesday
Four missiles hit Hezbollah storage near Damascus airport after Iran plane landed

12.19.22 – Mo- - - News – Monday
PA calls for UN patrols on the roads in West Bank to monitor Israeli activity

12.19.22 – Mo- - - News – Monday
New York Times shamefully undermining & demonizing Netanyahu coalition